

Promoting social cohesion and convergence

# **Social impact of migration: Addressing the challenges of receiving and integrating Ukrainian refugees**





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## Abbreviations

<b>ECEC</b>	Early childhood education and care
<b>FRA</b>	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
<b>GP</b>	General practitioner
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>IT</b>	Information technology
<b>NEC</b>	Network of Eurofound Correspondents
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PES</b>	Public employment service(s)
<b>PES Network</b>	European Network of Public Employment Services
<b>PESEL</b>	Universal Electronic System for Registration of the Population
<b>REALT</b>	Regional education and language team
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>Unicef</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# Executive summary

## Introduction

This report focuses on the challenges that the EU Member States and Norway face when receiving and integrating refugees who fled Ukraine after Russia's invasion in February 2022. It investigates labour market integration by exploring the barriers to it and examines access to and experiences with public services that are crucial for societal inclusion. The main aim of this report is to explore how different areas of integration are interconnected: housing arrangements, health status (including mental health), and access to childcare, education and social assistance can all have strong impacts on employment prospects and societal integration, and in turn having a job can lead to greater social inclusion. This report considers not only the support measures in place to encourage labour market integration but also how the Member States and Norway facilitate access to key public services.

The report uses information collected by Eurofound from the Member States and Norway and covers developments up to mid-2023.

## Policy context

In the wake of the mass inflow of refugees from Ukraine, the EU activated its Temporary Protection Directive, granting immediate temporary protection to Ukrainian displaced people; 4.2 million were under temporary protection in the EU in September 2023. This inflow is different in many respects from that of the asylum seekers who arrived in the EU in 2015. For example, it is mainly women and children who have arrived; most of the adults have high levels of education; the refugees speak mainly Ukrainian or Russian, which are similar to several host country languages; and a large Ukrainian diaspora already lives in Europe. Nevertheless, the refugees' arrival posed new challenges, especially in countries with less experience of receiving refugees.

With the Temporary Protection Directive, the EU provides a harmonised legal framework helping to ensure access to employment and key public services. The application of the directive has been extended for another year, to March 2025. To facilitate the implementation of the directive, the EU plays an active role in coordination, providing recommendations, guidelines on certain areas, opportunities to exchange good practices and financial support. With these tools, the EU helps in various areas covered by this report. The Member States have also individually made substantial efforts; by mid-2023, they had made use of EU funding of €17 billion. In addition, to reduce the uncertainty

caused by the war and to improve its prospects, Ukraine has been granted EU candidate status.

## Key findings

- Ukrainian refugees' integration into the labour market seems generally to have been successful, as their employment rate is high, especially compared with other refugee groups. The rate ranges from more than 10% to well above 40% in some countries (even reaching 50% or higher). This rate of employment seems likely to continue to increase.
- As in the case of other refugee groups, however, several barriers impede labour market integration (the language barrier, lack of information, lack of a social network). Lack of availability of accessible childcare, reflected in low enrolment rates (ranging between 42% and 71%), is another important obstacle, especially considering the predominance of women with children among Ukrainian refugees.
- Many innovative measures have been introduced to remedy these problems (e.g. lifting some restrictions that limit access to childcare; easing strict language requirements in certain occupations; simplifying and speeding up processes for the recognition of qualifications; tailor-made language courses).
- Labour shortages seem to be an important driver for employers to recruit Ukrainian refugees; initiatives by employer organisations and individual employers/companies help engage refugees. Public employment services also play an active role in reaching out to employers to provide jobs for refugees.
- While many are working, most Ukrainians have so far been unable to find stable employment: temporary or occasional jobs still prevail, and Ukrainian refugees are overqualified for most of these jobs. The income earned by many refugees is therefore unstable, leading to reliance on social assistance.
- Mainstream provision of benefits and services has not necessarily been adjusted to refugees' special needs; for example, readiness to accept a job as an eligibility condition for benefits may not be appropriate where refugees are not adequately prepared for labour market access. In addition, due to a lack of tailored measures, displaced people may lose entitlements to things that they still need even after getting a job (owing to an unstable income or housing situation).

- The Ukrainian refugee population has outstanding needs across the host Member States and Norway; these include integration into local communities (e.g. through children's extracurricular activities) and access to vital services (e.g. transport). These needs are met only to a certain extent by public services, and non-governmental organisations are responding actively to them. This, however, may not guarantee sufficient coverage and continuity.
- In most Member States, public services are experiencing long-term challenges, resulting in unstable housing arrangements (due partly to pre-existing housing problems), unavailability of childcare facilities, a lack of capacity in schools and difficulties in accessing healthcare.
- More systematic efforts are needed to coordinate general social provision and adapt support measures in response to the prevalent and emerging needs of Ukrainian refugees. There is scope for improved coordination across public services. Some Member States have begun establishing dedicated posts or agencies for this purpose, but so far these are limited in scope and capacity.
- Current initiatives are often short-term and scattered due to the unstable funding of the non-governmental organisations that launched them. International organisations have helped, especially in countries that have little experience of (and funding for) receiving refugees. The question is, however, how sustainable this is and to what extent governments (and local authorities) can continue this work and integrate it into their systems. In terms of funding, some replanning of EU funds, with careful consideration of the efficiency and effectiveness with which they are spent, may be needed.
- In assessing the appropriateness of general social protection measures for the purpose of effectively integrating the Ukrainian refugee population, their adequacy and links to housing measures must be considered so that the issue of unstable income is addressed (e.g. through minimum income schemes providing access to appropriate public services). The consistency and adequacy of income support should be monitored to identify any need to adjust and update support measures when a refugee's situation changes (for instance, because they are no longer entitled to certain types of support once they obtain employment).

## Policy pointers

- The unprecedented large inflow of Ukrainian refugees amplified countries' pre-existing problems with their public services. Many initiatives are planned to address these challenges, but they may not help Ukrainian refugees, who need specific and targeted support. Long-term and affordable housing solutions are required to provide stability, ensure continuity in the education of children and young people, facilitate refugees' integration into local school systems and local communities, and improve prospects for more stable employment among adults.



# Introduction

The aim of this research is to focus on the challenges that the EU Member States and Norway face when receiving and integrating Ukrainian refugees who have fled Russia's war against their country. Although the difficulties that refugees experience on arrival can have a strong impact on later integration opportunities, this research focuses mainly on integration. The report investigates five areas that are crucial for settling in: labour market access, housing, education, healthcare (focusing on mental health) and social assistance.

Many organisations have conducted research on similar topics, often focusing on just one area, for example labour market integration, healthcare or education. This report, however, aims to present the current integration challenges facing displaced people from Ukraine by linking the different areas of integration.

To date, labour market integration can be regarded as a success story. Undoubtedly, the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive (see the section 'Policy context' for further details) contributed to this success story. Under this directive, displaced people from Ukraine had immediate access to the labour market, without the waiting time and/or lengthy bureaucratic procedures that apply to other refugee groups. The Member States and Norway actively facilitated easy access to their labour markets, which also made a difference.

However, refugees face many barriers to employment (e.g. see Eurofound and FRA, 2023; MPI, 2023; OECD, 2023a). These include insufficient language skills, family responsibilities, a lack of information and difficulties navigating the public administration system in the host country. Added to this is the lack of jobs; those that are available are mainly temporary.

There appears to be less research on other integration areas, but some (sporadic) data are available (e.g. in the field of education). However, due to the many changes in these fields, the data must be continuously updated to reflect the state of play of integration. Accommodation appears to be a big problem, partly due to the significant pre-existing housing difficulties in the Member States (Eurofound, 2023a). Health status and mental health may be issues, highlighting the need for adequate mental health care provision, which is often lacking.

The research questions are as follows.

- Why can displaced people from Ukraine be regarded as a special group among immigrants and more specifically among refugees?
- How do they fare in the labour market?

- What measures have the Member States and Norway taken to integrate those displaced from Ukraine and what impacts can already be seen?
- How can Ukrainian refugees access the various public services they need for their integration and what are the main challenges?

This research involves several challenges. First, there is uncertainty about the ending of the war, and, related to that, intentions to return are also unpredictable and often change (e.g. the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) regularly conducts surveys that include questions about return intentions). Even where there are signs of more people wanting to stay in the host country (e.g. see the results of the survey by Brücker et al (2023) in Germany, conducted in early 2023), intentions have important implications for integration, since they strongly influence the motivation for, commitment to and investment in developing skills, getting the right qualifications and learning the relevant language(s).

In addition, the situations in the Member States and Norway are constantly changing; therefore, the report can provide only a snapshot of the state of play in spring/early summer 2023 (with some updates in autumn 2023).

In terms of statistical data, there are many limitations: hardly any EU-wide surveys have been carried out, although some conducted by EU agencies (the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the European Union Agency for Asylum) cover several countries. For instance, the FRA survey (FRA, 2023) covers the 10 host countries covering large numbers of people registered for temporary protection. Although administrative data on specific aspects are available in some countries, such data are not available in significant quantities in many of the largest host countries. Therefore, cross-country comparable data cannot be presented.

Moreover, practices in the Member States and Norway vary in important areas – for example, in health services – and experiences with accessing public services often depend on the country context.

Despite these challenges, the report aims to shed light on the differences across the Member States (plus Norway). In addition, by revealing the links between the individual integration areas (e.g. adequate housing as a prerequisite for stable employment), it draws together the lessons learned; these can inform the work of both policymakers and practitioners in facilitating the societal inclusion of displaced people from Ukraine.

## Policy context

The unprecedented scale of the inflow of refugees from Ukraine, which is the largest since the Second World War, poses new challenges, especially for the host countries most affected. Despite many Member States having recent relevant experience in the wake of the high inflow of asylum seekers (mainly from the Middle East in 2015), the current inflow is different in many respects. For its part, the EU responded quickly to the Ukraine refugee crisis: it activated its Temporary Protection Directive with the aim of granting immediate protection to Ukrainian refugees.

Both the EU and the Member States have been making efforts to facilitate the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive. The EU has played an active role not only in setting up the legal framework (the Temporary Protection Directive and its activation and extension) but also in coordinating, providing recommendations, offering guidelines for certain areas, creating opportunities for sharing good practices and offering financial support. An important example of coordination is the ‘Ukraine’ solidarity platform, which the EU set up immediately after the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive. One of its subgroups, the Temporary Protection Registration Platform, which covers 25 Member States (European Commission, 2023a), is a crucial tool for data collection: it detects double registrations within a Member State or across the EU. This is needed because of the decision to waive Article 11 of the Temporary Protection Directive. As a result of the decision, the formalities involved in Ukrainian refugees with temporary protection moving across EU countries were reduced (European Commission, 2023a, p. 21).

In April 2022, to facilitate the recognition of qualifications, which is an important prerequisite for labour market integration, the Commission issued recommendations on the recognition of qualifications for people fleeing Russia’s invasion of Ukraine; some months later (in June 2022), it published guidelines on the fast-track recognition of Ukrainian academic qualifications.

The share of schoolchildren enrolled in education in the host country varies not only due to different contexts in the individual Member States but also because of differing practices. To adopt a more efficient approach to enrolment, the EU encourages exchanges of good practice in the area of education, for example through the European School Education Platform.

A comprehensive package of financial support has been set up and used. According to the Commission: ‘Through the CARE [Cohesion’s Action for Refugees in Europe] and FAST-CARE [Flexible Assistance to Territories] initiatives, the EU and Member States have so far used more than €1 billion from the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Rural Development Fund (ERDF), and under REACT-EU [Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe] to finance programmes, which help people integrate into the EU’ (European Commission, 2023b). The Member States have also individually made substantial efforts and had made use of EU funding of €17 billion by mid-2023 (EPRS, 2023).

In summary, the EU has done its best to help the Member States in all those areas that are crucial to helping Ukrainian refugees settle in to their host countries. This report links the EU-level initiatives to measures that the Member States have introduced or plan to introduce in these areas and identifies similar measures in Norway.

## Methodology and structure of the report

The report uses mainly qualitative information from the Member States and Norway. It is based on contributions from the Network of Eurofound Correspondents (NEC) in the Member States and Norway. The correspondents replied to a questionnaire designed by Eurofound. To provide a comparative overview, some data from Eurostat are also used. Where relevant, available survey results are presented to allow comparisons of several countries (with some limitations). In addition, national survey results are also noted when country examples are discussed (see Annex 1, Table A1, for the codes assigned to the national surveys).

The structure of this report reflects the key areas of social integration and access to the public services that assist refugees with integration. Chapter 1 provides a brief overview, giving an insight into the specificity of this group, by outlining basic data about its composition, public attitudes and changes in them, and the future intentions of the refugees. Chapter 2 focuses on issues around labour market integration: the current situation, the facilitating measures introduced and challenges encountered, with a special focus on the experiences of the refugees themselves. Chapter 3 is split into four sections; these focus on key integration areas concerning housing, childcare and education, healthcare (with a special focus on mental health status and services) and social assistance. Chapter 4 presents the overall conclusions.

# 1 Ukrainian refugees – A special case

According to the latest Eurostat data (September 2023), the number of beneficiaries of temporary protection stood at almost 4.2 million in the EU (4,186,165) and more than 50,000 in Norway. The concentration is high, as the three countries receiving the most refugees (**Germany, Poland and Czechia**) host more than 60% of the Ukrainian refugees in the EU: their number exceeds 1 million in Germany, is close to 1 million in Poland and is almost 358,000 in Czechia. Since December 2022, the number has decreased in Czechia only (from 432,000). During the same period, the number of beneficiaries has increased in Germany (from close to 968,000 to 1,194,900). The inflow to the EU was so high that, by September 2023, the number of beneficiaries of temporary protection reached 9.3 per thousand of the whole EU population, and in several countries (Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) it even exceeded 22 per thousand. At the end of September 2023, total numbers of temporary protection beneficiaries per thousand people were the following: Czechia (33.1), Estonia (26.2), Poland (26.1), Bulgaria (25.8), Lithuania (25.5) and Latvia (23.4) (see Figure A1 in Annex 2).

The ratio is lower in Finland, Germany, Ireland and Norway: between 10 and 20 per thousand (see Annex 2).

## Social composition of the EU's Ukrainian refugee population

The composition of the Ukrainian refugee population differs from that of most other refugee groups. As shown by data from sources such as Eurostat, the NEC and UNHCR, it is mainly women and children who have fled from the war (around 75%), and most of the adults are highly educated. Close to 30% of the displaced Ukrainians are children (Eurostat [migr\_asytpfm]; see Figure A2 in Annex 2). Out of them, 69% are under 13 years of age (European Commission, 2023c). Most of the working age adults are women: their share in the individual countries (EU27 and Norway) ranges between 61% (**Sweden**) and 84% (**Italy**) (see Table 1). Although men have accounted for the bulk of immigrants in most

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries until recently, this is not true in the EU Member States, where the share of women has reached or exceeded 50% in 17 countries (see Table 1). In the EU, before the arrival of large numbers of Ukrainian refugees, the share of women in the foreign-born population had remained stable over the previous 14 years, although this share dropped in two-thirds of Member States, largely due to large inflows of refugees who were mainly men, especially in 2015–2016 (OECD, 2023b). Now, with the arrival of Ukrainian refugees, this may change, especially in the countries receiving the largest numbers of refugees: in **Czechia**, the share of women will most likely become larger than that of men, and the same is likely in **Germany**, whereas in **Poland** the existing female majority will get even bigger.

As can be seen from Table 1, within the working age population (18–64 years) of Ukrainian refugees, women's larger share is even more pronounced (far exceeding 60% in almost all cases). This is understandable, since working age men are not allowed to leave Ukraine due to the military service requirement. In some countries, the share of working age women is especially high: for example, in **Italy**, women account for the overwhelming majority of working age Ukrainian refugees (84%). The national contribution confirmed this high percentage.

There are only two countries where the share of Ukrainian women among all working age refugees is lower than that of Ukrainian women among all Ukrainian refugees: **France** and **Sweden**. In France, children are not registered among Temporary Protection Directive beneficiaries, but older women (65+) constitute more than half of the beneficiaries of that age group (Eurostat [migr\_asytpsm]). In Sweden, the number of Ukrainians who had been staying in the country before the war broke out was sizeable, roughly one-third of all beneficiaries (12,000 versus 36,000; Statistikmyndigheten, 2022). The composition of this group, however, may have been different from that of those who arrived after the war broke out.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Prior to the war, work seemed to be an important reason for Ukrainians to emigrate to Sweden: the share of working age people (16–74) was higher among Ukrainian immigrants (89%) than other foreign-born people in the country (85%). The share of men who had residence permits for work was much higher than that of women: 74% versus 26%. In addition, the gender gap between Ukrainian men and women living in Sweden had narrowed since 2011 (before which 70% were women) so that, by 31 December 2021, 62% were women and 38% men.

**Table 1: Women's share of the foreign-born population in 2021, among all Ukrainian refugees in 2022 and among working age Ukrainian refugees in May 2023 (%)**

Country	Women's share of the foreign-born population in 2021	Women's share among all Ukrainian refugees in 2022	Women's share among working age Ukrainian refugees (18–64 years) in May 2023
Austria	51	68	74
Belgium	51	61	66
Bulgaria	50	68	76
Croatia	51	67	76
Cyprus	55	69	76
Czechia	42	63	64
Denmark	50	66	73
Estonia	56	66	69
Finland	48	62	65
France	52	74 <sup>a</sup>	71 <sup>a</sup>
Germany	49	64	68
Greece	52	69	76
Hungary	49	66	n.a.
Ireland	50	62 <sup>b</sup>	n.a.
Italy	53	72	84
Latvia	60	64	70
Lithuania	44	68	78
Luxembourg	49	66	70
Malta	42	72	79
Netherlands	52	62	67
Norway	48	63	66
Poland	51	67	77
Portugal	52	59	64
Romania	46	60	63
Slovakia	48	67	75
Slovenia	41	67	74
Spain	52	63	68
Sweden	50	62	61

<sup>a</sup> In France, children are not counted among the beneficiaries of the Temporary Protection Directive. <sup>b</sup> No data for Ireland were available from Eurostat, so this figure is from the Central Statistics Office, Ireland and is correct as of March 2023. n.a., not available.

Source: Eurostat, Beneficiaries of temporary protection at the end of the month by citizenship, age and sex – monthly data [migr\_asytpsm]

Previous research (e.g. Eurofound and FRA, 2023; FRA, 2023; UNHCR, 2023a) pointed out that Ukrainian refugees have high levels of education. The country examples of Eurofound's current investigation confirm this: for example, in **Croatia**, 70% of Ukrainian refugees are highly educated; and in **Poland**, 61% of Ukrainian

refugees have a university degree. Even where exact data are not available, the latest estimates from UNHCR (e.g. from intention surveys) show that around 70% of refugees from Ukraine have a university or other tertiary degree (UNHCR, 2023a).

## Public attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees

The emotional resonance of the conflict led to a remarkable surge in support for Ukrainian refugees across the EU. Insights from the Flash Eurobarometer survey 506 (European Commission, 2022), conducted in the latter half of March 2022, reveal strong support for welcoming people fleeing the war to the EU, with an EU-wide average of 88% approval. Countries demonstrating particularly high levels of support include Sweden (91%), Poland (92%), Finland (95%) and Portugal (97%). Even though approval was not as high in some countries (e.g. Bulgaria (75%) and Czechia and Slovakia (both 77%)), a clear majority still supported welcoming the refugees.

Although signs of some ‘solidarity fatigue’ had emerged by August 2023, a large majority (76%) still agreed with welcoming Ukrainian refugees to the EU, according to the Eurobarometer survey on EU challenges and priorities in 2023 (European Union, undated). A Joint Research Centre study on shaping solidarity also confirmed that, over a year after the war began, support for displaced people was still high (De Leur et al, 2023).

Eurofound’s own online survey, originally introduced in April 2020 to monitor people’s quality of life during the pandemic, is conducted periodically. The last two rounds of the e-survey (spring 2022 and 2023; Eurofound, 2023b) asked about the war in Ukraine, which makes it possible to shed some light on people’s views, specifically those on the government’s support for Ukrainian refugees. In spring 2022, 19.5% of respondents thought that housing and other assistance was ‘too much’, but by spring 2023 the share of respondents answering this had increased by more than 3 percentage points to 22.7%. The differences between the two rounds were significant at a 95% confidence level. A slight decrease in the share who think the assistance is ‘too small’ and a very small decrease in those who viewed the support as just the ‘right amount’ were also observed.

The role of the diaspora in response to the arrival of the refugees proved important both in the initial help provided upon arrival and in the later settlement process. Its major contribution was crucial to various areas where urgent action was needed (such as food and clothes provision, help with information, translation, organisation of language courses, support with housing, education). Reports of the diaspora’s help came from some of the key receiving countries, such as Estonia and Poland (OECD, 2023b).

The important role the diaspora played is also linked to the number of Ukrainians in these countries before the war; Ukrainians are one of the largest groups of third-country nationals across the EU. The number of

Ukrainians in the EU rose sharply in 2014 after the illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. By the end of 2021, over 1.57 million Ukrainians were legally residing in the EU27 (Eurostat, undated).

Among other things, the general welcoming attitude is illustrated by the fact that even right-wing parties (such as Vlaams Belang in **Belgium**), which have critical views of refugees, extended temporary support to Ukrainian refugees, drawing a distinction between them and refugees from other parts of the world. An online survey, entitled *De Stemming*, carried out in the Flemish region between 14 and 31 March 2022 (with 2,064 respondents) further highlights this differential attitude, revealing that 59% of Flemish respondents held a positive stance on Ukrainian refugees. This represented a stark contrast to the considerably lower levels of support for refugees from Afghanistan and Syria (29%). A similarly strong contrast between attitudes towards Ukrainian displaced people under temporary protection and other refugee groups was reported in other countries, for example **Estonia**, even though the number of refugees of other nationalities is very small there. This difference in attitude may have been upsetting for the other refugee groups. The potential for growing tension and the ethical dilemmas the support organisation may face (especially vis-à-vis the refugees who arrived in 2015/2016) is an emerging topic for research; see, for example, Besic et al (2023).

## Future intentions of refugees

As the war becomes protracted, the intentions of refugees to return to Ukraine seem to be changing. For example, in **Germany**, while about 39% had wanted to stay longer in summer 2022, within half a year, by early 2023, this share had increased by 5 percentage points to 44%.

According to the fourth round of UNHCR’s intentions survey, carried out between April 2023 and May 2023 (at the same time as Eurofound was gathering its information), a higher share of refugees staying in Ukraine’s neighbouring countries report having hopes to return than those living in other European countries (71% versus 57%) (UNHCR, 2023b, p. 4). Therefore, the ‘waiting dilemma’ (the phenomenon whereby people who have fled tend to remain in a state of limbo due to feeling conflicted about integrating into their host countries as they yearn to return home), which may affect their overall integration, appears to be stronger in the neighbouring countries (European Commission, 2023c).

In other countries, such as **Finland**, the survey shows that up to 27% of respondents do not intend to return to Ukraine. One-third have decided to return to Ukraine after the end of the war. The remaining 40% of Ukrainians still have open plans, influenced by

employment in Finland and the development of the war in Ukraine. In **Ireland**, 41% of respondents to a survey conducted by Ukrainian Action in Ireland said that they planned to stay in Ireland permanently, 24% planned to go back to Ukraine as soon as circumstances allowed and 32% said that they didn't know (IE2).

At the same time, there have been some fluctuations already in the number of Ukrainian refugees in host countries, since many refugees either visited family in Ukraine or returned to Ukraine. Although 'UNHCR's intentions survey shows an increasing trend of refugees visiting Ukraine since settling in host countries, rising

from 17 to 39 per cent over four survey rounds', evidence shows that 'the number of people leaving Ukraine generally exceeds those returning' (Unicef Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, 2023). This overall trend is confirmed by data from **Germany**, where, according to the figures given by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, 256,000 Ukrainian refugees left Germany between the outbreak of the war and mid-August 2023 (they either went to another country or returned to Ukraine; see Mediendienst Integration, undated). Despite the rather high level of outflow, the number of new arrivals exceeded the outflow level during this period in Germany.

## 2 Integration efforts in the labour market

### Current situation, key barriers and their impact

The Temporary Protection Directive provided Ukrainians with immediate access to the labour market; this contributed to the high employment levels of displaced people from Ukraine not long after their arrival (within a year or just slightly over one year). This is especially true if it is compared with the employment levels of other refugee groups. In addition, as evidence shows, the employment of displaced people from Ukraine is continuously increasing. This is shown by some surveys covering several countries (e.g. UNHCR surveys) and also became clear from data provided by the European Network of Public Employment Services (PES Network). According to the network, by April 2022, about 1,523,000 displaced people were in employment. This number covers only the 19 countries that responded to the network's questionnaire, which included the countries receiving the most refugees: **Czechia, Germany and Poland** (European Commission, 2023d). According to a survey conducted in 2023, the number of people in employment was particularly high in Poland: more than 60% of the respondents (Kaczmarczyk, 2023).

This chapter will provide an overview of the key barriers to labour market integration. These key barriers, which have already been identified by multiple sources, are lack of knowledge of the host country language, lengthy procedures for the recognition of qualifications and

potential skills/job mismatches, lack of job opportunities/information and lack of childcare (the last of which is detailed in Chapter 3).

### Level of employment

Nonetheless, in some countries the employment rate of displaced people is remarkably high, and, even in those where it is less so, the employment level is higher than in cases of other refugee groups more than one year after their arrival. For example, in **Germany**, two years after the arrival of asylum seekers in 2015/2016, their employment rate stood at 13% in 2018 (Deloitte, 2022). This is due not only to the fact that most countries gave Ukrainian refugees immediate access to their labour markets (in line with the provisions of the Temporary Protection Directive) but also to the high education levels of Ukrainian refugees (see Chapter 1) and, in several cases, to the similarity of the host language to Russian/Ukrainian (Czechia, Poland, Slovakia) or the fact that there is a sizeable Russian-speaking population (Baltic states). Differences between countries in this regard may explain why the approximate employment rates vary by country to a large extent, as shown in Table 2. It is not always possible to make direct cross-country comparisons due to the data being from different points in time, varying sources (such as administrative data and survey data) or the inclusion of different age groups (see Table 2 notes); in many cases, no precise data are available. However, with regard to their orders of magnitude, the figures can still be regarded as indicative.

**Table 2: Estimated employment rates of Ukrainian refugees under temporary protection in selected Member States**

Estimated employment rates				
Around 10%	Around 15%	Around 20%	Around 30%	Close to 40% or above
Italy <sup>a</sup>	Finland, France, <sup>b</sup> Romania <sup>c</sup>	Austria, <sup>d</sup> Germany, Luxembourg, Portugal <sup>e</sup>	Slovakia <sup>b,f</sup>	Czechia, <sup>g</sup> Denmark, <sup>h</sup> Estonia, Ireland, <sup>i</sup> Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, <sup>j</sup> Sweden

<sup>a</sup> As of November–December 2022; result of a survey (IT1). <sup>b</sup> Share in the adult population. <sup>c</sup> Data from Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (data from another source are also available). <sup>d</sup> As of December 2022; working age population: 20–59 years old. <sup>e</sup> It stands at 26%, but those who work remotely in Ukraine may also be included. <sup>f</sup> Includes those who were employed 'for a certain period of time during the first year of the war'. <sup>g</sup> Includes those who are registered with public employment services. <sup>h</sup> Share of those who are 'available for work' (above 60%). <sup>i</sup> As of June 2023; working age population: 20–64 years old. <sup>j</sup> The estimated rate reported in the national contribution is well in excess of 40%, but that may include those Ukrainians who worked in the country before the war, and that number was high. However, other sources (e.g. the FRA survey) showed that the respondents' paid work rates were above 40%: 42% for women and 54% for men.

**Note:** Most data refer to January, February or March 2023, unless otherwise indicated.

**Source:** National contributions

In most countries where estimates are available, the employment rate is around or exceeds 20%; this is true for the three countries receiving the most refugees: **Germany, Poland** and **Czechia**. In terms of cross-country differences, there are additional reasons besides those already indicated. For example, the strong influence of the diaspora seems visible, especially in **Poland**, where, even before the war, many Ukrainian people had been living. Much anecdotal and other evidence shows that the diaspora helps refugees not only on arrival but also later, when they are settling in (other factors, such as labour shortages, also help to explain the high employment rate in the country).

The crucial role of country context can also be demonstrated in other countries. For example, the prevalence of part-time jobs in the **Netherlands** may explain why the country features in the highest employment category, with an employment rate close to 50% among Ukrainian refugees. In the Netherlands, most refugees work part-time: 58% work less than 25 hours a week. This is a specific feature that may have facilitated fast entry to the labour market, and may not be characteristic of the market in other countries.

Despite the relatively high employment level, there are several important barriers to employment that Ukrainian refugees face when seeking a job. These are covered in the following section.

## Key barriers

There has been some research focusing on the main barriers to the labour market inclusion of Ukrainian refugees (e.g. Duszczuk et al, 2023; Eurofound and FRA, 2023; FRA, 2023; MPI, 2023; OECD, 2023a). The existing research emphasises a lack of knowledge of the host country language, the lengthy process for the recognition of qualifications, skills/job mismatch and care responsibilities. Care responsibilities are particularly important in the case of Ukrainian refugees, considering their composition: the predominance of women (see Chapter 1), who are potentially accompanied by children and elderly people who may also need care.

Lack of language knowledge was the barrier indicated by the highest share of respondents to a FRA survey (Eurofound and FRA, 2023; FRA, 2023); among those who were looking for a job, the second most prominently reported barrier was that they could find only irregular work.

Duszczuk et al (2023) highlighted challenges for labour market integration in a broader context: they indicated the relevance of the functioning of the healthcare system and the housing situation of Ukrainians who live in Poland. These issues will be analysed in more detail in Chapter 3.

## Language as a barrier

This barrier seems to feature prominently in all countries. For example, in **France** this is identified as the main difficulty in accessing the labour market. Out of the 85,000 adults who arrived in 2022, only 11,000 had taken French courses by the end of November 2022. This also adversely affects highly qualified refugees, who experience social downgrading because of a lack of French knowledge. Similarly, in **Romania**, this was the barrier mentioned most frequently, with 88% of respondents indicating this as an issue (RO5). Likewise, in **Sweden**, language was reported as the main barrier by 85% of respondents who were seeking jobs (SE2).

In addition to countries where English is the host language (Ireland and Malta), knowledge of English could help in other countries. For example, in **Finland**, in certain professions, English knowledge could help refugees continue the same occupation they had in Ukraine. This is the case, for example, for information technology (IT) professionals and other workers for which a knowledge of Finnish is not necessarily a requirement. In **Luxembourg**, English speakers can be integrated more easily, as can those who can speak either French or German. In **Greece**, a lack of English knowledge, which is observed among older people in particular, is identified as one of the biggest obstacles to accessing the labour market.

Likewise, in **Malta**, older cohorts were mentioned as groups for whom a lack of English knowledge seems particularly problematic: even if they have experience and the necessary skills and are well educated, they cannot find a job. At the same time, it can be assumed that knowledge of English (being particularly prevalent among younger people) may have played some role in country selection among refugees. Despite this, even in **Ireland**, where proficiency in English is needed, a survey showed that more than one-quarter of those who did not work and were not looking for a job reported this being due to their 'poor English' (IE1).

For highly skilled Ukrainian refugees, a lack of host country language skills was regarded as especially problematic, not only in **France** and **Malta** but also in other countries, including **Finland, Lithuania** and **Slovenia**. In **Slovenia**, higher-level knowledge is required (C1 level), especially in many regulated professions. This is less of an issue in low-skilled jobs, as Slovenian and Ukrainian are both Slavic languages; Ukrainian refugees can quickly achieve the required language level, which is often lower due to the pressing labour shortages in these fields. In **Finland**, a lower level (B1) is set as a general requirement (not only for highly skilled workers). However, because this must be achieved within a certain time frame, it seems to be hard to achieve even for highly skilled refugees. In **Croatia**, it is reported that a level of knowledge equivalent to B2 level would be needed to access the



labour market. In **Lithuania**, one of the prerequisites for reaching a highly qualified position is good knowledge of Lithuanian. This is true even though the host country language requirement has temporarily been waived for Ukrainian professionals in some sectors, ‘leaving it to the discretion of employers to decide whether a role can be performed without speaking Lithuanian’ (MPI, 2023, p. 15). Similarly, in **Latvia**, a law was adopted to enable Ukrainians to be employed without knowledge of Latvian, provided this does not interfere with completing their duties at work. In **Poland**, inadequate skills (structural mismatches) are also mentioned in the context of lack of familiarity with Polish, emphasising that the combination of the two leads to Ukrainian refugees having to occupy jobs for which they are overqualified. Despite high skills levels, over 50% of refugees do simple jobs (Deloitte, 2022). Similarly, in **Estonia**, even though Ukrainian refugees are usually highly educated, most of them are employed in positions that require low or no qualifications: 62% of respondents to the survey (EE1) said that their current job did not correspond to the educational qualifications they had. The barriers are likely to be language skills and a lack of knowledge of the Estonian context.

### Recognition of qualifications and skills/job mismatch

Although the EU is active in facilitating a smoother process for the recognition of qualifications in the Member States, there are still many challenges, as reported in the national contributions. Many countries reported that recognition of qualifications is an issue, especially in regulated professions. For example, in **Croatia**, none of the several dozens of doctors who arrived in the country have managed to get their diploma recognised (Večernji list, 2023); anecdotal evidence indicates that some are working as waiters and waitresses. The qualification recognition process has been accelerated, but, even with this, refugees must wait about two years. The costs of the procedure, which include payments for court interpreters and translations of the necessary documentation, contribute to the challenges. Similarly, in **Ireland**, recognition of qualifications in the field of medicine proved to be a particular barrier. For medical professionals, an additional difficulty is that the language classes that are currently organised are inadequate; courses dedicated to medical professionals are needed (Empower, undated). In **Slovenia**, additional professional exams must be completed, mainly (but not exclusively) in regulated professions. Specific knowledge is needed in certain professions; for example, accountants and lawyers must acquire knowledge of the Slovenian legal system (another reason why language proficiency is so important). In **France**, recognition of diplomas is identified as the second most important barrier after knowledge of language due to the difficulties evaluating diplomas in the French labour market. This mainly

affects the relatively high proportion of refugees (20%, mostly women) who have a five-year degree, according to Paul Bazin, Deputy Director-General of Pôle emploi (the public employment service (PES) in France) (France bleu, 2023).

The PES are active in helping with the recognition of qualifications: in **France**, the PES tries to help refugees complete additional modules so that their Ukrainian diploma can be recognised (France bleu, 2023). In **Slovenia**, the PES covers the expenses. In **Croatia**, a special team was set up to help with any difficulties (Lider, 2023). In **Slovenia**, the Ukrainian ENIC-NARIC centre (national academic recognition information centre) also helps by providing documents when refugees do not have their certificates with them. However, the national contribution from **Spain** reports that Ukraine does not participate in the European Qualifications Framework, making it more difficult to understand and validate the skills and competencies of refugees. Nonetheless, at EU level, some efforts have been made to remedy this situation (see details in the section ‘Measures addressing the difficulties of qualification recognition’). A further challenge is that in several host countries the qualification requirement for certain professions is substantially different from those in Ukraine. For example, in **Estonia**, qualifying as a nurse requires the completion of a 3.5-year programme that grants a medical higher education diploma, whereas in Ukraine nurses obtain a vocational degree. Within this context, it is understandable that, in **Romania**, approximately 19% of respondents to a survey (RO3) felt that they were underqualified for the available positions. It was reported that companies were seeking more qualified workers or people with skills that Ukrainian refugees do not have.

In **Finland**, problems with the recognition of qualifications slow down the integration of refugees. Therefore, there is a concern that qualified Ukrainians will be locked out of their professions due to both the language proficiency requirements and the need to get their non-EU qualifications recognised (F11). For professional jobs such as teachers, doctors and nurses, processes of validating qualifications and Finnish language knowledge are a barrier. One study (F11) recommends that the Finnish state considers creating fast-track programmes tailored specifically to healthcare professionals from Ukraine; they are in high demand due to the vast shortage in that professional group. **Finland** has a higher unemployment rate than the other Nordic countries, and has problems with the matching of skills and labour market needs among the existing population. Ukrainians have been presented as part of the solution to the labour shortage in the public sector, such as in healthcare services (Helsingin Sanomat, 2022), and some initiatives for the fast-track education of immigrants have been established, but greater efforts are still needed (Alho et al, 2022).

In **Finland**, problems with the recognition of qualifications and diplomas unintentionally contribute to mistreatment and exploitation. For example, Ukrainians have been taken advantage of in construction work (Aamulehti, 2023).

Skills mismatch is also a serious problem elsewhere, and, understandably, is often mentioned in the context of difficulties with the recognition of qualifications and diplomas. In **Estonia**, access to the labour market was studied in a survey conducted in autumn 2022 (EE1). As discussed in the section ‘Language as a barrier’, the average Ukrainian refugee in Estonia is highly educated but is employed in a position that requires low or no qualifications. Even in **Latvia**, where knowledge of the host language as a requirement is not always as strict, Ukrainian refugees tend not to work in the same jobs as in their home countries due to a lack of knowledge of the language. Similarly, in **Poland**, structural mismatches, combined with a lack of familiarity with the language, lead to refugees undertaking work for which they are overqualified: despite their generally high qualification levels, 50% perform simple jobs (Deloitte, 2022). In **Romania**, 16% of respondents to a survey reported being overqualified for the available job opportunities (RO5).

### Lack of job opportunities and insufficient information

Despite severe labour shortages in certain sectors and occupations in many countries, a lack of job opportunities is reported as a barrier among Ukrainian refugees (of course, this may also depend on the labour market situation in the given country). For example, in **Bulgaria**, this obstacle was reported as the main barrier by 29.6% of respondents (BG1). Although this barrier did not seem to be so severe in **France** (it was the fourth most common barrier), difficulty in finding work was reported, within a regional context, as being caused by a number of factors, including distance from the city, a lack of means of transport and poor language skills (La Nouvelle République, 2022). In **Romania**, in addition to a lack of knowledge about job opportunities (68%), the absence of available, appropriate jobs was indicated by about 62% of respondents as a barrier to employment. In addition, a high proportion (54%) reported uncertainty regarding the process of applying for jobs

(RO5). The respondents did not understand the application procedures, the requirements and the cultural norms related to job applications. Lack of information concerning employment services was indicated in **Finland**; this difficulty was raised by both Ukrainians and Finnish professionals, who added that better information provision could potentially improve employment. Lack of knowledge about job opportunities and other related information is obviously closely related to the fact that many Ukrainians also lack social networks in their host countries. Those could also enhance their chances of employment (Alho et al, 2022).

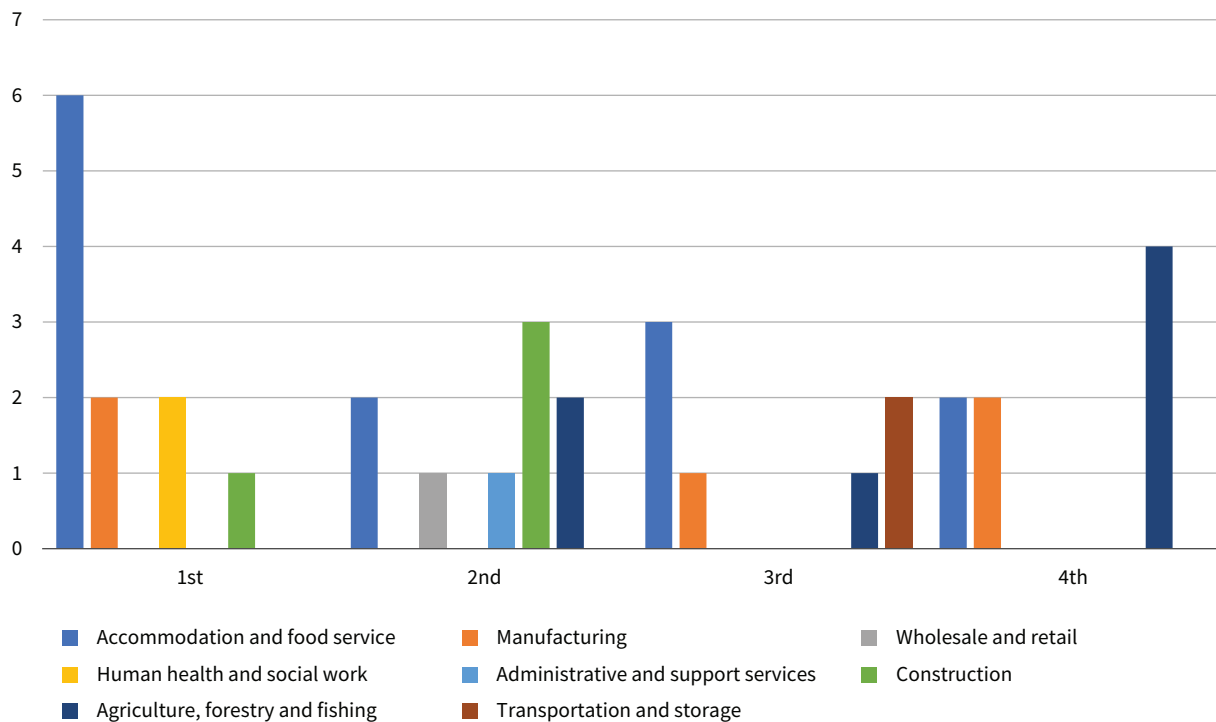
### Risks of low job quality and abusive practices

Many of the barriers discussed may not only have significant impacts on the labour market position of Ukrainian refugees in general but also be linked to exposing refugees to risks of low job quality and/or, in some cases, to abusive practices. Malpractice may not be widespread in general: for example, according to the FRA survey, 59% of respondents have not experienced any challenging working conditions or abusive practices at work (FRA, 2023). Various data also show that discrimination is not prevalent either. For example, in **Finland**, only 11% of respondents to a survey (FI1) mentioned discrimination in response to an open-ended question. Nonetheless, there could be a group of people facing multiple disadvantages in the labour market, especially in certain sectors/occupations.

Except for the findings of the FRA survey, comparable data on exposure to challenging working conditions are rare.<sup>2</sup> Such exposure, however, could be linked to certain sectors/occupations, where, according to previous research, challenging working conditions are prevalent; see, for example, the findings of Eurofound’s Working Conditions Survey of 2021, which, with its job quality index, pointed out that extremely strained and highly strained jobs (jobs in which the demands faced by workers are much greater than the resources at their disposal) can mainly be found in health, followed by transport, agriculture, and commerce and hospitality (Eurofound, 2022a). The FRA survey asked respondents not only about their experiences of these conditions but also about the sector in which at least one of the challenging working conditions listed was experienced.

<sup>2</sup> The respondents to the FRA survey could select from the following list of challenging working conditions: underpaid or not paid for work; work without a contract/a contract not covering all working hours; very long working hours; could not take breaks or rest time; no access to drinking water, food or a toilet; not given protective gear when needed; could not communicate freely with others; and threats or violence by the employer.

**Figure 1: Sectoral pattern: Number of countries ranking each sector as among the top four for employing Ukrainian refugees (selected countries)**



**Notes:** Since the sectors may not cover the same categories across the countries, the comparison of rankings is indicative only. See also Table A2 in Annex 3, which specifies the ranking of the different sectors in selected countries. The selected countries are: Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.

**Sources:** National contributions, except for Sweden (IOM, 2023)

### Sectoral/occupational distribution and challenging working conditions

Most Ukrainian refugees work in sectors and/or occupations that typically employ migrant workers. For example, as can be seen in Figure 1, many Ukrainians work in the accommodation and food service sector.<sup>3</sup> This was explicitly indicated in 11 countries where the sector ranked among the top three sectors in which Ukrainian refugees are employed: Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden (see Table A2 in Annex 3). In six countries for which information is available, this is the sector where most Ukrainian refugees are employed (Figure 1). These countries are **Croatia, Cyprus,<sup>4</sup> Ireland, Latvia, Portugal and Spain.**

As can be seen from the figure, unlike accommodation and food service, manufacturing and human health and social work top the list in only two countries each. Construction is ranked second in three countries.

In **Ireland**, more than one-third of Ukrainian refugees work in accommodation and food service, a sector where staff are usually employed part-time. On the one hand, many Ukrainians would like to work part-time to meet family responsibilities, and this can be regarded as a positive development. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether they are able to make ends meet with the income from part-time and/or seasonal jobs.

According to the survey conducted by FRA, 16% of women indicated that they had experienced at least one challenging working condition in the tourism/hospitality sector (see the list of criteria that respondents could select from in footnote 2). The survey also showed that a large percentage of both women and men working in manufacturing reported such problems in the workplace, with shares as high as 26% and 22%, respectively. In both the tourism/hospitality sector and the manufacturing sector, 'having to work long hours' was the challenging working condition selected by most people.

<sup>3</sup> In certain countries, the Nomenclature of Economic Activities (NACE) categories do not exactly match the categories given by respondents, although there is certainly considerable overlap.

<sup>4</sup> This is qualitative information, based on an interview carried out by the national correspondent with a representative of the Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation.

Again, according to the FRA survey, domestic/care work was the third sector among those specified that was selected by the respondents who indicated having experienced at least one challenging working condition. Most people complained about being underpaid or not paid (one-third) and having to work long hours (more than one-fifth). Although domestic/care work is not specified among the NACE categories, there could be quite a large overlap, especially in the human health and social work activities sector (NACE code Q). There are two countries where a high percentage of Ukrainians work in this sector: **Luxembourg** (23%) and **Norway** (16%). In **Luxembourg**, this sector has the highest proportion of Ukrainian workers (followed by accommodation and food service, with a share of 17.3%). In **Norway**, the high share may be attributed to the fact that the health and social care sector is a broad category that includes hospitals, medical and dental services, care services (such as home care and nursing home care) and kindergartens.

Although construction is a sector where women's share is low, this sector was mentioned explicitly in even more countries than manufacturing (Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Romania, Spain). In terms of the employment of Ukrainians, the percentage is especially high in **Lithuania** (22.3%) (where it is ranked second after manufacturing), but it is also quite high in **Spain** (9%), **Denmark** (6%), **Luxembourg** (5.9%), **Ireland** (5.1%) and **Latvia** (4.9%). In the FRA survey, challenging working conditions were reported in this sector by 26% of men.

Transport/logistics is a sector where 16% of men indicated experiencing challenging working conditions in the FRA survey. In general, however, this sector seems less important than the others, although in **Lithuania**, for example, with a share of 19.2%, this is the third most important sector in terms of employment for Ukrainians. Nevertheless, its share is below 10% in all the other countries; examples include 4.5% in **Denmark**, 3% in **Spain**, 2.6% in **Latvia** (rail transport only), 1.8% in **Luxembourg** and 1.4% in **Ireland**.

The other reason why these data should be interpreted with caution is that in the case of **Poland**, for example, it is not possible to distinguish between those Ukrainians who were already in the country before the war and those who arrived after it began. In fact, their sectoral distribution may be different. Further research could explore the reasons why administrative and support service activities rank second, after manufacturing, in Poland.<sup>5</sup> In **Sweden**, information and communications technology is the sector ranked second for employing Ukrainians.

In countries where occupations are specified, it is often emphasised that Ukrainians are employed in low-skilled jobs; for example, in **Latvia** they tend to be engaged in jobs such as domestic worker, cleaner, shop assistant, cook, construction worker and truck driver. Here, 1.6% of Ukrainians work in the general cleaning of buildings. In **Malta**, the few Ukrainian refugees who have found a job are employed in casual work, for example as babysitters, nannies or cleaners. In **Italy**, one-third of Ukrainians are employed in domestic services (caring/cleaning). Such high shares are not reported in other countries. In **Luxembourg**, for example, 5.6% of Ukrainians are housekeepers and home care workers, and 1.6% are employed in childcare, for example, as childminders, assistants or babysitters. In **Spain**, 5% are involved in domestic activities, 1% work in social services, 1% work in health services and 1% work in nursing homes. In **Poland**, one of the surveys, carried out mainly in the second half of 2022, revealed that, while Ukrainian migrants who arrived before the war generally worked in permanent jobs (83%), only slightly more than one-third (38%) of refugees had been able to secure permanent employment. They mostly had relatively poorly paid jobs, very often working on a part-time basis. Their labour market status, however, clearly improved between May and November 2022: the share of respondents who were working more than doubled during this period (from 28% to 65%), whereas the proportions of both unemployed people and those who were inactive halved (NBP, 2023).

In **Sweden**, cleaners, builders, IT specialists, teachers, carpenters, waiters and waitresses, cooks and domestic workers are among the top occupations. Here, in the construction, cleaning and agriculture sectors (the last of which relies heavily on seasonal workers), special attention has been paid to the criminal exploitation of Ukrainian workers. The issue of poor conditions, especially in construction, was prevalent before the war and affects more nationalities than just Ukrainians; problems identified include a lack of protective equipment, long working hours and low wages. With the increased number of Ukrainian refugees, however, the situation has become worse.

### Abusive practices – Issues and examples

Malpractice by employment services was also reported in some countries. For example, in **Finland**, fake employment service systems try to exploit Ukrainians' willingness to work (Yle Uutiset, 2022a).

<sup>5</sup> Examining the individual sectors by gender in Poland reveals that the share of women is high across all areas in accommodation and food service (close to 86%). Although this may be related to the types of jobs there, this may hint at the heavy presence of newly arrived Ukrainians. In the human health and social work sector, women's share reaches almost 94%.

## Box 1: Abusive practices – Swedish example of typical issues

In an article in a major daily newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*, the following issues were identified in several construction companies that were accused of not paying salaries to their workers (many of whom are Ukrainian):

- workers not knowing their rights in the Swedish labour market and being exploited by opportunistic and criminal employers
- employers not paying or not fully paying salaries for work
- employers issuing fake employment contracts
- employers getting workers to pay back part of their salary in cash under the guise of helping them with getting a permanent visa from the migration agency, or extracting excessively high rent for housing provided by the employer
- employers disregarding regulations (aimed at ensuring the health and safety of workers in the EU) at the construction sites

In 2022, several articles addressed similar exploitation in the agriculture sector, mostly regarding people working in harvesting. The conditions described included working with hazardous chemicals without protective gear and working very long hours (up to 350 hours in a month).

In the **Netherlands**, the unions detected transnational malpractice regarding the posting of workers. Ukrainian refugees, who were employed by a Polish employment agency, were forced to work for a horticultural company (plant grower). Their employment contracts included references to fines and prohibitions and threatened them with deportation. To avoid further incidents of abuse, a bill for the mandatory certification of employment agencies was to be sent to parliament in 2023 (see Eurofound, 2023c).

To some extent, similar issues were reported in other countries. For example, in **Czechia** there have been reports that those Ukrainians who had been living and doing business there for a long time before the war attempted to abuse their compatriots, the Ukrainian refugees, by deliberately spreading fake news to increase insecurity and advance their interests among the refugees (Ministry of the Interior of Czechia, undated). They often generalise certain facts, which can contribute to a partial misunderstanding and a distorted view of the given issue. Similarly, in **Belgium**, some cases were reported in which Ukrainian refugees were employed at very low rates in improvised jobs, such as gardening, within the community of Ukrainian migrants who had been in the country before the war. There was uncertainty about whether this was illegal under labour law or a kind of community service that was well intended and compensated as voluntary work (Eurofound, 2023d).

Due to the presence of this kind of grey zone, it is sometimes difficult to define and identify abusive practices. Decision-makers (or labour inspectorates) may face similar dilemmas when the details/conditions of self-employment are examined. On the one hand, this (atypical) form of employment could be a way of getting paid work, so it could facilitate integration in areas other than the labour market; on the other hand, bogus self-employment could be malpractice. For example, in

the **Netherlands**, the government wanted to protect Ukrainian refugees from bogus self-employment schemes and exploitation, but there were some calls from Ukrainian refugees indicating that they wished to be able to undertake self-employed work, as this could increase their employment rate. There are other examples that show a clear motivation for being self-employed, for example a more flexible work schedule. In **Romania**, Ukrainian women have shown a preference for informal self-employment in occupations such as cooking or sewing (MPI, 2023).

More straightforward examples show abuse by employers. In **Lithuania**, it was reported that employers sometimes treat Ukrainian refugees unfairly: the State Labour Inspectorate often receives complaints about Ukrainians being paid less than they were promised; signing employment contracts in Lithuanian, which they do not understand; or working illegally without any contract (Diena.lt, 2023).

Lack of information has already been mentioned as a barrier. When discussing the potential for abusive practices and exploitation, a lack of information is identified as a problem in several countries. It is explicitly mentioned, for example, in **Finland** and in the **Netherlands**. In **Finland**, examples include social media and web-based groups in either Russian or Ukrainian aimed at refugees who do not speak English. Therefore, it is hard for the jobseeker to ensure the authenticity of job advertisements. There are cases of Ukrainian jobseekers who have received offers of jobs as sex workers through these kinds of groups, for instance. Fake advertisements for work at existing Finnish companies are also reportedly published on a large Russian- and Ukrainian-language job portal (YLE Uutiset, 2022a). Ukrainian refugees have also reportedly been taken advantage of on at least seven construction sites. They have been paid low salaries, worked long days and received very few days off. The working conditions were

revealed when the Finnish Construction Trade Union (Rakennusliitto) performed an inspection at one of these sites in Tampere (Yle Uutiset, 2023). In **Bulgaria** and **Sweden**, specific measures were introduced regarding the provision of information, with the aim of raising awareness among refugees and preventing exploitation. In **Bulgaria**, these apparently focus mainly on abuse in the labour market (a brochure was made available online in four languages and printed versions were provided in labour offices); in **Sweden**, the aim of the campaign was to prevent human trafficking and exploitation. The key objective was to prevent Ukrainian women from being forced into prostitution to support themselves, but it also aimed to prevent other types of exploitation of men and women in the Swedish labour market.

Abuse occurs mainly to take advantage of Ukrainian refugees' vulnerable situations. Malpractice could be linked to the refugees' disadvantaged positions not only in the labour market but also in other areas, for example in the housing market (due to their vulnerability there). This issue will be touched on in the section 'Housing situation of Ukrainian refugees'.

## Measures to facilitate labour market access and increase inclusion

Some measures aiming to overcome barriers have already been mentioned (e.g. the new law in **Latvia** and the waiving of language requirements in **Lithuania**). This section provides more details on these and other measures. The aim is not only to present the measures themselves but to explore what kind of challenges were encountered during their implementation, or to what extent the measures could be regarded as schemes with promising results (potentially good practices).

The measures could make an important contribution to easing labour market access for Ukrainian refugees. For example, in **Germany**, a survey revealed that 38% of respondents stated that they would need support when looking for work. At the same time, there is certainly political will in the Member States and Norway to facilitate speedy labour market integration. In addition, employers are also motivated to find a workforce, especially in occupations where there are labour shortages. These drivers help to continue measures that proved to be effective (such as fast-track integration schemes in **Sweden**) and/or find and experiment with innovative solutions.

The PES in the Member States undoubtedly play a key role both in facilitating access to labour markets in the host country in general and in improving refugees' inclusion in employment. Some examples of their activities (either those reported by the NEC or similar practices in other countries highlighted by the PES Network) will be discussed in subsequent sections.<sup>6</sup> In this section, however, the focus will be on other initiatives, since the PES Network regularly reports on its activity, highlighting good practices.

Social partners may also help to ease labour market access (see Box 2). It is worth mentioning, for example, that the Federal Chamber of Labour in Vienna (AK Wien) prepared a brochure entitled *Important initial information for people arriving in Austria from Ukraine* (AK Wien, 2022). It is available in Ukrainian and German and was updated in 2023 to keep displaced people from Ukraine informed. The brochure aims to help Ukrainian refugees to access the labour market in a holistic way, since it covers not only those topics directly related to employment (accommodation and access to the labour market, law and work, recognition of professional qualifications), but also topics such as family benefits, basic services/minimum benefits in Vienna, social security and taxes in Austria.

### Easing labour market access

Not only is there a consensus among the Member States of the importance of easing access to employment for Ukrainian refugees, it is also stipulated in the Temporary Protection Directive that '[T]he Member States shall authorise ... persons enjoying temporary protection to engage in employed or self-employed activities, subject to rules applicable to the profession'; those who enjoy temporary protection are also subject to national labour market policies and general conditions of employment. In some Member States, however, specific laws were adopted or amended to facilitate Ukrainians' access to the labour market. For example, in **Poland**, such a law was adopted on 12 March 2022. According to its provisions, an employer can immediately hire a Ukrainian citizen who is legally staying in the country and must notify the local PES within 14 days of the work starting.

In addition, various financial incentives and services in the Member States facilitated access to employment and, in view of the labour shortages, rules have often been changed to encourage employment in specific sectors/occupations.

<sup>6</sup> The PES Network was established by the European Commission. It has already published a document identifying key considerations in the wake of the high inflow of asylum seekers in 2015–2016. A PES Network Working Group was set up in November 2022 to adapt this document to the specific situation of Ukrainian refugees. For the most recent update, see European Commission (2023d).

## Financial incentives

Acknowledging the cost of starting a new job, some countries have introduced direct financial incentives. For example, in **Latvia**, upon entering employment, a Ukrainian citizen is entitled to a one-off employment allowance or start-up allowance of €620, called the employment or self-employment allowance. In January 2023, 10,000 Ukrainian citizens received the allowance (Eng.LSM.lv, 2023).

In addition, scholarships for study courses and grants specifically targeting researchers and academics have been introduced. Social partners in certain sectors seem to be active in this regard in **Italy**, where a financial incentive is provided within the framework of training. An agreement was concluded between the main trade union confederations and the national association of employment agencies. In addition to other support measures, a training allowance was introduced. Not only are expenses for food, accommodation and transport reimbursed, but a one-off €1,000 allowance is also provided upon completion of the first training phase. In **Portugal**, a monthly internship grant has been provided since December 2022. It is granted for 12 months. It became part of an existing wider programme aiming to strengthen the support for integrating other groups as well as Ukrainian refugees. The grant is provided to individual participants, depending on their levels of qualification, and ranges from 1.3 times to 2.5 times the Social Support Index (which was €480.43 in 2023). In addition, in the case of beneficiaries of temporary protection, the employer must ensure transport between the beneficiary's residence and the place of internship. If this is not possible, the beneficiary is entitled to the payment of transport expenses or a monthly transport allowance equivalent to 10% of the Social Support Index.

In terms of the main objective of subsidised employment, it is to some extent comparable to the internship grant, even where it is aimed specifically at unemployed Ukrainian refugees, as it is, for example, in **Lithuania**. This is the main active labour market policy measure provided by the PES in the country and is the most helpful measure for integrating Ukrainian refugees. It was introduced on 30 June 2022, when the Law on Employment was amended and refugees were added to the beneficiaries. If compared with the internship grant, one of the main differences is that it is granted to the employers of Ukrainian refugees. The wage subsidy is equal to 75% of the wage costs, and the maximum duration of the subsidy is longer, at 36 months.

**Denmark's** Business Promotion Board has awarded additional grants to four successful projects, totalling more than €2 million, with the aim of enabling them to specifically target Ukrainian refugees and facilitate their entrance into the labour market. These funds were allocated to existing projects that had been financed by the European Social Fund. The four projects include

initiatives that aim to improve the employability of Ukrainian refugees. They also include projects that create short-term jobs with a view to leading to lasting regular employment and the upskilling of refugees so that they are better prepared for the Danish labour market. Training is also an important part of one of the projects; another one is aimed at highly educated people and tries to get them jobs in the building, construction, transport and manufacturing industries in particular.

## Services

It was previously acknowledged when refugees started arriving in spring 2022 that help to access the labour market should be provided as early as possible once the refugees were placed in reception centres. As part of their outreach activities, the PES organised mobile teams in the largest reception centres or at the main areas where refugees arrived (European Network of Public Employment Services, 2023). The importance of a 'good reception' is acknowledged, for example, in **Denmark, Ireland, Romania and Spain**.

In **Denmark**, the aim is to ensure the provision of help with practical tasks, such as providing a personal identification number and a tax card, but there are also various measures for integration into the labour market in general.

In **Ireland**, employment support is also provided within the framework of the International Protection Support Services, primarily through the speedy allocation of a Personal Public Service Number (which is a basic requirement for access to all public services, including employment) and support with accessing employment through the Intreo offices (the government's job-finding service). According to the experiences reported, the vast majority of those seeking employment have found a job.

In **Romania**, the key objectives include providing vocational information, counselling, job matching, vocational training, assessment and the recognition of professional competencies. The measures also include European Employment Services support services, which provide information, advice and job matching for jobseekers in the EU and the European Economic Area (although Romania is not yet covered by the EU Talent Pool Pilot project). As of May 2023, 7,855 Ukrainian citizens had registered with the territorial agencies for employment to benefit from the services provided. The measure has facilitated the employment of 924 Ukrainian citizens in various occupations. In addition, 390 employers have expressed their intentions to hire Ukrainian citizens, declaring 4,768 job vacancies in various sectors.

In **Spain**, an employment counselling service for Ukrainian refugees was available at the four reception, attention and referral centres operated by the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration – one each in Alicante, Barcelona, Madrid and Málaga. The service is

provided by the social foundation of Spain's largest employer association (Fundación CEOE) in association with temporary agency worker companies (which provide advisory personnel). This job advice is complemented by the *Empresas que ayudan* (Companies that help) digital employment platform, also provided by Fundación CEOE. Once the refugees register at the reception, attention and referral centres, they can be referred to the job orientation programme if they wish. In these centres, they are attended by staff from the Adecco Group (temporary agency worker companies); they are given an information leaflet (developed by the insurance company Mapfre). In this way, refugees can obtain guidance and access to the *Empresas por Ucrania* (Companies for Ukraine) platform. The consultancy firm Oliver Wyman provides strategic advice and coordination services for this platform. Support is also provided by Universia (a platform for the non-financial services provided by Banco Santander). One of the first support services provided by this programme is enrolment in language courses; it also provides other training support activities to help the refugees adapt to Spanish labour market requirements. Subsequently, it helps users to find an appropriate job offer that matches their profile.

#### Matching Ukrainian refugees with employers

Lack of information, especially about available job opportunities, has already been identified as an important barrier, and the PES in host countries have been active in identifying and registering vacancies and making efforts to directly match jobseekers (based on their competencies) with vacancies. This has been implemented, for example, through various online portals (in **Poland**, for instance) with integrated matching systems, and digital tools have increasingly been applied (European Network of Public Employment Services, 2023).

The need for job matching was recognised early, for example in **Lithuania**, where the PES invited employers to hire Ukrainians to fill vacant positions. By March 2022, 4,500 companies had registered with the PES, offering 10,200 jobs for Ukrainians fleeing the war. The selection of potential employees and meetings with employers for Ukrainian refugees fleeing the war took place regularly. Ukrainians were introduced to companies and given opportunities for permanent employment with them. PES are also active in this field in other countries, for example in **Belgium**, **France** and **Germany** (European Commission, 2023d).

In **Finland**, the Confederation of Finnish Industries and staff recruitment company Staffpoint launched the Security through Work project in spring 2022. This project aims to bring together Finnish companies that want to employ refugees with work permits (thus targeting not only those who have fled the war in Ukraine, but all Ukrainians). The objective is to employ

200–400 Ukrainians under temporary protection and other refugees in Finnish companies. It is open to all businesses in all sectors. More than 80 companies have joined the project. Furthermore, Staffpoint offered job placement services to companies on a pro bono basis for four months in 2022 in order to find them suitable employees.

One of the measures implemented in **Denmark** specifically targeted those refugees who have backgrounds in technology, science and engineering. Its aim was to facilitate job matching. It was implemented through a collaboration between the Danish Society of Engineers and the Technology Denmark network. The latter provided contact with employers. The Technology Media Centre (Teknologiens Mediehus) was also involved; it has a platform and the knowledge to connect employers and candidates. The advertised positions are typically temporary and require only short induction periods to enable new staff to perform the work. Advertised positions may also be project-based or at a junior level and tend to be clearly defined to facilitate the quick introduction of Ukrainian refugees to the Danish labour market. The job-matching measure is organised by Teknologiens Mediehus, which provides more 'hand-holding' than is generally offered to those candidates. Job placement is facilitated through the Jobfinder platform. People from the recruitment department monitor the Ukrainians entering the database, and the Ukrainians' profiles are matched with advertised Danish positions. In addition, Ukrainians are offered access to information on working in Denmark through the Danish Society of Engineers. Companies in need of labour are invited to send in their details. The platform then facilitates connections based on education, professional background and skills. Companies are also able to advertise specific job openings through the platform.

In some cases, labour shortages seemed to motivate measures to match employers with refugees. For example, in **Austria**, a job fair was organised in Styria, the objective of which was to bring together refugees from Ukraine with local companies. Furthermore, players in the fields of work, education, childcare and social affairs were present to provide information and advice, for example on language courses or the recognition of educational certificates. Around 25 companies from the state of Styria that had job openings were present (in sectors such as healthcare/social care and tourism where labour shortages are apparent), and around 400 people from Ukraine who were interested in getting a job participated in the job fair. The measure was initiated in May 2022. According to the Austrian Public Employment Service, 325 companies in Styria with over 500 vacancies have signalled their interest in hiring refugees from Ukraine.



## Box 2: Cooperation with employers, trade unions and other stakeholders – Danish example

In Denmark, the government and relevant stakeholders joined forces and set up a comprehensive scheme in March 2022: the Partnership for Ukrainians in jobs. The stakeholders include the Danish regions and four labour market parties: the Confederation of Danish Employees, the Danish Trade Union Confederation, the Danish Confederation of Professional Associations and Local Government Denmark. The partnership aims to cooperate with companies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to ensure the fast integration of displaced Ukrainians into the labour market in Denmark. The objectives of the measure are not only to mitigate the barriers that Ukrainians face when entering the Danish labour market but also to alleviate rigid regulations and rules. The partnership focuses on seven initiatives, which include good reception, skills assessment, the opportunity to join a job portal, the opportunity to join a Danish language course, upskilling opportunities, the possibility of joining the Basic Integration Training programme and the provision of information on fair working conditions and working life in Denmark. Within the framework of the partnership, various public meetings have been held. These have included presentations from company representatives of, for example, IKEA, the Rockwool Foundation, Coor Service Management and Local Government Denmark. While there is no information available on an assessment/evaluation of the measure, anecdotal evidence points to the helpfulness of the programme, especially for companies, as they could use the Basic Integration Training programme to ensure upskilling and employment. In addition, having a buddy arrangement at work was also useful during the training. The programme included providing means of transport to get to work (e.g. providing bikes and scooters); this also contributed to its success.

### Relaxation of certain labour market restrictions

As could be seen in the cases of **Latvia** and **Lithuania**, restrictions concerning language requirements have been lifted (in certain sectors in Lithuania and with some limitations in Latvia). In **Italy**, however, a general labour market restriction was lifted specifically for Ukrainian refugees: to encourage their entry to the labour market, greater flexibility was introduced in the use of fixed-term contracts. This means that Ukrainians can access employment with fixed-term (temporary) contracts with fewer constraints stipulated by Italian labour law for employers who use fixed-term labour contracts.

### Improving Ukrainians' skills/job matches

To match the skills of the Ukrainian refugees with available jobs, a skills assessment is first needed. Even before the arrival of Ukrainian refugees, the EU skills profile tool for third-country nationals had been developed at EU level. In **Ireland**, the regional education and language teams (REALTs) for Ukraine provide skills assessments for adult Ukrainians who want to find work.

Some efforts are also made to prevent Ukrainian refugees from ending up in jobs for which they are overqualified. In **Slovenia**, the representative of the employment service said that it turned away employers who wanted to recruit highly skilled workers

for low-skilled jobs. Other active efforts are being made for the same purpose: the active labour market policy measure programme for migrants (entitled Training: Persons with international protection and foreigners) helps people who do not yet speak Slovenian to gain work and language experience in a work environment in which they are comfortable. For this programme, the employment service prepares a vocabulary of rudimentary words related to specific jobs.

Due to pressing labour shortages, companies may also come up with various initiatives.<sup>7</sup> For example, in **Romania**, IKEA Romania launched a pilot programme in 2021, which is still ongoing. The Skills for Employment programme offers paid internships, IKEA training in a variety of areas and psychological assistance; it thus helps refugees gain the necessary skills and work experience. Some positions are offered as paid internships (temporary), while some participants are hired on a permanent basis after the internship period.

### Engaging Ukrainian professionals in public services

In **Slovakia**, medical workers from Ukraine can work in clinics under a temporary professional internship regime. This allows them to provide healthcare under the supervision of a professionally qualified person. Among other things, this measure helps reduce the language barrier between Ukrainian patients and healthcare personnel (RTVS, 2022; UNLP, 2022).

<sup>7</sup> Eurofound has another ongoing research project focusing on company initiatives to address their labour shortages. The project, which is based on case studies, includes those initiatives that target Ukrainian refugees. Therefore, only the examples that the national correspondents provided in their contributions to this specific project will be described briefly here.

In **Lithuania**, the PES itself employed Ukrainians (speaking Russian and/or English) to help war refugees who did not speak English or Russian to communicate. Similar instances of hiring Ukrainian professionals in public services to help their compatriots were reported in **Latvia, Poland, Romania** and **Spain** (see MPI, 2023, pp. 15–16). These practices build on similar schemes applied during the 2015–2016 migration crisis: in Sweden, for example, a fast-track route for Syrian teachers was created that allowed them to teach reception classes for new arrivals in Arabic, while also studying Swedish as part of their internship (MPI, 2023, p. 16). At the same time, a survey in **Finland** found that a lack of Ukrainian-speaking workers was a problem, as these workers would have been able to support and understand refugees from Ukraine (F11).

### Measures addressing the difficulties of qualification recognition

Having recognised the importance of facilitating the recognition of qualifications, the European Commission issued recommendations on the recognition of qualifications for people fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine in April 2022; some months later (in June 2022), it published guidelines on the fast-track recognition of Ukrainian academic qualifications. In addition to recognising qualifications, which often takes time, providing detailed information on qualifications is key so that employers can understand their potential employees' skills. The European Commission, together with the European Training Foundation, therefore set up a web page entitled *Information for EU Member States: authorities, schools/colleges/universities, and employers in the EU*. As part of further efforts to make it easier to compare Ukrainian qualifications with those in the Member States, the Commission, again together with the European Training Foundation, published the *Comparison report of the European Qualifications Framework and the Ukrainian National Qualifications Framework* in February 2023. Some Member States have introduced their own skills assessment tools, for example **Germany** and **Sweden** (see details in European Network of Public Employment Services, 2023, pp. 7–8).

Despite these efforts, Ukrainian refugees face various difficulties in the Member States when they want their qualifications recognised. For example, as mentioned, the recognition procedure can still be lengthy. There is a clear need to shorten it, not only so that Ukrainian refugees can be included in the labour market quickly but also due to labour shortages, especially in some professions. For example, in **Slovakia**, the process was simplified to allow teachers fleeing Ukraine to find employment in the Slovak school system. In April 2023, a qualification exam in Russian or Ukrainian was introduced for paediatricians to gain recognition of their Ukrainian education in paediatrics (Noviny Plus, 2023). As a result, the first 30 paediatricians who passed the exam between April and June 2023 received recognition

of their qualifications and were allowed to work as paediatricians in Slovakia (TASR, 2023a). In **Lithuania**, social workers only have to wait one month, rather than three, to gain recognition of their professional qualifications, and the procedure for submitting documents was simplified: only the most necessary documents must be submitted. The applicant can confirm the authenticity of these documents without the confirmation of a notary or relevant authority. Only the most necessary documents (diploma or other document proving the social worker's professional qualifications) must be translated into Lithuanian. If a Ukrainian citizen does not have a social worker's diploma or other document, the Department of Social Services Supervision will examine other information provided by the applicant or other institutions about the applicant's education and their activities in relation to social work. According to the PES Network:

*In addition, the relevant licensing rules were simplified. The requirement of Lithuanian language skills was also removed but the applicant must prove that he/she has started to learn it. Furthermore, to make flexible decisions on hiring healthcare professionals before the recognition process is completed, they can be employed as doctors' assistants.*

(European Network of Public Employment Services, 2023, p. 7)

Similarly, in **Poland**, special rules apply to medical personnel from Ukraine (also as a response to labour shortages). For example, Ukrainian doctors/dentists who obtained their diplomas outside the EU could practise their profession (a conditional right to practise); this rule applied up to August 2023. In August 2023 and again in February 2024, the rule was extended and it currently applies until June 2024 (Article 61, Special Law (Assistance to Ukrainian Citizens in Connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of Ukraine)). Not only were the formalities kept to a minimum when applying for this right to practise, but the Polish language requirement was also removed. The local medical council decides whether the doctor can practise independently or under supervision. Regarding teaching staff, non-Polish teaching assistants can be employed even without a document proving knowledge of Polish; however, they should still speak and write Polish sufficiently well to be able to assist a pupil who does not speak Polish. In terms of being employed at a lower level than that of their qualifications (while recognition is pending), it was reported in **Estonia** that Ukrainian-qualified teachers (and doctors) work as assistants in their professions (MPI, 2023). Similarly, in the **Netherlands**, Ukrainian teachers who do not speak Dutch can be employed as educational support staff in preparatory classes (referred to as temporary education facilities). In the Netherlands, the shortage of teachers is so acute that a new law is planned that will further facilitate the employment of Ukrainian teachers.

### Box 3: Combined training for Ukrainian-qualified nurses in Estonia – bridging the qualification requirements gap

Extra training was established for Ukrainian refugees who have obtained their nursing qualifications in Ukraine but who are unable to work in the field due to different requirements in Ukraine and Estonia, even at educational level. In Ukraine, nurses obtain a vocational degree, whereas in Estonia they complete a 3.5-year programme, which grants a medical higher education diploma. Therefore, Tallinn Health Care College created an individual programme for all interested students that helps them to obtain the same level of education and therefore start working in Estonian hospitals alongside other nurses. It is a win-win situation, as Estonia has a shortfall of 100 nurses throughout the country, and integrating the Ukrainian nurses into the workforce would help to relieve that pressure.

Ukrainian refugees who wish to start working as nurses in Estonia first have to go through the language learning programme, which lasts at least a year; they can then start their medical training in Estonian. The higher education (*kõrgharidusõppe*) programme lasts two years and should give them the correct level of education, according to EU qualifications, to work. They have a separate study programme and group from that of the other nursing students in the school to allow them to focus specifically on their training. The Ukrainian students are chosen based on the previous education they have obtained in their home country. However, that is quite difficult due to the very different levels of education that the nurses have (some have vocational education, some have higher education and some have master's level education). All nurses participating in this programme have to take a qualification exam at the end before they can start working in the field.

#### Bridging training programmes (combined courses)

One of the most well-known and comprehensive programmes, introduced in the wake of the large inflow of asylum seekers in 2015–2016, is offered in **Sweden**. Sweden's fast-track programme combines vocational and language training and is aimed specifically at occupations where there are labour shortages, so that the participants can gain credentials within the recognition procedures (see details of the programme in Eurofound, 2016, and a more up-to-date account in MPI, 2023). However, beneficiaries of temporary protection – that is, most displaced people from Ukraine who have arrived in Sweden – are not eligible for the programme. This is because they have the same rights as asylum seekers, who are not entitled to this programme either and are not eligible for broader integration courses. The government limits such courses to refugees (although Ukrainians can access some services at local level). Despite the absence of centrally organised programmes, a bridging course was launched by a university in **Sweden** for Ukrainian-licensed doctors and nurses in 2022; part of the course is conducted remotely. Its objective is to speed up the procedure for recognising the qualifications of these medical professionals. In **Czechia**, a similar measure was adopted in 2022 with the same aim. In addition to on-the-job training, the programme also uses online modules (including professional webcasts to help participants prepare for licensing exams and a distance learning course on health-related Czech terminology) (MPI, 2023, p. 22).

There is combined training organised for Ukrainian-qualified nurses in **Estonia**, which, even though it is not called a fast-track programme, has some

similarities with the initiatives in Sweden (see the description in Box 3).

## Conclusions and policy pointers

This research confirmed previous findings (e.g. Eurofound and FRA, 2023; OECD, 2023a) that the labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees was quicker than that of other refugee groups. In most countries where estimates are available, the employment rate is around or exceeds 20%; this is true for the three countries receiving the most refugees: **Germany**, **Poland** and **Czechia**. The relatively high rate is unusual for refugees such a short time after their arrival (1.5 years maximum at the time of writing). For example, in **Germany**, two years after the arrival of asylum seekers in 2015/2016, their employment rate stood at 13% in 2018 (Deloitte, 2022). The level of employment varies by country: the rate ranges from 11% (in **Italy**) to more than 50% (in **Lithuania**, for example), with even the lowest rate seeming higher than those of other refugee groups so soon after their arrival.

Displaced people, however, must face many barriers when entering the labour market. Previous research covering selected Member States (Eurofound and FRA, 2023; MPI, 2023; OECD, 2023a and 2023b) and individual country studies (e.g. **Sweden**; see IOM, 2023) have pointed out that the most important barrier is lack of knowledge of the host country language. Other difficulties include care responsibilities (which is important, especially in view of the composition of Ukrainian refugees – many are women with children), challenges relating to the recognition of qualifications, lack of suitable job opportunities and insufficient

information about the labour market in the host country.

The sectoral and occupational pattern of employment shows that Ukrainian refugees work mainly in temporary jobs. For example, the accommodation and food service sector, where many jobs are of a temporary/seasonal nature, features prominently in most countries where data are available. The occupational pattern suggests that Ukrainians are mainly employed in low-skilled jobs, such as domestic workers, cleaners, construction workers, housekeepers and home carers. The information from the NEC supports Eurofound's earlier finding that the availability of only irregular jobs was identified as an important obstacle during job searches (Eurofound and FRA, 2023).

Although discrimination does not seem widespread, working conditions often proved challenging (e.g. long working hours, being underpaid or not being paid, being employed without a contract). This applies especially to those sectors/occupations where most Ukrainians work, namely tourism/hospitality, domestic work, manufacturing and construction. In addition, abusive practices in relation to job offers (fake advertisements) were also reported in some countries.

This chapter presented many innovative measures aiming to both facilitate labour market access and improve skills/job matches, thus facilitating better inclusion. Those that seem to be specifically effective are those that simultaneously address both difficulties with recognition and lack of language knowledge: within the framework of such programmes, when Ukrainian refugees can work at levels close to their qualification level and the rules regarding knowledge of the host country language are also relaxed (even temporarily), the transition to a suitable job eventually becomes smoother. During this time, they can familiarise themselves with the job market of the host country, their skills are used and they have some time to learn the language.

### Policy pointers

- Targeted approaches are needed to address those barriers that Ukrainian refugees face in the labour market. It is not only tailor-made, job-related language courses that are required (such as those in **Slovenia**); schemes that help to mitigate the key barriers, including care responsibilities, are also needed.
- Many innovative programmes have been launched, such as training to bridge the gap in qualification requirements for nurses (**Estonia**) and the engagement of Ukrainian medical professionals in medical services under the supervision and mentorship of experienced native speaker professionals (e.g. in **Estonia** and **Poland**). These types of schemes could be regarded as good practices, and their further development needs to be explored.
- Childcare services are not always available, especially in remote areas. Capacity problems add to the difficulties in accessing these services. The promising practice of involving qualified Ukrainian teachers as assistants to tackle bottlenecks should be continued and scaled up.
- Training modules that are tailor-made for the individual needs of Ukrainians, especially those who are highly skilled, could be organised.
- More attention should be paid to vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, Roma and other third-country nationals who fled Ukraine because of the war. Their labour market integration requires special measures.
- The partnership with employers, NGOs, local governments and other stakeholders proved efficient in **Denmark**, due to its comprehensiveness. Other countries may consider applying this good practice as well.

# 3 Challenges with housing, education, healthcare and social assistance

In this chapter, the focus will be on integration areas that not only help in facilitating labour market integration but are key for societal inclusion in general as well.

## Housing situation of Ukrainian refugees

### Background – Key challenges

Housing Ukrainian refugees has proved to be particularly challenging. This is mainly because of the pre-existing housing problems faced by all the Member States and Norway. These include an insufficient housing supply, rising costs, the financial strain for low-income tenants and owners with high mortgages, housing inadequacy and homelessness. Eurofound (2023a) published a report in early 2023 that gives a detailed overview of these problems across the EU. Even its title is telling: *Unaffordable and inadequate housing in Europe*. Costs have risen: over more than a decade (from 2010 until the fourth quarter of 2022), average rent increased by 19% in the EU and house prices increased by 47%. The gap between housing costs and income has widened: house price growth has consistently outstripped income growth (Housing Europe, 2023). For people with unstable income, such as Ukrainian refugees with temporary, often low-paid jobs (see Chapter 2), these problems are particularly pressing and provide important context for the challenges that policymakers face when they seek long-term solutions.

During the initial phase of reception, when the Ukrainian refugees first began arriving, the solutions offered – such as emergency housing, collective sites, hotels and other arrangements – were mainly ad hoc. In line with the provisions of the Temporary Protection Directive, all the Member States provided publicly funded reception housing (OECD, 2022, Annex 1.A. Table 1.A.1). Initially, however, about half of the Member States did not support the private accommodation arrangements that were offered by households and other providers, such as NGOs, companies and other organisations. These solutions quickly became widespread. Later, short-term housing

solutions were arranged; these included municipal/public housing and accommodation offered by the private rental sector. As a general solution, however, public housing was still limited due to severe shortages in the sector. This manifested itself in a variety of ways, including long waiting lists, strict eligibility criteria and the fact that ‘rules specifying the need for a local connection (residency or job) dominate most allocation systems’ (Habitat for Humanity International, 2023, p. 48). Social housing, however, was provided in those countries where this plays a major role, for example **Austria** and **France**.

In many countries, the housing shortage in general is severe. For example, in **Poland**, the main challenges in finding accommodation derive from the overall low supply of adequate housing in the country (including a significant number of vacant properties in need of renovation; Eurofound, 2023a); related to that is the drastically increasing cost of renting. The issue of eviction is also often regarded as controversial: on the one hand, it is important to prevent eviction procedures to observe people’s right to housing (see examples in Eurofound, 2023a) but, on the other, it is often argued that tenant protection laws could discourage many landlords from providing housing to Ukrainian refugees (WiseEuropa, 2022). A large proportion of refugees live in substandard or overcrowded accommodation in Poland (RPO, 2022a).<sup>8</sup>

The issue of eviction is similarly controversial in **Ireland**, where a ban imposed during the pandemic was lifted on 1 April 2023 (and has been hotly debated). The current situation is a housing crisis: the demand for housing significantly outstrips the supply of both private and social or affordable houses being built. Ireland’s population increased by almost 8% between 2016 and 2022; net migration in the same period stood at 190,000. The housing stock increased by just 120,000 units, well below the increase in population (statistics from the preliminary results of the Central Statistics Office’s population census of 2022; CSO, 2022). The shortfall in housing supply has fed into an increase in house prices, while banks have implemented a tighter lending/mortgage policy. The shortfall has also led to a substantial increase in rental prices, particularly in major urban centres. A further issue compounding

<sup>8</sup> The article by Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich (RPO) references ‘restrictive eviction laws’, but their objective is to protect the tenants.

accommodation problems for Ukrainian refugees is the significant increase in non-Ukrainian international protection applicants arriving in Ireland. While Ireland has dealt with around 3,000 such applicants per year in recent years, this has increased to well over 80,000 in the last 12 months. The lack of accommodation prompted the Ukrainian ambassador to Ireland, Larysa Gerasko, to record a video message, relayed on Ukrainian media, advising Ukrainians to reconsider coming to Ireland because of the accommodation shortage.

### Current situation – A snapshot

Towards the end of the summer of 2022, there was a gradual shift from the initial emergency solutions to more systemic arrangements. For example, in **Germany**, although private accommodation still seems to prevail (see Table 3), municipalities are taking over responsibility and mainstream service delivery for refugees. It is within this framework that subsidised loans for municipalities are made available for upgrading and for supply-side investment (Habitat for Humanity International, 2023, p. 49). In addition, more than 1.5 years after the arrival of refugees (at the time of writing), there are more efforts in place to replace short-term solutions with either medium-term or even longer-term arrangements. For example, in **Estonia**, some of the points where people could find information about short-term accommodation were closed in late spring/early summer of 2023 due to lack of demand.

As can be seen from Table 3, private accommodation plays a major role in housing Ukrainian refugees in several countries. Within this category, however, a distinction is rarely made between those who live in private accommodation and those who live with host families (except for in Germany; see Table 3). In addition, private accommodation does not play an equally important role in all the countries covered (a precise cross-country comparison is not possible due to different categorisation, so Table 3 gives only an indicative picture). For example, according to a survey carried out in 2022 (IE1), the majority of refugees in **Ireland** apparently live in hotels and guest houses, and close to one-third were able to find accommodation themselves, including with the help of friends and family. Other data show that the overwhelming majority (about 82%) live in serviced accommodation (such as B&Bs and hotels), only 13% live independently and the rest (5%) are still in emergency accommodation. This contrasts with the situation in **Estonia**, where most refugees have support from friends or family who can provide them with temporary accommodation. In a survey conducted in summer 2022, 54% of respondents reported choosing Estonia as their destination because of the presence of friends or family (Jauhainen et al, 2022) and, according to a survey conducted in autumn 2022 (EE2), only 13% of Ukrainian refugees lived in temporary housing offered by the government. It may be due to Estonia's high level of employment (see Chapter 2) that 41% of respondents pay for their housing themselves (and 65% reported that they could stay in their current housing indefinitely).

**Table 3: Share of refugees by type of accommodation (selected countries) (%)**

Country	Private accommodation		Hotels/guest houses	Shared accommodation (e.g. in reception centres or other types of refugee facility)	Municipal housing
	Total	Shared			
Austria	80 <sup>a</sup>	–	20	–	–
Denmark	20	–	–	–	50
Finland	46 <sup>b</sup>	–	–	–	–
Germany	74	16	–	17	–
Lithuania	50	–	–	–	10 <sup>c</sup>
Romania	89 <sup>d</sup>	–	7	3 <sup>e</sup>	–
Sweden	59	–	–	13	–

<sup>a</sup> As of October 2022; data from the Federal Ministry of the Interior. <sup>b</sup> Latest data, from October 2022, based on data provided by the Finnish Immigration Service (41% in reception centres, the rest in other places; Berlina, 2022). <sup>c</sup> Public institutions and municipalities. <sup>d</sup> 77% in apartments, 12% in houses. <sup>e</sup> Dormitories.

**Sources:** National contributions, except for Germany (socioeconomic panel that was used to survey 11,225 Ukrainian refugees from August to October 2022; Brücker et al, 2022)

### Accommodation offered by private households and NGOs

Initially, one of the most visible manifestations of the overwhelming support for Ukrainian refugees was the accommodation offered by private households, NGOs and businesses, for example (see the examples of schemes provided mainly by private households in Table 4).

These initiatives were so widespread at the beginning that, in **Malta**, for example, Ukrainian refugees were not put in 'open centres' (designated accommodation facilities administered and managed by the government's Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers) as other refugees were. All housing in Malta was provided by volunteers, such as families with extra rooms who hosted refugees in their homes and others with second houses/flats that they made available to refugees. Currently, some refugees are renting with

other Ukrainians or living with friends. Several Ukrainian refugees came to Malta because they had friends or relatives who were already living on the island. Businesses provided spaces that were converted into sleeping and living quarters. The kENUP Foundation, a non-profit public benefit foundation, and the Malta Council for Science and Technology transformed their office space at the Esplora Interactive Science Centre to launch the Ukrainian Families Adoption initiative. Families were allowed to stay on for as long as was necessary and were not charged for accommodation or the other services being provided, including regular meals. Similarly, NGOs play a major role in **Poland** thanks to the Ukrainian diaspora, which also contributed greatly to these efforts. The NGOs are involved in converting office spaces and retail buildings into housing (no building permits are needed, but spatial plans must be fully respected). This initiative is

**Table 4: Examples of housing schemes provided mainly by private households**

Country	Name/description	Time/trends/expectations/duration	Compensation/service provided	Magnitude (number/% of refugees or number/% of host families)
Finland	Home accommodation	Initially temporary, but long-term housing should be the aim	No	46% (includes housing in other private apartments)
France	Mobilisation of citizens willing to open their homes or provide accommodation	Compensation paid since 22 November 2022, but the initiative is now 'running out of steam': the number of French people who are ready and registered to house Ukrainians is lower every week, and only 1,000 of the expected 12,000 applications were received (Le Monde, 2022)	Quarterly financial aid of €450 offered to host families	n.a.
Ireland	Pledged accommodation	Declining: fewer places than expected (initially, 6,000–7,000 places were provided)	Yes, from the government	1,160 refugees, as of April 2023
Latvia	State support for Latvian residents who host Ukrainian citizens in their homes free of charge	The accommodation provider was entitled to compensation for a period of accommodation of a maximum of 120 days (more if vulnerable people were placed); the scheme was temporary and lasted until 30 June 2023	Natural and legal persons are eligible; €100 per month for the first person accommodated and €50 per month for each additional person, up to a maximum of €300 per month	Data from Riga Municipality: between May and December 2022, reimbursement for voluntary accommodation was granted 910 times, resulting in 2,066 refugees being accommodated for four months
Lithuania	Compensation for providing housing for Ukrainian citizens	Compensation was to be paid until the end of 2023	Around 5,000 natural and legal persons in Lithuania have received compensation	14,000 refugees
Luxembourg	Reception with families	Lasting longer than expected; NGOs take in most of the refugees and take over from families if necessary	No	500 host families; they can ask for support
Spain	Host Family Project	Initiated in April 2022; host families are required to host Ukrainian families for at least six months	No compensation, but training is provided for the host families <sup>a</sup>	n.a.

<sup>a</sup> In the Alicante, Barcelona, Girona, Madrid, Málaga and Murcia provinces. The 'la Caixa' Foundation, collaborating with the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration, launched it to connect host families with refugee families, setting up a network of host families. The technical host office (attached to the 'la Caixa' Foundation) is responsible for validating, supporting and monitoring host families, and providing them with training. n.a., not available.

Source: National contributions

now being copied by big NGOs, but only temporarily: this involves the adaptation of office buildings that need additional bathrooms and kitchens, but which are structurally appropriate for people to stay in, with all technical requirements being fulfilled. NGOs are also active in **Lithuania**. For example, through the Strong Together (Stiprūs kartu) citizen-driven initiative (which created a national voluntary aid coordination centre), 33,000 people found accommodation. In **Romania**, Habitat for Humanity Romania managed to transform an unused office building, the Edmond Center, into an accommodation centre and social hub for refugees. The centre has over 2,000 square metres of renovated energy- and heat-efficient space over three floors, with long-term accommodation capacity for 100 people and capacity to provide transitional shelter for about 20 people per night.

To facilitate initiatives run by private hosts, the EU launched the Safe Homes initiative in July 2022, which provides guidance for good practices. The aim is to support not only the Member States but also their regional and local authorities, civil society actors (namely those that organise private housing initiatives) and all those hosts who make their homes available. The good practices include effective matching of hosts and refugees and making sure that suitable and safe private housing is in place. In December 2022, in response to increasing demand for funding, the Safe Homes initiative was updated, and the European Commission announced that €5.5 million would be awarded to a project managed by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies that reinforces the initiative. In addition, other funds within the initiative, such as the European Social Fund Plus, within the Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe and the Flexible Assistance to Territories initiatives and within the framework of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (2021–2027), can also be used.

As can be seen, financial compensation is provided to the hosts in most cases. As mentioned, this was not so obvious at the beginning, although, for example, in **Poland** the Special Law, adopted early in the conflict, introduced a benefit of PLN 40 (€9.16 as at 26 January 2024) for the host for each day of accommodation provided to a refugee from Ukraine (this can be granted for up to 120 days, and from then on the benefit can be provided to certain groups only: elderly people, pregnant women and mothers of children under 12 months). However, even now, compensation is not granted in two countries and, in one other country, services are provided instead.

Financial compensation is increasingly needed, not only because the initial willingness to accommodate Ukrainian refugees is declining (see examples in Table 4) but also because the resources of host families are reduced, due partly to growing inflation and the energy

crisis. For example, in **Slovenia**, in the aftermath of the outbreak of war, people were willing to rent out their flats for free or for a symbolic payment. This is no longer the case. The Slovenian government has started to offer support for accommodation through an extensive national scheme. According to estimates, the scheme covers well over 70% of refugees (this information was cited in the national contribution). In addition, compared with other OECD countries, the support provided to adults is just below the maximum amount (€422 compared to €424 in the UK) and the highest for an adult with a child (€549) (OECD, 2022, p. 6). The support for accommodation complements the income support.

In **Romania**, the compensation scheme, the 50/20 Program (which also covers food support: RON 50 (€10.05) per person per day for housing and RON 20 (€4.00) per person per day for food), was suspended in January 2023 and restarted in May 2023 with new conditions. The suspension, combined with delays in the disbursement of housing costs for January–March 2023, has resulted in reported evictions of refugees from their accommodation, often without prior notice. This situation increases the vulnerability of many refugees, especially in Bucharest, Constanța and Năvodari, and induces high levels of stress among them. The refugees also faced uncertainties around the conditions in the new housing and integration support programme. According to the modified conditions, the reimbursement varies according to the number of family members, and the assistance is provided in stages: for the first four consecutive months, the monthly support includes RON 2,000 (€401.90) for a family's accommodation expenses, RON 750 (€150.70) for a single person's accommodation and RON 600 (€120.57) per person for food expenses; from the fifth month until the end of 2023, the support remained the same for accommodation. The programme requires refugees to meet certain conditions, such as being legally employed or registered with the regional employment agency, with exceptions for specific groups.

In **Finland**, where there is no compensation for providers of housing who host Ukrainian refugees, the challenge was that home accommodation became just a temporary solution. The media have reported on both how people have opened their homes and how poorly thought-through offers of home accommodation force refugees to move after only a short time (Iltalehti, 2022; Yle Uutiset, 2022b). This is just one of the reasons why, eventually, independent housing is needed. However, under the current circumstances – that is, during the initial phase of integration – the authorities must provide accommodation at a reception centre if or when private accommodation provision ends. However, a person can be placed in a reception centre anywhere in Finland, causing disruption to their everyday life and increasing stress.



The compensation schemes aimed not only to incentivise families hosting refugees but also to encourage landlords to place their vacant properties on the market (Habitat for Humanity International, 2023). To prevent properties on the market from becoming run-down, it is important to discourage owners from leaving their properties vacant for extended periods (Eurofound, 2023a). In principle, this could address housing shortages (at least to some extent), especially in countries (such as Poland) where there are many vacant properties: for example, ‘in Bulgaria 30% of all dwellings are vacant, but three-quarters of them are over 30 years old, lacking maintenance’ (Eurofound, 2023a, p. 58). In some countries, besides accommodation, other services (such as meals) are expected from landlords in return for the compensation (Habitat for Humanity International, 2023). This was the case, for example, in **Latvia** and **Romania** (in Romania, this was done within the framework of the 50/20 Program, where the refugees were also eligible for food support; this was a large programme, covering 66% of refugees). In other countries, there is no such obligation.

In many countries, websites have been developed to facilitate the matching of hosts and refugees. Not only do they contain valuable information, but they often help with finding safe accommodation and longer-term solutions. In addition to the websites developed and controlled by the state, many are set up by NGOs. For example, in **Romania** the A Roof platform, developed by Code for Romania, helps to identify accommodation spaces for refugees. It aims to alleviate immediate housing needs for refugees by providing verified accommodation spaces that meet their requirements, ensuring safety and comfort. One of the major issues, however, is the uncertainty surrounding the future of the 50/20 Program. In **Latvia**, by early August 2022, an NGO called I Want to Help Refugees had created the portal *majasbegliem.lv* to help refugees from Ukraine find housing in the country. People who were willing and able to help those fleeing the war in Ukraine were invited to offer rental or free-of-charge housing on the portal. The portal also brings together materials on the financial help available to both tenants and people who offer free housing, general information on renting a home, sample rental contracts in Latvian and Ukrainian and a practical guide to renting an apartment.

According to Eurofound, about three-quarters of Member States have introduced ‘Housing First’ schemes. It remains to be seen to what extent such schemes could contribute to housing solutions for Ukrainian refugees. Sometimes they are conditional – that is, people must engage with services – but, for the sake of stability, this should not be the case. At the same time, ‘they are largely successful in keeping people out of homelessness’ (Eurofound, 2023a, p. 57).

Nonetheless, ‘[f]ew programmes have the capacity to house more than 1% of the country’s homeless population. Social housing often plays a vital part in preventing and addressing homelessness’ (Eurofound, 2023a, p. 2) (see also the section ‘Social housing’).

### Examples and challenges with other support measures

Although there is only limited information on the various accommodation options (see Table 4), it is clear that in most countries several types of housing arrangements are available. Governments provide compensation not only to private hosts but also to municipalities and to businesses (such as hotels), and they provide compensation directly to the refugees, for example in the form of rent subsidies. These, together with the social housing schemes, are often embedded in the social protection system: for example, in the form of housing support measures for vulnerable groups. The subsidies are provided to Ukrainian refugees as well. This is the case, for example, in **Austria** (see the section ‘Rent subsidies’).

#### Rent subsidies

In **Slovakia**, making market rental properties available to people from Ukraine through rent subsidies provided by the state seems to pose a challenge, even though such subsidies are already in place. This mechanism needs to be made more flexible, because the associated bureaucracy and the retroactive payment of the contribution can be demotivating for many property owners. It is also necessary to reassess the amounts that can be reimbursed to landlords, so that they more accurately reflect the real market prices of rented properties in individual regions, and to avoid disadvantaging non-Ukrainian tenants and distorting the rental property market (CVEK, 2022). Currently, the subsidies are not differentiated by region, so they do not reflect the rent differences between regions.

In **Austria**, the rent subsidies for renting private apartments, which are provided within the framework of the basic care scheme (*Grundversorgung*), also support ‘organised assisted housing’ (smaller hotels or guest houses) for refugees.

In **Romania**, UNHCR has a cash programme in place. Its key objective is to provide cash assistance to vulnerable refugees displaced from Ukraine. The measure aims to support refugees with accommodation needs during the transition period between the suspension of the 50/20 Program (see the section ‘Accommodation offered by private households and NGOs’) and the start of the new government accommodation support programme. The programme is to provide multipurpose cash assistance of RON 568 (€114.12) per person, per month for the entire transition period.

### **Programme extension: Loan to municipalities**

A subsidised loan programme for municipalities was extended in **Germany**. In the context of this scheme, the German Development Bank (KfW) launched and expanded a special programme for investing in services and accommodation for refugees (backed by €500 million) to support German municipalities that are hosting refugees (Habitat for Humanity International, 2023).

### **Social housing**

Overall, social housing plays some role in many of the countries covered, but concerns a particularly large housing stock in the Netherlands (28% of all dwellings), Austria (23%: 6.9% municipal, 16.5% limited profit), Denmark (20%) and France (17%) (Eurofound, 2023a, p. 45). Social housing has played a role in housing Ukrainians, but there are capacity problems, with pre-existing waiting lists even in the countries with the largest housing stocks.

In **France**, social landlords<sup>9</sup> have participated in the distribution of the available social housing. They have also obtained a guarantee from the state that it will pay the rent. This is why the government has granted Ukrainian refugees access to housing benefits. This amount, added to the allowance for asylum seekers, should allow the financing of housing. In the event of insufficient resources, the state has agreed to add up to €200 per month if the rent cannot be paid using the allowance for asylum seekers and housing benefit alone. Another approach agreed with social landlords is the use of ‘rental intermediation’: the social landlord concludes an agreement with an organisation that will rent the accommodation (and receives the housing benefits and possibly the additional €200 from the state) and make it available to a Ukrainian family. The aim is not just to provide a roof over their heads, but to ensure that the organisation that houses them also deals with other aspects of the refugees’ integration (e.g. job market, healthcare, schooling). However, this initiative has run into two difficulties. First, organisations specialised in the reception of refugees do not cover the entire territory and certain social landlords have had difficulties in concluding contracts with them. Second, even though there are organisations in the field, they do not necessarily have the human resources required, as this sector is one of those experiencing labour shortages.

In **Austria**, social housing, which plays a large role in affordable housing in Vienna, is not open to refugees from Ukraine (yet), as a person needs to have a main residence at one address in Vienna for two years to qualify for such housing. Thus, housing is expected to become a larger problem in the future.

In **Bulgaria**, even though there is no national regulation governing social housing, some municipalities provide this service or other initiatives to improve access to adequate housing for groups in vulnerable situations. For example, in Stara Zagora, dwellings were initially renovated for Roma, but they were unable to pay the running costs and had to leave; those dwellings were given to Ukrainian refugees instead (see details in Eurofound, 2023a, pp. 35–36).

### **Other (temporary) solutions**

In **Estonia**, if the refugee has no other option, their temporary accommodation will be provided by the Social Insurance Board for a maximum of four months (UNHCR, 2023c). These living spaces have been provided mostly by hotels and cruise ships, and became available due to special agreements between the state and private accommodation companies. However, the Estonian authorities have expressed their concerns about the lack of permanent living spaces due to the lack of social housing options (UNHCR, 2023c, p. 23). According to a survey conducted in autumn 2022, 68% of Ukrainian refugees live independently, 10% live in a hotel/hostel, 8% live in a shared apartment, 7% live in a separate room/part of a private house, 3% live on a cruise ship and another 3% live in a private house (Lees and Espenberg, 2022). The earlier the refugees arrived, the more likely they are to live independently and in a separate apartment, and the later they arrived the more likely they are to live in temporary government housing, which suggests that temporary housing is necessary, but most move on to long-term housing. Although the accommodation provided by the Social Insurance Board is temporary, it might involve switching houses and even cities within Estonia. That is because the state can accommodate refugees only in houses covered by procurement processes and special contracts with the owners (e.g. some refugees were accommodated on Tallink cruise ships, as the state had a contract with the firm), which limits accessibility. Estonia also has a strong policy against discrimination in the housing market. A landlord has no right to choose their tenants based on ethnicity or whether they have children or not, which should also make it easier for the refugees to find private accommodation. In addition, a

<sup>9</sup> These are non-profit organisations that provide affordable housing; they could also be defined as landlord organisations for social housing (see World Bank and Social Union for Housing, 2010, p. 5).

refugee who has not yet found a job can apply for a state subsidy for rent and utility payments.

### Solutions for long-term housing

As the war becomes protracted, moving to long-term housing is an issue that is increasingly coming to the fore in host countries. This process may vary by country, depending largely on the labour market inclusion of the refugees but also on the national housing situation, policy and specific measures. This move, however, will be challenging everywhere due to the pre-existing problems (for details, see Eurofound, 2023a), the scale of the inflow into most countries, and the barriers to employment (described in Chapter 2).

Even in countries where the employment level is high and the housing situation seems relatively good (e.g. Estonia and Lithuania), temporary housing seems to be predominant. In **Lithuania**, where most Ukrainians are likely to have independently found and rented accommodation over time,<sup>10</sup> more than half of respondents (52%) indicated in a survey (LT1) that they had a temporary place to live, and 46% reported that their residence was permanent. However, 2% of respondents indicated that they did not have a place to live or that the issue of their residence was being resolved.

Countries have tried various solutions. The pressure of high demand from refugee families, which can be seen in all countries, led to the speeding up or extension of supply-side programmes and an attempt to address housing shortages, for example by improving ‘the portfolio of (social) affordable rental housing’ (Habitat for Humanity International, 2023). In **Ireland** the government is developing a more long-term response to accommodating both Ukrainian and other international protection applicants, including the provision of public services. The government has plans to construct 700 modular homes to accommodate international protection applicants. However, there are indications of planning difficulties. The government also has plans to construct publicly funded and permanent integration centres, rather than using existing hotels, conference centres and similar buildings, which can act as a gateway towards more permanent accommodation. It remains to be seen to what extent these will prove successful.

Similarly, in **Poland**, a large renovation programme (the Housing Package Bill, adopted in 2020), which provides local governments with funding for renovation, was amended in July 2022: procedures were simplified

so that the municipalities could use the funds on a larger scale, renovating and adapting empty properties for housing. The fund is designed to make it easier to access flats, even in cities. Local governments also try to accelerate all housing programmes, including renovations: these now take the form of social housing initiatives. Subsidies and credit are available from the government’s housing programme; they can cover up to 80% of investment costs. With a view to the Ukrainian refugees more specifically, the government set up the National Aid Fund: this refunds the expenses of measures supporting Ukrainian refugees (not only housing but emergency and social aid, health services and social benefits). In addition to national sources, the National Aid Fund is also financed by EU funds and loans from international organisations (Habitat for Humanity International, 2023).

### Challenges with long-term housing

The key challenge with the transition to long-term housing derives mainly from insufficient housing supply. Lack of housing is a serious problem even in the more affluent western European countries, for example in **Luxembourg**, where this, together with the cost of housing in a tight market, is identified as a main problem in the transition to private housing. Similarly, in **Estonia**, there is not enough housing available on the market within a budget suitable for Ukrainian refugees. This is especially true for those who are living in government housing, since they are often the ones who do not manage to move to long-term housing due to being more financially vulnerable (e.g. elderly people, people with disabilities, mothers with young children). For these people, the accommodation is provided by the Social Insurance Board (see the section ‘Other (temporary) solutions’). The refugees were supposed to leave this housing in May and June 2023. In countries such as **Romania**, it is emphasised that long-term housing solutions require sustained funding and resources. Problems with private renting have also been raised in several countries. For example, in **Latvia**, the (usual) practice of landlords asking for a security deposit of one month’s rent is a big obstacle for many refugees. In the private rental market, landlords are reluctant to rent apartments to foreigners and even more so to refugees because they are afraid of not getting paid; they prefer long-term rentals. Consequently, people often had to sign unfavourable contracts demanding excessive rents. This was reported in **Slovakia** and **Slovenia**, but may well be a general problem in other countries as well.

10 This can be assumed, although precise information is not available.

### **Regional dispersion**

In countries where accommodation provision relies on municipalities (e.g. **Denmark, Finland and Norway**), long-term housing poses other kinds of challenges related to the regional dispersion of refugees (although the challenges also derive mainly from housing shortages). For example, in **Denmark**, when applying for residency under the Danish Special Act (also known as the ‘Ukrainian law’ and adopted on 16 March 2022), Ukrainians were able to indicate the municipality in which they wanted to live. Overall, 88% of respondents were offered long-term housing in their chosen municipality (Ministry of Immigration and Integration of Denmark, 2023). However, according to a report by the Danish local municipalities, Danish Refugee Council and the Red Cross, the municipalities have also experienced challenges in moving refugees from temporary to medium- and longer-term housing solutions. Many municipalities have been and continue to be challenged by having to house so many refugees in such a short time. This has put pressure on housing capacity, and the municipalities have been forced to acquire and use several new accommodation sites, which, in many situations, have been costly. The increased pressure has also resulted in Ukrainian refugees being accommodated in housing of a very diverse nature and of different standards (KL et al, 2023). Most municipalities are working to offer refugees permanent accommodation, both to free up temporary places of residence and to give refugees a permanent base. This, however, requires the available housing in the municipality to be affordable for the Ukrainian refugees. One specific challenge here is that Ukrainian women receive lower social benefits due to being registered as married, even though they are effectively acting as single parents in Denmark, as their spouses remain in Ukraine. As a result, it is often only when the refugee finds employment that they can afford a permanent residence (KL et al, 2023). The report also highlights that many Ukrainians hope to return home soon, and thus do not want to commit to a fixed lease. This can create challenges in the relationship between the municipality and the individual refugee. However, the municipalities have the right to ask a refugee to move out of their temporary place of residence if they are offered permanent housing that they can afford (KL et al, 2023).

In **Finland**, since March 2023, all Ukrainian refugees under temporary protection who have stayed in Finland for a minimum of a year have had the right to a municipality of residence. Transferring there is voluntary. From March 2023, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, together with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, started transferring Ukrainians with

temporary protection to municipalities and welfare regions when they are granted a municipality of residence. They can receive healthcare from municipalities and welfare regions in the same way as Finnish citizens. Temporary protection holders are not entitled to a specific allowance helping them to transfer from reception centres or other temporary accommodation to long-term housing. However, the reception centre can provide guidance on finding a rental apartment. By contrast, a municipality of residence does entitle the person to the national housing allowance, which can help those with low or no income to obtain a long-term housing contract. It is estimated that tens of thousands of refugees are likely to require a municipality of residence. The number of Ukrainians entitled to transfer to a municipality of residence during early spring 2023 was about 14,000. All of them were not expected to apply, but the authorities did expect a large share to apply (Helsingin Sanomat, 2023). By April 2023, the number of Ukrainians who had received a municipality of residence stood at 4,167 (according to data from the VATT Institute for Economic Research, Data Room).

In **Norway**, the aim is to settle refugees in all parts of the country, in both large and small municipalities; the municipalities themselves can decide whether to accept refugees. The Directorate for Integration and Diversity decides where the individual refugee is offered a place to live (it asked all municipalities to accept a total of 35,000 refugees in 2023). The directorate does this based on what is known about the individual and about the opportunities and capacities in each municipality. The settlement of newly arrived refugees takes place in areas with relevant public services, training programmes and opportunities to participate in education, the labour market and society. After a refugee has been settled, the municipality is responsible for training and integration work and all other municipal services. The municipalities receive grants from the directorate to meet the costs of settlement and provide for the integration of refugees. Between 1 January and 26 April 2023, the municipalities settled twice as many refugees as had been agreed.

Regional dispersion is also important in **France**, where social housing plays a larger role than in most other countries (see the section ‘Social housing’). Here, the first line of action, at the request of the government, was to direct refugees to areas where the pressure on social housing was not too high.<sup>11</sup> The state therefore made 8,000 homes available to refugees in the second quarter of 2022. Through private rental housing and social housing, it was able to house 25,000 Ukrainians

11 The aim at that time, a few months before the presidential election in May 2022, was to avoid people who had been waiting for social housing for a long time being pushed down the housing queue by Ukrainian refugees, which would have risked creating tensions.

by the end of 2022, twice as many as had been housed by June. But, as *Le Monde* (2022) points out, there are still difficulties in relieving congestion in the Île-de-France and Alpes-Maritimes regions. According to reports, however, Ukrainians are sometimes reluctant to move away from the big cities. Many countries have a similar experience: most refugees settle in major cities. This is the case, for example, in **Lithuania**, where they have settled mainly in Kaunas, Klaipėda and Vilnius (according to the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of Lithuania (2023)). Another example is Spain, where most employment opportunities are concentrated in two metropolitan areas: Madrid and Barcelona. This is the case particularly for high-skilled jobs but also for low-skilled ones. However, these urban areas are also most affected by high household rent in relation to average salaries, and places in public accommodation are not sufficient. This is forcing thousands of Ukrainian refugees to leave the country or to move to other Spanish regions.

### Conclusions and policy pointers on housing

- The difficulties with providing housing for Ukrainian refugees, especially when seeking long-term solutions for them, exposed the many underlying housing problems that countries face.
- Even though there are some common patterns in housing provision for Ukrainian refugees across the Member States and Norway, countries varied in the extent to which they were able to establish more permanent solutions. In some of the countries covered, temporary housing is still predominant (for instance, in **Ireland**); in others, housing solutions seem more established (**Estonia**).
- So far, accommodation offered by private households (but also by NGOs and other organisations) has played a major role in almost all countries. Although most of these schemes have been supported financially, these offers seem to be declining. Not only was help provided by many support measures in the Member States and Norway, but the EU was also active (e.g. with its Safe Homes initiative) in providing guidance and presenting good practices, including innovative partnership and community sponsorship schemes.
- Many measures have been introduced to support the housing of Ukrainian refugees. These include some that can help at least temporarily and seem relatively cost-efficient, such as converting unused non-residential (mainly office) buildings into accommodation and developing plans for upgrading/using vacant residential buildings (e.g. in **Poland**).

- In the case of Ukrainian refugees, the scope for dispersal policies is limited, since the refugees are entitled to free movement within the country (and to leave to go to another country). In practice, however, refugees (especially vulnerable groups, who often cannot find accommodation on their own) have no choice but to accept housing or places in reception centres in areas other than where they initially arrived; this can cause disruption (this happened, for example, in **Finland**). In addition, in countries where municipal housing or social housing plays a major role (**Denmark** and **Finland** are examples of the former, **France** an example of the latter), there are greater possibilities for dispersal. However, this can lead to challenges, not only due to limited capacities in certain municipalities and limited social housing options (with long waiting lists, especially in metropolitan areas) but also due to a possible lack of job opportunities in remote areas where housing is provided for refugees.
- There are clear examples that problems start once the refugees leave the reception centres or other temporary accommodation and seek long-term solutions. Private rental markets do not seem to be an option for most Ukrainian refugees in a lot of countries. In many, the rent is often so high that tenants feel insecure about their housing situation. In several countries, the regulations proved inefficient (e.g. in **Hungary, Poland, Romania** and **Slovakia**; Habitat for Humanity International, 2023). In addition, rent is particularly high precisely in the, mainly metropolitan, areas where there are many job opportunities. In addition, not having trust in the refugees' ability to pay, both private landlords and real estate companies tend to ignore potential Ukrainian customers (e.g. in **Slovakia** and **Spain**).

### Policy pointers

- Long-term housing provision for Ukrainian refugees can be facilitated when many of the pre-existing housing problems in the Member States and Norway are addressed (such as the challenges posed by inadequate regulation of the private rental market). These problems are often so complex that policymakers in individual countries may consider acting on more than one dimension, that is, introducing several measures simultaneously (Eurofound, 2023a, p. 56). For example, the shares of households receiving rent subsidies are particularly high in countries where social housing or municipal housing is predominant: France (21%), the Netherlands (18%) and Finland (14%) (Eurofound, 2023a, p. 2). The specific situation of the Ukrainian refugees and their needs, however, should always be carefully considered and integrated into strategies.

- Some countries have introduced (and have experience with) certain solutions to remedy, for example, severe inequalities in their housing markets. The aim of social housing is to ease these tensions. However, even in those countries where this measure plays a major role, waiting lists are quite common, showing a lack of capacity (Eurofound, 2023a). Substantial additional funding and investment is therefore needed to cut the waiting lists, include Ukrainian refugees in these schemes and upgrade the current supply. EU funds may help, but, for such a large-scale investment, multi-donor support may be needed.
- An important type of mainstream affordable housing initiative that many Member States have introduced is the Housing First type, aiming to offer housing for homeless people. It remains to be seen to what extent this kind of measure can be used to accommodate vulnerable groups among Ukrainian refugees, but the capacity to house homeless people is usually low.
- Dispersal policies play a limited role in most countries. When, however, there is some scope for dispersal, access to job market and public services (schooling, healthcare) should be a key consideration when areas/municipalities are designated.
- Similarly, when addressing a shortage of housing supply through large supply-side investment schemes, an important consideration for finding sites is the area's connection to the public transport network, other public services and employment opportunities (the need to look at a broader context when physical housing solutions are designed is also emphasised in Eurofound, 2023a).
- By now, long-term housing solutions should be preferred, not only due to a decline in accommodation offered by private households (linked to solidarity fatigue; European Commission, 2023c) but also due to refugees settling in as time passes and being included in the labour market, which is essential. The main objective should be independent living. However, transitional arrangements and large-capacity temporary arrangements for new arrivals and/or vulnerable groups may still be needed (e.g. in Ireland, programmes such as the building of modular homes are planned; this is an example other countries may want to follow).

NGOs and other intermediary organisations played a pivotal role in finding accommodation for refugees and matching private hosts or landlords with tenants. Their role continues to be important, and it is essential that the authorities and the municipalities cooperate with them when long-term housing solutions are provided. Interventions by intermediary organisations can be vital (especially in the case of vulnerable

groups), for example in cases of non-payment of rent or where there is a risk of eviction. According to experiences reported:

*Intermediary organisations can play an important role when it is difficult to ensure the appropriate use of subsidies – for example, because the market discriminates against certain groups of people or landlords have no capacity or know-how to implement programs ... Typical intermediaries in the affordable and social housing sector are social rental agencies that provide various forms of guarantees to facilitate the entry of high-risk (vulnerable and discriminated against) groups into the private and municipal rental sector.*

(Habitat for Humanity International, 2023, p. 76).

In view of the composition of the Ukrainian refugees (mostly women with children), the intervention of these organisations could be essential, for example in cases of exploitation, violence or abuse. These organisations may also help in mitigating and minimising the risk of substandard conditions in private accommodation.

- More precise and comparable data on the housing situation of Ukrainian refugees are essential for guiding and providing solutions both in the individual countries and at EU level. Although the EU will fund a count of homeless people for the first time, definition is an important issue. For example, many Ukrainian refugees still live with volunteers, in holiday homes or in similar set-ups that may not be registered; these people are 'would-be homeless people' according to the German definition because they depend on goodwill, not a contract. It is known from some initial, sporadic data that the number of homeless people in Germany has increased to 372,000 due to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees.

## Childcare and compulsory education

In view of the composition of the refugee group – that is, the predominance of women with children (see Chapter 1) – this integration area is of special importance. As can be seen from Figure A2, around three in four Ukrainian displaced people under temporary protection are women and children (Eurostat [migr\_asytpfm]).

This section focuses mainly on Eurofound's own investigation, which updated (and largely confirmed) the findings of previous research carried out within individual countries (national surveys; see Annex 1, Table A1) or covering multiple countries (often conducted by international organisations, such as the OECD, the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), UNHCR or EU agencies such as the European Union Agency for Asylum or FRA). Most of the data/information in this section refer to the 2022/2023 school year (unless otherwise indicated).

The first subsection focuses on the varying practices of early childhood education and care (ECEC), where some country examples are highlighted. The challenges of integrating Ukrainian children into compulsory education are then presented (the barriers to accessing childcare and related services have also been investigated, for example, by the OECD, Save the Children International and UNHCR). In this subsection, some estimates of the scale of attendance of Ukrainian refugee children are also described. The third and final section focuses on the supporting measures.

### ECEC – Key challenges

Not only can proper childcare, including ECEC, contribute to the labour market participation of mothers, but ECEC also plays a significant role in developing children’s cognitive, emotional and social skills, which are indispensable for their performance at school, a successful career and societal integration in general. Therefore, ECEC’s role in human capital development cannot be underestimated. In addition, ECEC also has an important role to play in including children with vulnerable family backgrounds, helping to overcome their initial disadvantages.

According to the statistics produced and published by Unicef, in early 2023, only one in three Ukrainian refugee children under the age of six attended ECEC; this figure refers to the situation not only in the Member States and Norway but also in other European countries (Baghdasaryan et al, 2023). Data on both the number of young children (a more detailed age breakdown of the children) and their attendance in ECEC are rarely available, which is a challenge for planning and improving the inclusion of children. Not only do the ECEC arrangements vary in the countries covered, but so too do the numbers of those children who are enrolled in ECEC. At the same time, evidence shows that in 11 countries (Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Romania and Spain; see Unicef, 2023a) there was an increase in ECEC enrolment. Even within this group of countries, various challenges have been reported. For example, in **Bulgaria**, a lack of capacity can be observed specifically in those cities/towns (Burgas, Plovdiv, Sofia and Varna) where most Ukrainians are settled. Similarly, shortages or insufficient places in childcare are reported in **Hungary**. In contrast, hardly any problems were indicated in two countries where the ECEC enrolment rate increased: **Denmark** and **Luxembourg**. In **Denmark**, although some municipalities with pre-existing ECEC capacity problems experienced challenges in receiving Ukrainian refugees, all children quickly gained access to both ECEC and schooling through their municipalities.

In **Luxembourg**, parents of children of preschool age (three to five years, in cycle 1 of the Luxembourg basic school system) are offered enrolment in a basic school in their commune of residence. In **Finland**, which also belongs to the group seeing increasing enrolment, there are certain gaps in ECEC provision: for example, if a parent is studying or working full time, they have a right to a place in ECEC for children younger than school age, but for those who are out of work/study (but for whom a lack of childcare may be a barrier to employment), provision of the service is not so straightforward. Therefore, the recommendation given to the Finnish authorities was that ‘reconciling employment and childcare should be supported by actively providing daycare places for children and arrangements such as part-time work for parents’ (FI1).

In **Poland**, it is especially in rural areas that shortages of places are reported. Similarly, in **Slovenia**, a lack of capacity poses a challenge in certain municipalities (no increase in enrolment to ECEC was reported in either of these countries; Unicef, 2023b). Lack of preschool capacity, especially in bigger towns, is a pre-existing, long-term challenge in **Slovakia**, where a key source of difficulty for both preschools (30% of them) and primary schools (47%) was the increased cost connected with the inclusion and education of children from Ukraine (SK2).

As can be seen, pre-existing capacity problems were identified as a key challenge. Other research (see OECD, 2023c; Unicef, 2023b) confirmed its importance. Financial problems also appear among the main challenges (as confirmed by the OECD survey of February 2023 (OECD, 2023c), where four countries indicated these as a barrier). Problems with language knowledge were identified as important by both OECD and Unicef research as well, but the national contributions to Eurofound’s investigation mentioned this in relation to compulsory education instead. According to Unicef findings, other barriers (related mainly to demand-side challenges, such as uncertainties regarding returning to Ukraine and lack of accommodation close to ECEC services) were also mentioned (Unicef, 2023a). Just as with the language problems, these difficulties were reported by Eurofound correspondents in relation to compulsory education (covered in the next section).

**Table 5: Specific problems with childcare services in selected countries**

Country	Unavailability	Lack of or insufficient capacity	Affordability issues
Bulgaria		X	
Estonia	X		
Finland	X		
France	X	X	
Greece	X		
Hungary	X		
Ireland	X		X
Poland	X	X	
Slovakia		X	

Source: *National contributions*

### Specific problems with childcare

The importance of care responsibilities (as a barrier to employment, see Chapter 2) is clear from the country contributions, where the responsibilities are mentioned frequently and in several countries specific problems with childcare arrangements/services are also identified. Table 5 gives a brief overview of these.

As can be seen, the unavailability of childcare services (especially in remote areas) is a major barrier in many countries. This barrier cannot be underestimated, especially if it is considered that in many countries a high share of refugees are mothers of children of school or preschool age. For example, in **Finland** these mothers make up over half of the Ukrainians arriving in the country; only 31% of all respondents to a national survey (FI1) reported living with a spouse. Therefore, the availability of childcare or the lack thereof can strongly influence refugees' presence in the labour market (their activity rates and even employment rates). For example, in **Estonia** the proportion of those who are inactive is higher among those with children under the age of seven than among others; family commitments, including taking care of young children, were indicated as the main reason for inactivity (57%; EE1). In **Poland**, employment rates among refugees are higher in regions where more children participate in the education system (Deloitte, 2022). Regional problems in this context are also apparent in **Bulgaria**, where lack of capacity in nurseries and kindergartens is particularly severe in Burgas, Plovdiv, Sofia and Varna, where most Ukrainians have settled. Taking care of children is reported to be a barrier by about 16.6% of respondents to the Winter Needs survey (BG1).

Even in countries where the issue of availability is not reported explicitly, lack of (child)care arrangements is alluded to as a problem. For example, in **Lithuania**, care responsibilities for children (or for elderly family

members) are identified as one of the reasons for not being ready to work (i.e. being inactive) among those still registering with the PES. Limited opportunities for flexible work schedules could obviously be related to this. Similarly, in **Romania**, incompatible work schedules are identified as an important barrier: in a national survey (RO5), approximately 26% of respondents mentioned that the work schedules offered did not suit their needs. Within this context, conflicts with family responsibilities are explicitly reported in the national contribution. For example, a lack of or insufficient opportunity for part-time work is mentioned in **Finland**, **Latvia** and **Poland**. In **Poland**, more than one-quarter of single mothers (28%) are looking for part-time work. This option is rarely available in the country (NBP, 2023). Similarly, in Latvia, young mothers who want to work part-time find it harder to get a job; this is also the case for people already living in **Latvia**, so it is a problem throughout the country in general. In **Finland**, one of the studies examined for this report recommended that the authorities actively provide 'daycare places for children and arrangements such as part-time work for parents' (FI1, p. 53). In **Hungary**, lack of childcare is mentioned as a reason why women are unable to take up part-time work.

As can be seen from Table 5, affordability issues are mentioned explicitly only in **Ireland**; the national survey mentions not only the problem of the cost of childcare but also its unavailability (IE1).

### Compulsory education – Integration difficulties

In addition to the language barrier, the other key obstacles to school enrolment reported across host countries include a shortage of teachers, schools' unpreparedness for teaching refugee children, differences in curricula between Ukraine and the host country, and lack of or insufficient schooling capacity.



Three countries identified a lack of motivation on the part of refugee children due to the uncertainty and possibility of return as a further obstacle (see the overview of challenges in Table 6). Findings of other, related research projects (see, for example, OECD, 2023c; UNHCR, 2023a; Unicef, 2023b) largely confirm these obstacles.

In **Estonia**, according to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Education in 2022 (Foresight Centre, 2022), 57% of schools that have accepted Ukrainian pupils responded that students have adapted well. However, the need to help these students catch up means additional labour for teachers and support workers, which has exacerbated the existing shortage of education personnel and the work overload for teachers. Most Ukrainian students go to school in Estonian regions that already face a shortage of teachers (e.g. Tallinn). The survey also mentions that many Estonian schools have received support from Ukrainian refugee colleagues, who translate materials, teach or act as support workers for students.

In **Finland**, most parents complained that they did not have enough information about the Finnish education system; only 42% were satisfied with the system (FI1).

Motivation to integrate into the host school system seems to be low in **Slovakia**: according to a representative survey among teachers, about 30% of Ukrainian pupils are not interested in education in Slovak. These children are very willing to return to their home country as soon as possible; they consider their stay to be temporary (SK1).

In **Latvia**, the language barrier is the biggest problem for Ukrainian refugee children. Many Ukrainian refugee children are therefore either completing Ukrainian distance education or even trying to study in two schools at the same time. Learning Latvian is an additional learning load for Ukrainian pupils. It is also mentioned that, due to the language barrier, children feel that they do not fit in at school.

In **Slovakia**, legislation establishes the obligation to provide courses on Slovak as a second language to overcome the language barrier. Teacher training is organised by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and its institutions. However, language courses (financed by regional school administration offices) were not used by

schools in the past. Schools and teachers were not sufficiently prepared to teach children from abroad with non-Slovak-speaking backgrounds (CVEK, 2022). Moreover, in primary schools, the language courses were provided in the afternoon. This led to the non-participation of some pupils due to online classes in Ukrainian schools, tiredness in the afternoon or a lack of interest in learning Slovak. A lack of financial resources, mentioned already in relation to ECEC, is also indicated in the CVEK report (2022), which explains that pupils from Ukraine with temporary refuge in Slovakia are not entitled to compulsory education. This is linked to permanent residency, which people from Ukraine with temporary refuge status do not have (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, 2022). However, in November 2023, an amendment was being prepared by the Ministry of Education to make school attendance compulsory for children with temporary refuge status from the 2024/2025 school year (TASR, 2023b). Schools do not receive adequate financial resources from regular normative financing. If the schools enrol pupils from Ukraine, they are eligible for a one-off contribution of €200 to cover increased costs for educating these children. However, this contribution is not sufficient, as it does not cover all the costs of educating children from Ukraine (such as financing psychological support or increased energy costs).

In **Romania**, financial constraints are severe: there are costs associated with school supplies, transport and extracurricular activities. Furthermore, concern is looming among educational service providers about securing sustainable funding. They fear the potential discontinuation of their services in the absence of adequate financial support, implying that additional resources are urgently needed to ensure access to continuous education for Ukrainian refugees.

In **Slovenia**, interviewees stressed the burden on children who take Slovenian and Ukrainian classes in parallel because they are afraid of not getting their Slovenian education recognised, despite the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science issuing guidance to Ukrainian schools on assessing learning outcomes in foreign schools (see European School Education Platform, 2023). Those who only attend Ukrainian schools online are exposed to social isolation and suffer from apathy.

**Table 6: Challenges encountered when accessing/attending compulsory schooling in selected countries**

	Estonia	Finland	Greece	Hungary	Ireland	Latvia	Lithuania
Lack of or insufficient schooling capacity							
Shortage of teachers	X	X			X		X
Costs and financial constraints							
Lack of teaching assistants							X
Language barrier	X		X	X	X	X	X
School's unpreparedness for integration/lack of experience in teaching bilingual/multilingual classes	X			X			
Differences in curricula (between the host country and Ukraine)	X			X			X
Lack of social network/limited after-school activities							
Lack of information		X					
Insufficient motivation (e.g. due to intention to return to Ukraine or go to another country)			X				
	Luxembourg	Malta	Poland	Romania	Slovakia	Slovenia	
Lack of or insufficient schooling capacity			X	X	X		
Shortage of teachers			X		X		
Costs and financial constraints				X	X		
Lack of teaching assistants					X		
Language barrier	X		X	X		X	
School's unpreparedness for integration/lack of experience in teaching bilingual/multilingual classes			X		X		
Differences in curricula (between the host country and Ukraine)		X	X				
Lack of social network/limited after-school activities						X	
Lack of information			X				
Insufficient motivation (e.g. due to intention to return to Ukraine or go to another country)			X		X		

Source: *National contributions*

### Ukrainian refugee children's school enrolment rates

It has become clear from the national contributions that practices also vary in the case of compulsory education: in some countries, attendance is compulsory; in others, due partly to school capacity problems, physical attendance may not even be required. For example, in **Hungary**, registering a child in school is a condition of receiving support under temporary protection status. However, interviews revealed that some schools offer loopholes for Ukrainian refugees, registering children who then do not attend school (see Menedék, 2023).

Although a direct comparison of educational attendance data across countries is challenging – given that very few countries have administrative data and so the estimates must be based on surveys, which are

often not representative – the data clearly reflect this variety (see Table 7).

According to UNHCR estimates, on average, only about half of refugee children from Ukraine have been enrolled in schools in their host countries (in Europe, not just in the Member States) (UNHCR, 2023a). In addition to a lack of or insufficient capacity, this can be attributed to parents' preference for their children to attend Ukrainian schools remotely. Understandably, this preference is strong among those parents who wish to return to Ukraine.

The number of pupils enrolled in both **Austria** and **Germany** increased between the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 school years, reflecting the increased inflow and the fact that these countries are destination countries (Unicef, 2023b). The numbers given by

**Table 7: Indicative data (estimates) on the enrolment of Ukrainian refugee children in kindergartens/schools in selected countries**

	Share of Ukrainian children in kindergarten (% of their cohort)	Share of Ukrainian children in primary school (% of their cohort)	Share of Ukrainian pupils in secondary school (% of their cohort)	Total share of Ukrainian children (< 18) enrolled (% of all Ukrainian children)
Bulgaria				17 <sup>a</sup>
Czechia <sup>b</sup>		90	50	
Denmark	71 <sup>c</sup>	87 <sup>d</sup>		
Estonia				81 <sup>e</sup>
Germany	50 <sup>f</sup>			80 <sup>b</sup>
Ireland		94	84	91
Italy				79
Latvia				36 <sup>g</sup>
Lithuania				61 <sup>h</sup>
Luxembourg				95
Poland				31
Romania				14
Slovenia	42	65	21	
Sweden				79 <sup>i</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Among children aged 5–17; survey data (BG1). <sup>b</sup> Data from UNHCR (2023a). <sup>c</sup> Age group: 0–5 years. <sup>d</sup> Age group: 6–16 years (lower secondary school included), 87%; 74% in upper secondary school. <sup>e</sup> Survey data (EE1). <sup>f</sup> Data from second round of the IAB-BiB/FRIDA-BAMF-SOEP<sup>12</sup> survey, conducted at the beginning of 2023 (Brücker et al, 2023). <sup>g</sup> Share of children in general education (not in kindergarten) among all school-age children (7–18 years) who arrived in Latvia. <sup>h</sup> Estimate based on a Lithuanian Red Cross survey conducted in January 2023 (according to that survey, an additional 5% of respondents intend to register their children at Lithuanian schools in the future). <sup>i</sup> Survey data (respondents: municipalities).  
Sources: National contributions, unless otherwise indicated

Eurofound's correspondents are in line with the OECD data (see OECD, 2023c). However, no percentage of enrolment is available. Nevertheless, in **Austria**, since September 2022, when the legislative provisions on compulsory schooling came into force, a rate of close to 100% can be assumed.

In contrast, in certain countries, which are apparently transit countries rather than destinations, there is a downward trend among pupils from Ukraine actively attending school or kindergarten. This is because many families are returning home or, more commonly, moving to other EU countries (this is the case in **Greece**, for example).

As can be seen from Table 7, the enrolment rates vary to a large extent by country, ranging between 14% (**Romania**) and 95% (**Luxembourg**). In some important receiving countries, such as **Poland** and **Romania**, the rates are low, confirming the UNHCR data. Although, according to UNHCR estimates, the enrolment rate for children of compulsory school age in **Poland** is higher

(44%), the Eurofound data may take into account younger children as well, which could explain the lower rate. In the case of **Romania**, Eurofound's data are very close to those of UNHCR, which estimates the rate at 15%. One of the reasons for these low rates could be that there is no mandatory enrolment in either of these countries. Similarly, in **Latvia**, mandatory enrolment does not apply to upper secondary schools (see OECD, 2023c). Upper secondary schooling is not mandatory in **Estonia** either, but the general enrolment rate is higher there. Therefore, there could be other factors behind the low rate – for example, capacity problems – and further evidence may be needed. However, as many people in Estonia speak Russian, language appears to be less of a problem, and that may play some role in the higher rate.

In **Finland**, compulsory education applies to all children under temporary protection who have a municipality of residence in the same way that it does for other children aged between 6 and 18 years (Finnish National Agency for Education, undated).

12 Cooperation between the Research Centre of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees with the Institute for Employment Research, the Federal Institute for Population Research and the Socio-Economic Panel at DIW Berlin.

## Supporting measures

Table 6 shows that, in most countries, language is a major barrier encountered when accessing/attending compulsory schooling (just as it is in the case of labour market integration). This is confirmed by other research findings.<sup>13</sup> For example, according to the OECD survey, this was the barrier identified by most countries (not all are Member States) (OECD, 2023c). The other key barrier is teacher shortages, which may be closely linked to a lack of or insufficient capacity (as can be seen in Poland and Slovakia, where both barriers are indicated) and lack of space. Accordingly, there are measures in place to try to address these problems. As will be discussed in subsequent sections, besides attempts to remedy the lack of capacity, many countries have introduced language courses to help Ukrainian pupils. In addition, various other (often innovative) arrangements have been introduced to facilitate the integration of Ukrainian refugee children.

### Measures to overcome capacity problems in ECEC/compulsory schools

In **Slovakia**, short-term measures include the amendment of legislation so that it allows the establishment of temporary preschool classes in premises other than preschools. The long-term measure is the allocation of €135 million to increase preschool capacities and €102 million to increase primary school capacities; this is funded by the Recovery and Resilience Facility. As additional support, a register to help find preschools and primary and secondary schools with spaces and a register for Ukrainian teachers willing to find a suitable job in a school in Slovakia have been created.

### Measures to overcome language problems and curriculum differences

In **Ireland**, in recognition of the difficulty that Ukrainian children may have with the language, the Department of Education has set up regional education and language teams (REALTs) that organise English language classes in schools enrolling Ukrainian children. The REALT initiative also ensures that Ukrainian children are enrolled in a school as close as possible to their accommodation.

In **Estonia**, a special school was created for Ukrainian refugees who want to obtain Estonian education system diplomas. It provides both a primary and a secondary education equivalent to the national curriculum in

Estonia. The school provides both Estonian and English language lessons, but students can also study in Ukrainian with other Ukrainians. Educational institutions were given a lot of autonomy in the management of Ukrainian refugees, so this is a separate school providing education for only refugee students. The school operates 60% in Estonian and 40% in Ukrainian, and the students have five Estonian language lessons per day. The school is initially opening for grades 7–12. After they graduate, students will get the same diploma as other Estonian students, which can be used to apply to both Estonian and international universities. The education provided by the school is also accepted by the Ukrainian government, so the credits can be transferred when they return to Ukraine. In other schools, where Ukrainian students were integrated into existing classes, Ukrainians had a lot of problems with lack of comprehension and blending in, but in this school they are surrounded by other refugees.

In **Latvia**, the government supported a solution proposed by the Ministry of Education and Science in May 2022 to organise summer camps for children and young people to provide psychoemotional support, facilitate Latvian language learning and promote the integration of Ukrainian refugee children (lsm.lv, 2022a). However, the programme did not go very well, with much of the funding remaining unused. Overall, only one in four of the approximately 3,000 Ukrainian pupils learned Latvian during the summer (lsm.lv, 2022b). The ministry believes that the initiative failed because there was not enough time to prepare the courses. In April 2023, additional training and follow-up activities were arranged to support Ukrainian refugee children (lvportals.lv, 2023). For pupils in years 10 and 11, in all subject courses where the learning performance assessment score at the end of the course or at the end of the 2022/2023 school year was lower than four points or no assessment was obtained, additional learning activities and follow-up examinations were organised for a maximum of three weeks until 25 August 2023. In order to provide more support for Latvian language learning, schools will be able to provide children with an individual learning plan for years 1–8 and 10–11, respectively, in the general education curriculum and for years 1–3 in the vocational education curriculum.

<sup>13</sup> Language does not feature so prominently as a barrier to accessing child protection services in the Impact and Save the Children International survey (2023): it is fourth after 'long waiting time', 'costs of services' and 'unavailability of staff'. However, in that survey, child protection services included not only educational services but also health and social services. To view the survey dashboard, see [https://info.impact-repository.org/ukr/dashboard\\_ukraine\\_refugee\\_cp\\_cash\\_survey/](https://info.impact-repository.org/ukr/dashboard_ukraine_refugee_cp_cash_survey/)

In **Slovakia**, almost 98% of secondary schools provided an adaptation period for new pupils from Ukraine. Its length was specific to individuals and depended, for example, on the pupil's age, their region (*oblast*) in Ukraine and their experience of the war.

- The main support activities to facilitate inclusion (in almost 50% of secondary schools) consisted of enhancing multicultural education and eliminating the language barrier.
- About one-third of schools prepared learning material in Ukrainian (SK2).

In **Romania**, while language courses are in place, demand outstrips current capacity, suggesting the necessity for expanded language support programmes.

### Other measures

In **Romania**, a registration system for Ukrainian refugee children was set up. It aims to quickly identify, register and monitor Ukrainian children who are either in transit or temporarily staying in Romania. This measure is also utilised to detect potential situations of abuse, neglect or trafficking as early as possible, and ensure the protection and rights of children. Since its launch, almost 20,000 Ukrainian children who fled the war have been successfully registered. Various efforts have also been made to ensure that all Ukrainian refugee children have access to high-quality education services. This includes diverse learning pathways, such as online learning, special classes and after-school activities. These learning hubs are facilitated by Ukrainian-speaking educators or operate in a third language, such as English. The aim is to facilitate the integration of refugee children into the Romanian education system. In addition, Romanian language courses, mental health and psychosocial support, and recreational activities are provided to support their integration.

In **Ireland**, the Department of Education has issued several guidance notes to schools on how they should support Ukrainian children in their schools, with particular emphasis on the child's well-being and psychological welfare (see Department of Education and NEPS, 2022).

In **Malta**, during the summer months, the government offered Ukrainian children the opportunity to attend summer school free of charge; however, this was available only for a half-day, which proved challenging for Ukrainian mothers wanting to work in full-time employment.

Recognising that helping Ukrainian refugees to adapt is a complex task, new positions were created for this purpose. In **Luxembourg**, 209 education agents have been hired to ensure the reception of Ukrainian refugee students in municipal schools. In **Slovakia**, a new position of adaptation process coordinator was established in 7% of schools (SK2).

In **Slovakia**, the National Institute of Education and Youth, following the Comenius Institute survey outcomes, published guidelines about the inclusion of children and pupils from Ukraine in Slovak schools on its website. It also provides information about courses on Ukrainian, links to Slovak-Ukrainian dictionaries, information about the education system in Ukraine, guidelines for pupils and parents from Ukraine and a buddy programme for Ukrainian children and pupils. The main objective of the buddy programme is to help foreign children who are pupils in primary and secondary schools (particularly from Ukraine) to integrate into the schools in Slovakia. It was initiated in May/June 2022, and the official programme lasted until the end of the 2021/2022 school year. The programme initiators recommend providing buddy relationships for a maximum of three months. The schools develop and deliver the programme, which is funded by EU sources within the recovery and resilience plan.

### More flexibility

In **Denmark**, due to the Special Law allowing displaced Ukrainians temporary residence permits, the municipalities responsible for daycare centres and basic schools were facing great pressure, having to take in more people than they normally would. The agreement between the political parties on increased flexibility in the reception of displaced children allows schools and daycare institutions to make local adjustments to how education and ECEC are offered. Moreover, it allows Ukrainian children to continue to receive their education primarily in Ukrainian. The agreement has, among other things, made it possible for schools and municipalities to use Ukrainian and English as the languages of instruction and stipulates that parts of the teaching can be organised as virtual teaching, something that would not have been possible under the standard education legislation. The only subject that is required to be taught in Danish is Danish as a second language. The agreement has allowed schools to create introductory classes for displaced children and young people where teaching is partly based on virtual Ukrainian teaching materials, such as materials from the All-Ukrainian Online School. There is, however, a requirement that the contents of the lessons at an overall level adhere to the general requirements for primary and secondary education in Denmark.

Factors in the success of this approach are that the children are provided with the necessary networks, Danish language skills and academic qualifications to enable them to navigate Danish society now and in the future. However, challenges still exist. These include having sufficient staff to overcome capacity overload and ensuring that the staff have the right competencies to receive the children and young people from Ukraine, such as language skills and the ability to deal with children with trauma. While language and cultural

differences seem to be a barrier, they do not affect access to education. In terms of capacity, however, some municipalities with existing issues in terms of capacity in ECEC have experienced challenges in receiving Ukrainian refugees. Nevertheless, all children have quickly gained access to both ECEC and schooling through their municipalities (KL et al, 2023).

### Transitional arrangements/options

In **Norway**, primary school pupils with a mother tongue other than Norwegian or Sámi are also entitled to special language training until they have sufficient skills in Norwegian to follow the standard education. Special language training can consist of special Norwegian training, mother-tongue training, bilingual training or a combination of these.

In **Luxembourg**, the Ministry of Education's Department for the Schooling of Foreign Children has set up a one-stop shop for families from Ukraine. After an interview with the families and children, the service offers one or more options to ensure that each child receives a suitable education quickly. The final choice between the possible options lies with the parents. The educational provision for Ukrainian refugee children and young people is mainly organised by six international public schools. Due to the multicultural population, these schools have set up reception classes in English specifically for Ukrainian pupils, as they learn it from the third grade onwards. Alternatively, when the children are ready or if they have the required language skills, they can join a regular international class (optional schooling). Depending on the age of the pupils and as their learning progresses, a second language will be added, either French or German. In exceptional cases, pupils can join a regular international class directly. For this purpose, additional places have been created in existing classes in international schools.

In **Austria**, the city of Vienna established specific classes for Ukrainian children in addition to regular school classes. Known as *Neu in Wien* (New in Vienna) classes, they quickly provide all children arriving to the city with a place in a school, facilitate their integration into the Austrian school system and enable them to quickly learn German while still having support in their native language from an assistant teacher. The classes constitute a special form of the existing German support classes. The lessons are taught in German by two teachers, with a native speaker providing support in Ukrainian and, if necessary, in English. Children of compulsory school age (from six to seven years of age) are taught together in two slots (morning and afternoon). Classes are for up to 25 children. Once the children have become proficient in German, they switch to regular classes. The special language classes are provided if they are needed but have been in the process of being phased out since late in the 2022/2023 school year, with children being integrated into regular classes; however, if the need arises, the classes can quickly be re-established.

There were 4,500 Ukrainian school pupils in Vienna as of February 2023; of those, 1,222 were in 62 New in Vienna classes. Integration has been successful: in early 2023, the city of Vienna changed its strategy towards integrating Ukrainian children into regular classes instead of Ukrainian classes. This has always been the aim from a medium-term perspective. New arrivals to Vienna started in regular classes from the second semester of 2022/2023 onwards. This should involve no difficulties, as regular primary school classes are often quite multicultural anyway. However, those general challenges that have been highlighted before in the example of other countries, namely finding sufficient staff, can be observed here as well. To address this problem, retired primary school teachers have been rehired. Teachers of German as a foreign language and native teachers proficient in Ukrainian (80 such teachers) had been hired by June 2022. The problem of finding space for schooling reported by other countries is also experienced in Austria. As a remedy, some companies offered space; a bank offered space to Ukrainian students in their last year of upper secondary schooling (approximately 18 years old). However, there is no information available on the extent to which these offers have been taken up.

### Conclusions and policy pointers on childcare and schooling

- The enrolment rates still seem to be quite low, especially for ECEC, in many of the countries. This is caused by various obstacles: for refugees, the main one is the language barrier.
- From the point of view of the providers, lack of or insufficient capacity (for instance, in the form of lack of learning space), shortages of teachers/teaching assistants, the school's unpreparedness for integrating pupils/lack of experience in teaching bilingual/multilingual classes, and differences in the curricula taught in Ukraine and in the receiving countries are the issues indicated most often.
- From the point of view of refugees, the main issues included uncertainty about the future (possible return, the waiting dilemma, a possible move to another country) and hence a lack of motivation to invest in language learning. Other issues were a lack of a social network, housing problems and related uncertainties (e.g. possibly moving within the country; see the section 'Housing situation of Ukrainian refugees'). In addition, financial problems can also impede integration, since a lack of financial resources can inhibit, for example, children's participation in extracurricular activities or access to childcare/schooling services when there are issues such as a lack of affordable public transport.

- Many measures have been introduced to remedy most of the barriers, including some innovative schemes. Examples of such measures are language courses, transitional arrangements for facilitating integration into regular classes (such as online courses), after-school activities, separate catching-up classes/courses for Ukrainian students and summer camps.
- As of October 2022, most Child Guarantee national action plans did not include measures specifically targeting Ukrainian children (see Molinuevo and Consolini, 2022). In the future, however, more national action plans will contain these measures. In this way, the specific needs of refugees can be addressed within the framework of the Child Guarantee plans.

### Policy pointers

- As the war becomes protracted and the lives of children continue to be disrupted, it is of the utmost importance to integrate many children into ECEC and, if possible, all or nearly all children into the compulsory education system of the host country.
- ECEC and compulsory schooling are provided at local level; municipalities therefore play an important role in managing the integration initiatives, preparing training materials and reaching out to the refugees themselves (perhaps with the help of NGOs and other voluntary organisations). However, to tackle the capacity problems, teacher shortages and the related financial constraints, nationally coordinated programmes are needed. These should be linked to adjustments in the school or the ECEC system. For example, planned/ongoing reforms in ECEC could take into account the need to integrate Ukrainian refugee children, ‘with a focus on equity, thereby ensuring ECEC services are readily available in areas with higher densities of refugee populations’ (Baghdasaryan et al, 2023).
- Primary and secondary education are not mandatory for Ukrainian refugees in all the countries covered. Due to capacity problems, this is understandable on a temporary basis, but it is not sustainable, especially now in the third school year (2023/2024) since displaced people started arriving in spring 2022. In addition, the gap may be widening between children continuing their main education in Ukrainian schools (remotely, using online tools) and those who have moved to the host country system. This is an issue that has been raised in **Poland**, for example, where increasing the limit of students per class/group has allowed Ukrainian students to be integrated into current classes; however, unless new classes/groups are created and more teachers are recruited, the quality of education will decline (Fundacja Batorego, 2022). If children attend online schooling

only, this could also hinder their integration into the local community of their peers. This not only delays them gaining essential cognitive and other skills that may be needed in the host country, but adversely affects their mental well-being as well.

- Systematic training on refugee integration for teachers is important, especially in those countries that lack experience with large-scale refugee integration (**Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia**). In addition, more training needs to be provided on teaching the host country language as a foreign language (in **Slovakia**, this problem has already been recognised). Schools should also take an active role in helping with the integration of refugee families by organising community programmes and translating key documents into relevant languages (this is a recommendation quoted in the national contribution from **Hungary**).
- Although many of the innovative measures proved effective and successful, they often require additional efforts from both the school personnel (teachers) and the refugee children.

## Healthcare, psychosocial risks and mental health care

This section provides some information on the different practices in the Member States and Norway. The key question is whether they give full access, partial access (not to all displaced people from Ukraine) or access to just emergency services. The focus of this section then turns to the challenges that providers and refugees face (such as shortage of personnel, extra workload placed on healthcare workers and funding in the case of the former, and problems with communication due to the language barrier, procedural/administrative difficulties, prescriptions for medications and different medical practices in the case of the latter). Discussion then turns to psychosocial risks and mental health services, including access issues and possible support measures. Finally, conclusions and policy pointers are provided.

### Access to healthcare – Key issues

According to the latest UNHCR survey round of August 2023, which covered eight Member States (Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia), 30% of respondents who needed healthcare experienced difficulties. These are clearly related to access problems (see Table 8) and to other challenges discussed later in this section. It is important, however, to know the share of those in need. The country examples provide some information, showing that only a minority of refugees have not yet needed healthcare. For example, in **Norway**, according to a survey conducted in 2022, about 20% reported that they had not (yet) needed healthcare services. For those who had been in contact with the healthcare services in

some way, the services received an average score of 3.9 out of 5 points, while ‘access to medicines’ scored somewhat lower (3.5). In **Lithuania**, the share of those who indicated that healthcare services were not relevant to them was lower than in Norway, at around 15% (Lithuanian Red Cross, 2023); this could be because the Lithuanian Red Cross survey was conducted at a later date. Among those who sought out health services, 32% indicated that they had sought them out for their children who were living with them, 25% had acute physical health problems and 19% had chronic diseases. One-third (32%) of respondents who had gone to a healthcare facility indicated that their needs had not been met or had been met only partially, which matches figures for Lithuania that were published in the UNHCR survey of August 2023. The most common reasons given for not having their needs met included the need to pay for (certain) services and not having the necessary treatment extended. Around 11–12% of those whose needs were not met mentioned a language barrier or impolite behaviour on the part of medical staff. In general, people in smaller towns appear to be better informed about access to healthcare services and to have a better opinion of the adequacy of healthcare services. The accessibility of treatment facilities is not a major problem, but some Ukrainians (about 8%), especially those living in smaller or more remote

settlements, have difficulties due to a lack of public transport or distance that they need to travel, for example. Around 40% of respondents indicated that they needed to take prescribed medicines, but almost 90% of them had not been or were not being reimbursed or partially reimbursed for these, and for about 60% of them additional support for the reimbursement of medicines would be relevant.

In general, the Member States have made the necessary changes to their legislation to comply with the Temporary Protection Directive provisions for access to healthcare (European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies and European Commission, 2023). However, as Table 8 shows, there may be certain problems that prevent some groups from accessing the free healthcare provision. In most countries, full coverage is promised, but, as can be seen in the table and the subsequent description of the practices of individual countries, certain groups may fall through the gaps: in **Estonia** and **Slovenia**, those who do not apply for healthcare; in **Poland**, those who temporarily returned to Ukraine and have therefore been deregistered; in **Hungary**, those who do not possess a passport or do not qualify for temporary protection; in **Germany**, those who do not take up benefits (although they may be eligible); and, similarly, in **Ireland**, those who fail to get their medical card.

**Table 8: Coverage of healthcare services in selected countries**

Country	Just emergency services	Not all groups covered	Full coverage	Comment
Austria			X	
Cyprus		X		Access to just public hospitals and medicine, but no access to the general healthcare system. Those with visa-like biometric residence cards, which Ukrainians must apply for, can access free healthcare
Denmark			X	Includes free access to dental care
Estonia	X	X		Available upon application to those under temporary protection through the Health Insurance Fund. Employees with contracts and registered unemployed people are insured, plus those under 19, pregnant women and pensioners. As of March 2023, 69% were covered among those aged 19+
Finland			X	
France			X	Within the universal health protection scheme, refugees also have access to the Centres médico-psychologiques, free of charge, and can receive home care or nursing care. The cost of care is fully covered by the health insurance system. A translated version of the website providing information about the centres has been made accessible to Ukrainians (Réfugiés.info, undated)
Germany		X		All those on welfare benefits are covered by statutory insurance
Greece			X	While Greek citizens have the right to free primary medical care from an external network of doctors of every specialty contracted to the national health system, Ukrainian refugees do not have this option
Hungary	X	X		Those who registered for temporary protection and have the necessary documents are covered; otherwise, only emergency care is provided. Those who lived in Hungary before the war but could not return to Ukraine, those who did not arrive directly from Ukraine and those who have dual Hungarian–Ukrainian citizenship do not qualify for temporary protection



	Just emergency services	Not all groups covered	Full coverage	Comment
Ireland		X		According to a survey carried out by Ukrainian Action in Ireland in 2023 (IE2), 87% of Ukrainians have been issued with a medical card that provides them with free access to general practitioner (GP) care and treatment in public hospitals. However, the medical card does not cover all treatment
Latvia			X	
Lithuania			X	
Luxembourg			X	
Malta			X	
Norway		X		Except for children and pregnant women, a service fee is payable
Poland		X		Those who have Universal Electronic System for Registration of the Population (PESEL) numbers are insured. This Polish identification number has the added designation 'UKR' when it concerns Ukrainian refugees (PESEL UKR). However, they are not eligible for convalescent homes. A growing problem is the withdrawal of PESEL UKR status (and thus the right to healthcare and social benefits) for refugees who have temporarily returned to Ukraine
Portugal			X	
Slovenia	X	X		In general, only children and adolescents are insured. There are some exceptions: upon application by those with temporary protection status, the health commission may approve more health services in justified cases
Spain			X	
Sweden			X	

Source: *National contributions*

### Access to health services – Main obstacles

In **Poland**, the healthcare system received 350,000 refugee patients from Ukraine and provided them with services worth more than PLN 500 million (€114.5 million).<sup>14</sup> However, the language barrier remains a major problem, especially in patient–doctor communication, for example regarding giving informed consent for services, due to a lack of provision of and funding for interpretation services in medical facilities. Hospitals must cope with the need on an ad hoc basis, and there is not always a Ukrainian-speaking person among the staff. Families of children with disabilities have considerable needs that are not met due to cost, a lack of a disability certificate, transportation challenges and a lack of services for adolescents (RPO, 2022b). Some other subgroups have difficulties accessing the services they need; this applies in particular to those with chronic diseases and those who need specialised treatment (RPO, 2022b). Moreover, a Ukrainian citizen's right to health services is not clear when they do not have a PESEL number but only a passport. Medical facilities do not know on what basis these Ukrainians can receive health services (RPO, 2022b). These

problems specific to Ukrainian citizens overlap with the general problems in the Polish health service, which has been facing significant underfunding and brain drain for years. According to a survey by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Statistics Poland (2023), the most frequently mentioned obstacle to accessing healthcare was the information barrier (language or cultural barrier). The cost of the service was too high for one in three refugees. Another frequently mentioned barrier was long waiting times.

In **Hungary**, the Protection Risks and Needs of Refugees from Ukraine survey found that 31% of households experienced difficulties accessing the healthcare system (UNHCR, 2022). Of these respondents, 58% cited the language barrier as the reason, while 38% indicated long waiting times.

In **Ireland**, according to the survey conducted by Ukrainian Action in Ireland in March 2023 (IE2), two out of three respondents have interacted with the medical services in Ireland. However, in terms of barriers, 56% said that they did not understand how to access a consultant, 20% said that language was a barrier, 17% said that it was hard to find a GP, 13% referred to

<sup>14</sup> Figures based on the National Health Fund's speech to the parliament. There is no official publication as a source. For exemplary media coverage, see, for example, [CowZdrowiu.pl](http://CowZdrowiu.pl) (2023).

long waiting times, 11% said that their medical needs were expensive and not covered by a medical card and 6% said that they did not understand what they were entitled to with the medical card. A shortage of staff, in particular doctors, is affecting healthcare services for Ukrainian refugees. At primary care level, there is also a distinct shortage of GPs, particularly in small towns and villages. During the first half of 2023, 60,000 medical cards were issued to Ukrainian refugees, with half that number of refugees assigned to GPs.

In the survey conducted in **Finland** (FI1), it was found that, of more than 2,000 respondents, over half (59%) said that they needed more information on health.

In **Romania**, it was reported that the Casa Națională de Asigurări de Sănătate IT system does not automatically detect refugees with temporary protection status as insured people and additional checks and registrations are needed.

As Table 9 shows, the main obstacles are the following:

- language problems
- long waiting times
- a lack of information
- procedural/administrative problems

However, the countries also face more specific challenges, which are detailed below in ‘Other challenges’.

### Other challenges

In **Estonia**, the uptake of free primary health checks is regarded as low. Reasons for this may vary. For example, refugees need to get used to a new health system while taking care of other priorities and tasks at the same time (e.g. getting a job, finding a home).

In **Bulgaria**, a burden on personnel was reported: not only are there more patients, but the rapid movement of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers from one location to another within Bulgaria, or their transit through multiple countries, can result in GPs needing to deregister patients. As this is a complicated process, many GPs are reluctant to enrol these patients in the first place. Movement also creates a rupture in health service continuity, and patients may find it hard to adhere to recommended treatment when they have uncertain daily living conditions. In addition, a shortage of health workers and a limited number of GPs, with resulting long waiting times, have a negative impact on the ability of refugees to access healthcare. Furthermore, national health workers lack a full understanding of and

**Table 9: Key difficulties/obstacles faced when accessing healthcare in selected countries**

	Bulgaria	Finland	Greece	Hungary	Ireland	Lithuania
Communication difficulties due to language problems (e.g. lack of interpreters)	X		X	X	X	X
Long waiting time (e.g. due to a shortage of health workers)	X	X		X	X	
Affordability issues (including indirect costs, e.g. transport)	X				X	X
Lack of information (e.g. about the healthcare system)	X	X		X	X	X
Procedural problems (e.g. administrative, referrals, prescriptions, lack of documentation)	X		X	X	X	
Lack of medical history record	X					
Concerns over quality of services		X				
	Norway	Poland	Romania	Slovakia	Slovenia	
Communication difficulties due to language problems (e.g. lack of interpreters)		X	X			
Long waiting time (e.g. due to a shortage of health workers)		X		X	X	
Affordability issues (including indirect costs, e.g. transport)		X				
Lack of information (e.g. about the healthcare system)			X	X		
Procedural problems (e.g. administrative, referrals, prescriptions, lack of documentation)	X	X	X			
Lack of medical history record		X				
Concerns over quality of services						

Source: *National contributions*

the competency to deal with refugee and migrant health and their specific health needs and vulnerabilities, making it more difficult for the workers to provide health services to these populations. A lack of translators, interpreters and cultural mediators may also weaken provider–patient communications. Moreover, experiences of stigmatisation, discrimination on the part of providers or worries about confidentiality issues with providers regarding diagnoses can make migrants hesitant about seeking healthcare.

In **Finland**, a specific programme has been introduced aimed at infectious disease prevention and vaccination specifically for people arriving from Ukraine. The measure targets mainly children, since many of those from Ukraine were found to be particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases, for example due to a lack of vaccinations. Within the framework of the programme,

those arriving from Ukraine are offered an initial health check, screening tests and vaccinations. These are voluntary.

In **Ireland**, the government established the Healthy Ireland Ukrainian Resilience Fund in December 2022. With one-off funding of €1 million, the initiative supports projects developed by local authority community response forums. This is part of the government's overall Healthy Ireland programme, aiming to improve wellness and mental health in the population. The Department of Health said that it had spent €24 million on Ukrainian refugees in 2022. A total of €50 million was allocated to the Health Service Executive (which runs Ireland's health service) to implement the 2023 migrant and refugee healthcare model.

## Solutions to and measures for accessing healthcare

### Health4Ukraine: A successful programme in Poland

Health4Ukraine provides a subsidy for purchasing medicines and other products available in pharmacies. The refugees can apply for a subsidy of up to PLN 500 (€114.50), and the applications are verified. Communication with the applicant is conducted only on an online basis. There is a helpline available, which is staffed by Ukrainian-speaking consultants. The criteria for eligibility and the rules are clearly communicated (including presenting a document with a PESEL UKR identification number). Both adults and children are eligible. Initially, the number of beneficiaries was estimated to be 100,000, but this did not cover all those with needs, so 309,152 refugees received the subsidy. As a consequence, the company running the programme (Epruf) opened up enrolment to the programme to all Ukrainian refugees. During the initial programme period, funds not used by participants by a certain date were returned to the aid pool and could be given to others in need. The company received further donations, which allowed it to enrol additional beneficiaries. The success of the programme was confirmed by a WHO and Statistics Poland report (2023), based on a survey, which concluded that 'Obtaining medications was challenging due to the need for prescriptions and the cost; electronic prescriptions and initiatives such as Health4Ukraine improved access.'

### Health centres and measures for online medical consultations and information provision in Slovakia

Healthcare centres for Ukrainian refugees were set up in selected towns/cities (Banská Bystrica, Bratislava, Košice, Prešov and Žilina) in March and April 2022. The centres (of which the one in Banská Bystrica and two in Bratislava have been closed since early 2023 and July 2022, respectively) house the medical offices of a GP, a paediatrician and a gynaecologist. Information in Slovak and Ukrainian is provided on their websites. The goals of the medical offices are mainly to provide primary care to refugees from Ukraine, including prescribing medications for chronic illnesses, and to reduce the burden on primary healthcare centres, which were already overburdened before the conflict in Ukraine (Denník, 2022; Hospodárske noviny, 2022).

Another measure in Slovakia aims to address the problem of a lack of information: two NGOs, Mareena and the Human Rights League, have together established a specialised website, [ukraineslovakia.sk](http://ukraineslovakia.sk), where refugees can get the necessary information about the Slovak health system. On the website's Health Line for Ukraine, Ukrainian refugees can consult with doctors, listen to doctors' recommendations and find their way around the Slovak health system (Mareena and Human Rights League, 2022a, 2022b).

## Psychosocial risks and mental health services

As the literature on mental health in different refugee groups highlights, the prevalence of psychosocial problems is particularly high among refugees. The available studies focusing on Ukrainian refugees suggest that this high prevalence also applies to them (see further details in Eurofound, forthcoming-a). It is therefore very important that they are provided with mental health services.

In some countries, mental health services are embedded in the healthcare system (as in France, for example (see Table 8), and in Finland, Germany and Sweden (see Eurofound, forthcoming-a)). In many other Member States, however, this does not appear to be the case. Therefore, this subsection focuses on an overview of Ukrainians' main challenges in accessing mental health services; this is provided in Table 10. This overview is followed by some explanations of these issues and a discussion of related problems, summarising the specific difficulties of displaced Ukrainians. Finally, those supporting measures that have been reported are briefly outlined.

### Mental health issues – Importance and key challenges

As in the case of general healthcare, the key barriers to accessing mental health services are related to language problems, a lack of information and labour shortages. Although social barriers and limited capacity to deliver/lack of experience of war trauma treatment were reported by just one country, other countries may well have similar problems.

Some country experiences have shown how serious the language barrier can be, specifically in relation to mental health issues. For example, even in the **Netherlands**, where targeted measures engage Ukrainian psychologists prior to recognition of their diploma (Eurofound, forthcoming-a), a survey indicated that, although 65% of respondents report knowing English, most still prefer to receive psychological aid in their own language (NL3).

A lack of information explains why there is a gap in **Norway** between those who felt that they needed help with psychological issues after arrival (more than 50%) and those who received any offer of mental health care (only 30%). Moreover, more than 70% of the participants did not know where they could seek help for mental health care needs.

A lack of information is also reported in **Poland**, where many parents are not aware that their children can receive psychological support in schools (among other things, such as free/subsidised school lunches and care arrangements). There is a large group of children with special educational needs, but psychological and educational counselling centres lack specialists who speak Ukrainian and Russian, and there is a lack of interpreters. Without a proper diagnosis, schools do not have the capacity to respond appropriately to the individual developmental and educational needs of a pupil or student.

### Specific difficulties of Ukrainians

The sociodemographic composition of Ukrainian refugees (women with children, with women arriving mainly alone, without their partners/husbands) may also add to the severity of their mental health problems.

**Table 10: Challenges of accessing mental health services in selected countries**

Country	Language (need service in native language)	Lack of personnel to satisfy demand	Lack of information	Lack of experience of war trauma treatment	Social barriers (e.g. stigma)
Bulgaria	X				
Estonia		X			
Finland	X		X	X	X
Germany		X			
Greece		X			
Hungary			X		
Lithuania	X				
Netherlands	X				
Norway			X		
Poland	X	X	X		
Portugal		X			
Romania	X		X		

Source: *National contributions*

It is known from previous studies that being a woman or a child may increase exposure to psychosocial issues (Eurofound, forthcoming-a). The vulnerability of women was shown by a survey conducted in **Estonia**, for example, which revealed that women found their mental health to be significantly worse than men did. On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being positive, the average for women was 7.4, whereas for men it was 8.0 (Kender, 2023).

Specialists in **Poland** say that around 20% of Ukrainian refugee children and adolescents will require psychological or psychotherapeutic help. Meanwhile, there has been a shortage of psychiatrists for years, and child psychiatry wards are being closed throughout the country (RPO, 2022c). In addition, caregivers say that there is no one to look after their children while they attend these services (WHO and Statistics Poland, 2023).

In **Lithuania**, an international survey covering, among other groups, Ukrainians living in Lithuania found that:

*The majority of children surveyed (57%) said they feel either a little or a lot less happy since leaving Ukraine. Older children (aged 16 years or over) seem to be most affected .... When asked whether they had experienced any negative emotions in the last month, children commonly said that they worry about the future (55%) and feel restless (44%) and lonely (44%). Older children overwhelmingly reported that they were experiencing more anxiety (78% compared with 50% of younger children).*

(Tyler-Rubinstein et al, 2022)

According to the Lithuanian Red Cross survey on Ukrainian refugees, 20% of respondents indicated that they needed psychological help (while living in Lithuania) (Lithuanian Red Cross, 2023). Almost 60% of those who had used psychological services stated that their needs had not been met or had been only partly met. The main reasons for not having these needs met were lack of continuity of services (38%), the language barrier (20%) and the quality of services (15%). People in larger cities rated the psychological services slightly higher.

In **Slovakia**, a representative school survey of teachers (SK1), revealed that about 21% of children experienced psychological discomfort, about 18% suffered from war trauma and about 13% were overloaded by parallel education in Slovak schools and their schools in Ukraine.

In some countries, the under-reporting of mental health problems was highlighted (e.g. in Finland, Poland and Romania). In **Poland**, for instance, when questions about feelings of anxiety were asked in surveys, respondents expressed their discomfort about replying. Even though just three countries indicated it explicitly, under-reporting could be more widespread: those who indicated mental health problems in the UNHCR multi-assessment survey ranged from 14% to over 50%

(for an overview of the findings, see Table 2 in Eurofound, forthcoming-a, p. 7). This also shows (at least implicitly) that in certain countries mental health problems tend to be perceived as taboo. Similarly, it is also emphasised in the case of **Finland** that the low percentage of those Ukrainian refugees who perceived themselves to have a need for psychological help (16%) may be connected to the stigma of seeking this help. Furthermore, only 10% had used emotional and psychological support services at help centres. According to the Executive Director of Finnish Refugee Aid, war trauma has a wide range of possible effects on a person's ability to function. They might suffer from insomnia, an inability to concentrate, difficulties in remembering, traumatic flashbacks and learning difficulties. Moreover, traumatised children react to trauma in age-appropriate ways, which can lead to aggression, for example. According to the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (2023), the majority (80%) of refugees arriving in Finland have experienced a traumatic event either in their country of origin or during their travel to another country. There is a general worry that the mental health services will not be able to support the sudden arrival of a large number of refugees in need of help.

### Support measures

Nonetheless, a wide range of support measures are available in the reporting countries. They vary, however, in their scope, how systematically the service is provided in the country (the coverage of the measure) and their providers (which also vary within countries), for example. An overview of public mental health service provision and services delivered by other organisations as well as utilisation of mental health care services is presented in a Eurofound (forthcoming-a) working paper. Some typical examples will be highlighted to illustrate the types of services available.

In **France** (as one of the countries that provides mental health services within the framework of its general healthcare system), the medical and psychological emergency units, which intervene throughout the country to take care of people involved in and witnessing events with the potential to be highly traumatic, also offered their services to Ukrainian refugees. One of them was responsible for carrying out an initial global assessment of the refugees, identifying people who were at risk of psychological trauma and carrying out emergency consultations if necessary. It raised awareness among displaced people, accompanying people and organisers of the signs that could indicate trauma. Brochures were distributed in French and Ukrainian.

Local providers seem to be key actors in **Germany**, providing elements of central assistance. Ukrainian refugees can visit local psychosocial information centres and ask for further information. The Association of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians (Kassenärztliche

Vereinigungen) offers an online tool, Der Patientenservice, with which the refugees can search for competent therapists in the area where they live. In addition, the National Centre for Early Help, in cooperation with Ulm University Hospital's Clinic for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy and with Rostock University Medical Centre's Clinic for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Neurology, Psychosomatics and Psychotherapy, provided online training. This consisted of a total of 18 digital consultation hours for professionals working in the field of early intervention, professionals or volunteers who provide advice, and Ukrainian families with young children. During these consultations, the psychosocial effects of war and flight on children, specific assistance, counselling and therapy approaches, and legal aspects were explained.

Helplines are available in many countries, and they are often staffed by Ukrainian-speaking professionals (e.g. in **Denmark** and **Greece**, where the telephone services are anonymous and free). In **Estonia**, help is provided in accommodation centres, at reception points, online and via helplines (in English and Russian). Additional materials and videos are provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs. In **Italy**, the Italian Red Cross has set up a helpline offering psychological support. The helpline has been active since April 2022 and is nationwide and free of charge.

In **Denmark**, professionals are trained to assist with issues ranging from more practical questions to dealing with stress and trauma and being in a new, unknown country. The helpline is based on previous experiences that the Danish Refugee Council has had in assisting refugees and asylum seekers. The first call is a screening call, focusing on finding out the needs of the refugee, which can vary from worries related to the caller's children to practical questions and issues relating to trauma after having fled Ukraine. After the initial call, many of the refugees are offered more and longer conversations where the support worker calls them up. The municipalities have been informed of the measure and they in turn assist with informing Ukrainian refugees of its availability. The measure was initiated early in March 2022, and it is ongoing. The callers have primarily been single mothers. After five months, questions become related to mental health issues and the trauma of displacement to a greater extent. These questions include how to talk to their children about the situation, handling loneliness and feeling powerless.

In addition to helplines, online services are also offered and, in some cases, can help in overcoming the language barrier. For example, in **Luxembourg**, due to language problems, the non-profit organisation LUkraine has designed a digital platform on doctena.lu to help psychologists and psychotherapists to manage their interactions with Ukrainian patients. Between February 2022 and February 2023, more than 1,300 sessions of psychological assistance were offered to adults and children in the country.

Even though helpline and online services can provide substantial assistance, face-to-face contact can still prove indispensable (especially after an initial, introductory diagnostic phase). In **Estonia**, in addition to the helpline, it is also possible to access face-to-face counselling. However, even before the war, the number of mental health specialists was insufficient (see Table 10). There is a focus in the country on mental health and psychosocial support and community-based methods to reduce the likelihood of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and trauma that might have arisen as the refugees fled Ukraine. The community-based methods are delivered in psychosocial groups of children, young people and adults, providing group members with psychological and pedagogical support and skills and raising awareness of mental health (UNHCR, 2023c). Help with psychosocial crises is organised by the Social Insurance Board, and, in addition to national crisis telephone lines, there is a separate line for Ukrainian refugees. Similarly, in **Ireland**, mental health assistance is coordinated centrally within the framework of the health services for Ukrainians, and is provided in conjunction with general health services (by the Health Service Executive). MyMind counselling services are provided by the Department of Health as an additional form of support for Ukrainians, and these range from self-help and education to GP support and onward referral to specialist mental health services where necessary. The service is free for Ukrainians. It employs Ukrainian mental health professionals, with five dedicated therapists available currently, to provide support to Ukrainian refugees. Sessions are provided online, by telephone or in person. As part of the Department of Health's social inclusion workstream (Sharing the Vision), work is ongoing to further develop regional psychosocial support and access to services and to ensure that all mental health services are delivered in a culturally competent manner. In addition, the Healthy Ireland Ukrainian Resilience Fund supports recreational, physical, creative, social and cultural activities to help Ukrainian refugees, including children, to adapt to their new surroundings, while supporting their general health and well-being and their integration into the local community.

In addition, several countries provide support and mental health assistance for children in schools. For example, in **Estonia** there is a helpline staffed by school psychologists who offer mental health support related to school and education. In **Slovakia**, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport published guidelines for teachers and pupils on how to deal with the situation from a mental health perspective and established crisis intervention teams in each region. The information was published on a new website in both Slovak and Ukrainian. In addition, the Research Institute of Children's Psychology and Pathopsychology, with its counselling and prevention centres, published a

document and launched podcasts and webinars with psychological advice regarding the war in Ukraine for children and parents in English and Slovak on its *Crisis intervention* web page. In **Greece**, support is available from psychologists and social workers for students and teachers to help refugee children to integrate into the Greek education system. Unicef provides psychoemotional support services to refugee students at Unicef creative employment centres. In **Latvia**, the offer of psychoemotional support for Ukrainians is quite wide-ranging and is provided in a variety of ways – through both face-to-face and remote counselling – by several institutions and branches of the Child and Adolescent Resource Centre. The State Inspectorate for Protection of Children’s Rights also provides support for families, children and adolescents.

NGOs, other civil society organisations and international organisations play an important role in providing mental health assistance (with international organisations especially playing a role in countries with less experience of receiving refugees, such as Hungary, Romania and Slovakia). For example, in **Latvia**, NGOs provide counselling. The website *propozycii.lv*, which brings together support measures for Ukrainians in Latvia, offers 31 options for psychoemotional support. These include various NGOs, associations, individual specialist practices and religious organisations. In **Slovenia**, as well as helping with practical issues to navigate everyday life, Slovene Philanthropy assists in linking individuals with psychotherapists. In some cases, NGOs play an important role at local level. For example, in **Austria**, an initiative called Psychotherapy in Ukrainian in Styria is implemented by the NGO Zebra, which is experienced in intercultural psychotherapy. The psychotherapy is provided either with ad hoc translation by specially trained Russian or Ukrainian interpreters or by native-language-speaking psychotherapists. Ukrainian refugees are offered 10 hours of psychological counselling (to be extended if necessary). During interviews to record medical history, professionals assess which therapy is necessary and will be effective. The initiative was launched in May 2022 and is funded by regional funds. By the time the initiative had started, 70 requests for psychotherapy had already been made.

In **Hungary**, it is often volunteers who offer mental health services; for example, Migration Aid, through its Learning Without Borders programme, and the MedSpot Foundation provide mental health/psychological services to Ukrainian refugees free of charge. In **Slovakia**, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) provides supervision of experts from other institutions and aid organisations that provide services to people from Ukraine. This support is delivered thanks to cooperation with IPčko (a civil society organisation), an implementation partner of the IOM, which provides advice and assistance to people from Ukraine in all eight regions of Slovakia. IPčko’s help, which is free and

anonymous, is also provided in Ukrainian. The help of eight mobile teams, which have been operating in individual regions of Slovakia since September 2022, can be requested by Ukrainians, employees of municipalities and aid organisations, operators of hostels for refugees and individuals who help people in need from Ukraine. One of the activities the teams provide is group music therapy, which is an effective tool helping to reduce anxiety, offer emotional relief and facilitate mutual social interactions (IOM, 2023). Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the IOM, in cooperation with IPčko, has provided mental health care and psychological and social support to more than 9,748 people who fled from the conflict to Slovakia. The League for Mental Health has published a crisis manual for volunteers, psychologists and local and regional governments. The manual provides information on how to behave and work with Ukrainian refugees and how to support them in the field of mental health. In **Romania**, Médecins du Monde offered mobile units for mental health and psychosocial support services, and WHO worked on legislative proposals to allow Ukrainian psychologists to practise in Romania.

## Conclusions and policy pointers on healthcare and mental health care

- Even though countries have amended their legislation or introduced legal changes to provide free access to healthcare in compliance with the Temporary Protection Directive, there can be bureaucratic or other obstacles, such as a lack of information (e.g. due to a lack of language knowledge, unfamiliarity with how the system works or lack of awareness of specific services). These either hinder access (especially for more vulnerable groups) or make using the service problematic. Refugees are not always eligible for more specific health services for which nationals are eligible.
- Various schemes contribute to remedying the access problems and helping refugees get the services they need. Targeted and specific help has proved useful, but, especially in countries that have little experience of receiving refugees, it is mainly NGOs and other civil society organisations providing these programmes, especially in the case of mental health care provision. This may not be sufficient (e.g. in terms of coverage).
- Capacity problems (partly related to underfunding) are related to long waiting times, which were identified as one of the most serious problems. In most cases, this reflects a wider problem: the pre-existing challenges for health services in the countries covered. Although health services in many countries have had their budgets increased over the last few years, the demand pressure is still high in the wake of the pandemic and amid ageing populations.

- Many schemes to provide mental health services have been introduced in several countries. However, the number of people who may need psychosocial help is believed to be under-reported; stigmatisation and lack of awareness could be some of the reasons for this.

### Policy pointers

- Refugees may need targeted help with getting more information about both the health system and the services they are eligible for; cases have been reported, for example, of refugees not even being aware of the existence of mental health services, let alone their right to make use of them.
- This section covered mainly country-related examples providing a snapshot of the situation at a given point in time. Regular monitoring of the challenges of accessing healthcare, including mental health services and unmet needs, could help services providers (at local level) and lead to more informed policymaking (see European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies and European Commission, 2023). As demonstrated, individual national survey results can give a good insight, but a specific EU-wide survey (in addition to the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions survey on unmet needs) focusing on access difficulties and other related challenges that refugees face could provide a comparative view. This could inform not only the relevant stakeholders at country level but also EU bodies (e.g. European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety).
- As demonstrated, NGOs were able to provide aid, but more systematic, specific and sustainable help is needed. This could be provided, for example, through partnerships between NGOs and public services. In addition, there are issues that could be remedied only by centrally organised and funded solutions. For example, intercultural communication training for healthcare staff is needed in countries with less experience of receiving refugees (this need was reported in Bulgaria, for example). A more systematic set-up could lead to more funding for the services (more specifically, the underfunding of personnel costs was reported). The funds provided by the EU for integrating refugees could certainly help in this respect.

- Due to the under-reporting of mental health issues, outreach activities are needed. The scale of the problem appears large, so a systematic approach needs to be adopted; for example, embedding mental health services for refugees within the general health system, as done in France, could certainly help. In addition, training for staff to be specialised in the treatment of war trauma and setting up certain specific services – such as psychological care for women who have experienced sexual violence – could improve the services and therefore the mental well-being of refugees.

## Social assistance

Social assistance is an integral and important part of national social protection systems,<sup>15</sup> which include entitlements to monetary and in-kind benefits, many of which were discussed in the previous sections of this chapter (such as housing benefits, childcare and education support schemes, and allowances to facilitate access to healthcare).

In this section, the focus is on schemes aiming to provide a minimum income to Ukrainian refugees. These are often embedded in wider social assistance programmes that also support other vulnerable groups, such as young people, people living alone, single parents, people with low skills levels and workers in precarious jobs. Migrants in general are identified as one of the groups suffering from a high risk of low access to minimum income schemes (see the overview of minimum income policies in SPC and European Commission, 2022). These schemes are non-contributory, means-tested programmes, often referred to as last resort measures, which help to preserve solid safety nets by targeting people without sufficient income (SPC and European Commission, 2022; Eurofound, forthcoming-b). This can be vitally important for refugees.

This section contains illustrative examples from the countries where such information was reported. The EU and some international organisations (IOM, UNHCR, Unicef) support Member States with both guidance and funding (European Commission, 2023e), as some of the examples demonstrate. In some countries, however (e.g. **Slovakia**), the government has taken over and finances these schemes. This is a substantial cost for the government, considering the previous amount funded by the international organisations (saving the state €11 million; UPSVaR, 2022a) and the scope of assistance to those in material need, for example Ukrainians accounted for 12% of all material need recipients.

<sup>15</sup> A comprehensive but concise description of social protection schemes in the Member States and in the European Free Trade Association countries, including Norway, is available in the comparative tables provided by the Mutual Information System on Social Protection at <https://www.missoc.org/missoc-database/comparative-tables/>



Nonetheless, there seems to be a long way to go to provide appropriate social assistance to all who need it.

## Addressing specific needs

### Specific support for refugees with children/families

In **Spain**, the aim is to provide direct economic support to beneficiaries of temporary protection status who do not have the financial means to cover their basic needs. The aid is a monthly payment of €400 per month per adult who is the final beneficiary of the benefit, plus €100 per month for each dependent minor. The benefit scheme is administered by third sector organisations (such as the Red Cross in Andalusia). If the beneficiaries receive remuneration, this cannot exceed the minimum vital income.

In **Bulgaria**, a voucher scheme was introduced (Provision of vouchers to provide food and essential goods for displaced people from Ukraine), using funding under the Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (REACT-EU) programme. All identified vulnerable people with temporary protection are entitled to receive help through the scheme, but priority is given to households with children. The aid is granted to cover urgent needs including food, children's food and clothing, school supplies and hygiene materials. The nominal value of the vouchers is BGN 100 (€51.11).

In **Cyprus**, financial support is provided for caring for refugee children up to the age of almost five years. A family can receive €102 per month per child if the following conditions are met: (1) the child attends a school (kindergarten or nursery) approved by the Social Welfare Services or the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth; (2) the child's parent/guardian or parents/guardians work (salaried employment or self-employed); and (3) the family is in Cyprus under temporary protection status. The application should be submitted at the local social welfare office. The measure was launched in March 2023 and is ongoing.

### Benefit in a specific situation – Urgent accommodation need

In **Romania**, the key objective of UNHCR's cash programme is to provide cash assistance. The measure aims to support refugees with accommodation needs during the transition period between the end of the 50/20 Program and the start of the new government accommodation support programme. See the section 'Housing situation of Ukrainian refugees' for further details (e.g. amounts provided for accommodation). The measure aims to ensure that vulnerable refugees receive financial support for their basic needs and can access the necessary resources during the transition period. By mid-2023, 18,984 refugees had been supported with cash assistance. In 2022, their number stood at 43,129.

### Benefits for vulnerable groups in Slovakia

In **Slovakia**, a scheme specifically launched for Ukrainian refugees in 2022 was the humanitarian aid subsidy for people with severe disabilities who had special protection status. Continuing financial support is provided based on the level of disability (UPSVaR, 2022b, 2022c). The scheme follows those provided by the IOM and Unicef for people with disabilities between May 2022 and December 2022. The provision of the scheme was transferred to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic in cooperation with the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in December 2022 (Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic and Central Office for Labour, Social Affairs and Family, 2022). The provision of the subsidy is ongoing.

A new assistance programme was introduced in 2023, called Cash for Protection for Vulnerable Refugees. The eligibility conditions include not only being under temporary protection or being an asylum seeker, but also belonging to a vulnerable group, such as being elderly (60+) without sufficient family support, a person with disabilities or with a serious medical condition, a single parent or caregiver, or a single pregnant or lactating mother. The amount is aligned with the national social assistance schemes. People receiving the assistance in material need provided by the national government via labour offices can also be the beneficiaries, as 'Cash for Protection is a complementary top-up amount, and doesn't duplicate any kind of financial assistance MoLSAF [Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic] is providing' (UNHCR and Unicef, 2023, p. 5).

### Problems with access and coverage

In **Hungary**, although the eligibility requirements for the subsistence allowance for Ukrainians are the same as those for nationals, the system itself is inadequate to facilitate labour market integration and ensure mobility due to difficulties with accessing employment, even for Hungarians. Navigating the system is even more difficult for Ukrainians, especially because of the language barrier (Menedék, 2023). A precondition of Ukrainian refugees receiving subsistence support is that they accept jobs offered to them by the PES, including the public works scheme. According to experts, it would help integration more if subsistence support were to be linked to language learning rather than taking a (public works) job. In addition, some of the problems reported with accessing benefits are that many people stay in Hungary as tourists or are unaware of the benefits of the temporary protection status or how to apply for it (Eurofound, 2022b). An application for temporary protection must be submitted in person, which makes the process difficult for elderly people, sick people or under-age applicants. The applications are processed within 45 days, during which time the applicants do not receive any financial support (Tóth and Bernát, 2022, p. 356).

In **Romania**, if there is no address indicated on the identity documents issued to the beneficiaries of temporary protection, access to the minimum guaranteed wage and other welfare benefits (provided by local municipalities) is denied (Habitat for Humanity International, 2023, p. 29).

In **Austria**, although the basic care scheme is open to Ukrainian refugees in need (and asylum seekers from all countries), it makes it difficult to take on a job: those who earn more than €110 per month (plus €80 for each family member) lose entitlement to the scheme, meaning that accommodation and benefits are no longer provided by the state. This is a major disincentive, especially for women with children who would be able to work only part-time due to (even partial) childcare responsibilities. They would not be able to meet the cost of living (including accommodation) with what they earned in a part-time (often low-paid) job. Furthermore, it is not compulsory for refugees who receive basic benefits to contact the Austrian Public Employment Service (for job placement and counselling). These obstacles are major reasons why many displaced people from Ukraine are not actively seeking jobs. Austrian policymakers are aware of these facts, and negotiations are under way on either increasing the threshold for tax-free income (which was €500.91 a month in 2023) or granting Ukrainians the regular social assistance payment. At the same time, this scheme is tied to readiness to work: beneficiaries must accept jobs offered to them if they do not want to lose their benefits.

In **Ireland**, language difficulties are cited as the main reason for any failure to make use of government assistance on top of difficulties navigating the social welfare and health services on offer (although there are various measures in place to make this process easier).

### Adequacy of benefits

In **Poland**, as Ukrainian refugees have essentially the same access to benefits as Polish citizens, they are likely to experience the same challenges in terms of the low amounts paid in benefits. Most of the social benefits in Poland are not indexed to inflation. Given the rising cost of living, this therefore increases the risk of poverty for vulnerable populations. In terms of the Family 500+ programme (see below), the number of individual benefits have not changed since 2018 (RPO, 2022d). The carer's allowance (*zasiłek opiekuńczy*), guardian's allowance (*zasiłek dla opiekuna*) and nursing benefit (*świadczenie pielęgnacyjne*) are particularly inadequate.

The latter two forms of support are aimed at people with disabilities and their families and are usually insufficient to cover the costs of treatment and rehabilitation (RPO, 2022d). Faced with shrinking public funds, the government has received help to cover benefits from international aid (for instance, Unicef covers the costs of the Family 500+ programme, Poland's flagship financial support for children (ZUS, 2022)).

In **Hungary**, if adults have temporary protection status, they can receive a monthly subsistence payment of HUF 22,800 (€58.87) and an additional HUF 13,700 (€35.37) for every child with them. However, as in Austria, if they find work, they are no longer eligible for this funding. Due to the low amount, many people do not bother applying in the first place (Tóth and Bernát, 2022, p. 357). The subsidy is sometimes supplemented by a small amount of local government aid or temporary accommodation and in-kind support, such as hot meals and free transport; however, the quality of these assistance measures is low (Tóth and Bernát, 2022, p. 358).

In **Denmark**, the level of government assistance for married women whose spouses remain in Ukraine is low. Since they are married, they receive a lower rate of assistance, despite effectively being single parents in Denmark (KL et al, 2023).

In **Austria**, NGOs have long criticised the fact that the financial support provided by the basic care scheme is much too low to provide for living in a humane manner (payments differ somewhat by province).

In **Bulgaria**, the state does not provide sufficient assistance in general. Many people in Bulgaria simply do not apply for social benefits because they amount to just BGN 75 per month (€38.33). At the same time, the beneficiary is supposed to do half a day of community work 14 days in a month. This means they are working 40 hours, so the social assistance works out at BGN 1.88/hour for them, which is less than €1 or just around USD 1 (for more details, see European Commission, undated).

### Conclusions on social assistance

This section presented some illustrative country examples on social assistance for Ukrainian refugees. The practices vary by country, and are often embedded in countries' different social protection systems. Therefore, a direct cross-country comparison (especially on this specific topic) would have been challenging and is beyond the scope of this research project.

From the qualitative information provided in this exercise, however, it became clear that this is an area that is strongly linked to monetary and in-kind benefits/services in other integration areas. More specifically, the following key conclusions can be drawn.

- Mainstream social protection measures have not always been adapted to the specific situation of Ukrainian refugees. For example, eligibility for minimum income schemes is often tied to readiness to work (e.g. in **Austria, Cyprus, Hungary** and **Poland**). Although incentives for getting a job might be important in the cases of other groups, these cannot be implemented in the same way for Ukrainian refugees, who need direct support for employment due to specific labour market barriers, such as language problems and lack of availability of childcare (see Chapter 2).
- In several countries, the benefits are inadequate either because certain rules have not been adjusted to the specific situation of Ukrainian refugees (see the example of **Denmark**) or because the level is generally low (**Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland**).
- There appear to be problems with the funding of the social assistance measures, so some countries must rely on help from the EU or from international organisations. It remains to be seen how sustainable this help will be.
- The problems with access to social assistance are comparable to those in other areas. The language barrier and a lack of information may explain the low take-up of at least certain types of social assistance (e.g. in **Ireland**).



## 4 | Conclusions

There has been interest in the labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees since their arrival, and research has been conducted in this area. These investigations have revealed the importance of public services in other integration areas (housing, education, health and social assistance) and the role that these services play in establishing the preconditions for successful labour market inclusion and societal integration in general. Reports on the integration of Ukrainian refugees, however, usually focus on one area only, offering valuable insights into that issue. This report adopted a specific perspective: in addition to labour market integration, it also covered other key areas of integration and the challenges that the related public services face. In doing so, it explored how these areas are interrelated, not simply by looking at the obstacles to integration within individual areas (e.g. labour market inclusion), but rather by identifying those obstacles that impede inclusion more generally, taking into account multiple areas and public services. The other distinctive feature of the report is that it covers the experiences of all the EU Member States and Norway.

One of the main conclusions is that the active inclusion approach is highly relevant: there is a need to monitor and address the links between labour market integration, access to public services (such as housing, education and healthcare, including mental health care) and guaranteeing an adequate income.

Ukrainian refugees' employment levels (employment rate) can be regarded as a success, especially in comparison with other refugee groups. The rate seems set to continue to increase. There are, however, several barriers to labour market integration, including those affecting all refugees (e.g. the language barrier, lack of information and lack of a social network) and (especially in remote areas) the absence of childcare provision, something that is especially important in this case due to the predominance of women with children among Ukrainian refugees. In addition, displaced people from Ukraine are employed mainly in temporary jobs, most of which are jobs for which they are overqualified. Many innovative measures have been introduced to remedy most of these problems (such as lifting certain restrictions, including language requirements for refugees wishing to work in childcare, in schools and in some medical professions; providing training to bridge the gap in qualification requirements; simplifying and speeding up the process for recognising qualifications; and providing language courses).

However, many Ukrainian refugees have so far been unable to find stable employment, due mainly to the uncertainties they face. These include not only their own return intentions (a sizeable share is still undecided regarding whether they wish to go back to Ukraine) but also unstable housing conditions, unavailability of childcare facilities, lack of capacity in schools and difficulties in accessing healthcare when they and/or family members need it. If they are employed in temporary/occasional jobs, their income is also unstable, and they have to rely on social assistance. The social assistance schemes are not necessarily adjusted to their special needs, so they may not even be eligible.

In addition, as the war becomes protracted and refugees need to stay for longer in their host countries, long-term, adequate and affordable housing solutions are required. Housing policy measures alone may not be sufficient to achieve this goal; the fact that certain groups have unstable income should also be considered. Affordable housing can be secured with the help of general social protection measures (such as minimum income schemes; see Eurofound, 2023a). These can support access to appropriate public services (e.g. transport) and other measures that facilitate refugees' integration into local communities. In view of the importance of integrating children and families, these measures could include community activities developed especially for children, families and young people (there are examples of these initiatives in **Ireland**). An integrated approach combining affordable housing and social protection measures is needed from a long-term perspective when the expansion of the housing supply is planned (Habitat for Humanity International, 2023).

Long-term and stable housing solutions are important not only to create opportunities for more stable employment but also to help ensure that Ukrainian children are integrated into local school systems. In addition, as previous research shows, frequent accommodation changes adversely affect children's mental well-being due to their uncertain environment; the Impact and Save the Children International survey looked at this issue in the context of the Polish situation.

The unprecedentedly large inflow of Ukrainian refugees exposed and amplified pre-existing problems in countries' public services. Examples include, for housing, unaffordable and inadequate housing due to a shortage of supply, and high prices and rent; for education, a lack of capacity and a shortage of teachers; for healthcare, a shortage of personnel and gaps in coverage; and for social assistance, inadequate benefits and access problems. There are many plans, initiatives and measures in place to remedy these problems. However, even if mainstream services are improved, this may not help Ukrainian refugees, since they need specific and targeted support. This report revealed many of these specific needs and presented numerous examples of targeted measures. These initiatives, however, have often been launched by NGOs and may operate only in the short term due to unstable funding. To provide stable assistance in various areas, more systematic measures and sustainable funding are needed.

In countries that have little experience of (and funding for) receiving refugees, international organisations

(e.g. IOM, Unicef, UNHCR) have helped. It remains to be seen, however, how sustainable this will be and to what extent and how governments (and local authorities) will continue and integrate their work into their systems. In terms of funding, some replanning of EU funds, with careful consideration of how these funds can be used efficiently, may be needed.

Those refugees who get a job may no longer be eligible for the support they had previously received. However, as the report revealed, mainstream public services, including social protection measures, have in many cases not been adjusted to refugees' specific needs. Ukrainians may lose entitlements to something they still need, for example, basic care, as in **Austria** (although there are plans in place to change this). As a result, there is a risk of increasing gaps in the coverage of various schemes, and more unmet needs could emerge. It is therefore important to develop specific measures for refugees and to carefully calibrate them, paying attention to refugees' emerging needs when they are transitioning to a more settled life in the host country.

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**Note:** All publications on Ukraine-related OECD work are available from the OECD Ukraine Hub: <https://www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/en/>



# Annexes

## Annex 1: National surveys

**Table A1: National surveys in the Member States and Norway**

Code	Publication title (italic)/ survey title/topic	Respondents/ sample	Sample size	Mode	Data gathering period	Organisation
AT1	Current situation and future prospects of displaced people from Ukraine in Austria	Female refugees only	833	Web	16–30 May 2022	Austrian Institute for Family Studies, University of Vienna
BE1	<i>#FreeSpot. Private accommodation of Ukrainian refugees in Belgium</i>	Host families		Online	14 June to 18 August 2022	Onderzoekscentrum Sociaal Werk and Kenniscentrum Gezinswetenschappen, hogeschool Odisee
BG1	Winter needs	Multiple (four) subsample survey	In state accommodation: 1,005; support through the Blue Dot hubs: 153; with private accommodation: 267; with children enrolled in the Bulgarian school system: 75	F2F	21 December 2022 to 18 January 2023	
CZ1	<i>The situation of refugees from Ukraine (in Czech)</i>	Refugees	50,236 refugees in total: 29,012 adults and 21,224 children	Web	1–30 June 2022	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
CZ2	Voice of Ukrainians (in Czech)	Representative sample (region of residence, age and gender) within the regions	Panel research: 1,634 households of refugees from Ukraine	Web	9 November to 12 December 2022, and 20 February to 2 March 2023	PAQ Research
CZ3	A survey of refugees from Ukraine – Patterns of displacement, needs and intentions	Not a representative sample	4,284	F2F	15 June to 30 December 2022	IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix
CZ4	Survey on refugees' economic activity, knowledge of Czech and possible return	Refugees, not a representative sample	1,037	F2F	July–October 2022	
CZ5	<i>Lives on hold: Profiles and intentions of refugees from Ukraine</i>	Women (90%)	4,871	F2F	16 May to 15 June 2022	UNHCR
CZ6	Economic activity in Czechia: Specifics and barriers to further professional education and retraining of Ukrainians	Refugees	1,022 (15–64 years)	F2F	2–30 September 2022	
DE1	<i>Ukrainian refugees in Germany (IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP survey)</i>	Refugees	11,225	Web and F2F	August–October 2022	Institute for Employment Research
DE2	Immigration monitor	Not applicable	Not specified	Not specified	Data are published once a month	

Code	Publication title ( <i>italic</i> )/ survey title/topic	Respondents/ sample	Sample size	Mode	Data gathering period	Organisation
DK1	Displaced people from Ukraine in Denmark	Those registered with an address in a municipality, with a Danish residency permit and registered in the Danish National Register	17,126	Web	13 October to 20 November 2022	Integration Barometer
EE1	Refugee survey	Adult (aged 18+) Ukrainian refugees with temporary protection	1,598; 85% response rate	Phone and web	October–December 2022	Praxis Centre for Policy Studies
EE2	Housing of Ukrainian refugees	Majority are covered by the Temporary Protection Directive	527	Not specified		University of Tartu
ES1	Ukrainian citizens' rights in Spain	No information available yet	No information available yet	Web	23 August to 30 September 2022	FRA
FI1	<i>The situation of Ukrainians in Finland who fled the war</i>	Refugees, including children and elderly people; representative sample	2,136	Web	15 June to 6 July 2022	Ministry of the Interior
FI2	<i>Overview: Ukrainians in Finland 2022</i> (in Finnish)	For the statistics: all Ukrainians in Finland about whom there is information; for the qualitative part: officials, professionals and Ukrainians	4 officials, 12 professionals, 9 Ukrainians; the study also includes responses from an ongoing research study with 17 Ukrainian respondents	Not specified	November–December 2022	Finnish Immigration Service, Ministry of the Interior, E2 Research, Sitra
HR1	Procedure protocol for the integration of people who have been granted international protection	Mainly those responsible for the integration of refugees, primarily at local level	Not a significant number, and not fully specified, but around 75 people	F2F	Approximately October 2022 to end of December 2022	
HU1	<i>Building an employment ecosystem for Ukrainian refugees</i>	Respondents from Ukraine's border crossings, transit stations and temporary shelters in Hungary and Poland	490 adult refugees	F2F and web	March–May 2022	Boston Consulting Group
HU2	<i>The situation of Transcarpathian Romani families fleeing from Ukraine to Hungary</i>	Roma families who have fled from Ukraine since the war started	161	F2F	15 July to 15 September 2022	Romaversitas Foundation
IE1	<i>Survey of Ukrainians in Ireland, 2022</i>	Refugees	2,191	Web	19–26 May 2022	Ukrainian Action in Ireland
IE2	Ukrainians in Ireland who found protection in Ireland – Integration, 2023	Refugees	4,273 adults, 3,665 children, 7,938 in total	Web	27 January to 8 February 2023	Ukrainian Action in Ireland
IE3	IPSOS/Market Research Bureau of Ireland opinion poll for <i>The Irish Times</i> , October 2022	Irish people (but no specific descriptions available)	Not specified	F2F	23–25 October 2022	<i>The Irish Times</i> /Ipsos

Code	Publication title (italic)/ survey title/topic	Respondents/ sample	Sample size	Mode	Data gathering period	Organisation
IE4	Panel for opinions on matters relating to the Russian invasion of Ukraine	No details available	Not specified	Not specified	One survey run in March 2022; follow-up survey run in July 2022	Amárach Research
IT1	Refugees from Ukraine in Italy: UNHCR profiling	Refugees	1,531 individuals (667 family units)	F2F	Over three weeks between November and December 2022	UNHCR
LT1	Assessment of the needs of Ukrainian refugees living in Lithuania: Survey results	Refugees	3,862	Web	16 January to 1 February 2023	Lithuanian Red Cross
LT2	Responses of municipalities to hosting war refugees from Ukraine: Experiences, challenges and good practices	Representatives of municipal administrations	Representatives from 13 municipal administrations	F2F	October–November 2022	Diversity Development Group
LT3	Sociological research on challenges regarding the war in Ukraine	No publicly available information	1,003 Lithuanian residents, 202 war refugees from Ukraine	Not specified	Survey of Lithuanian residents: February 2023 Survey of Ukrainians: March–April 2023	Department of National Minorities
LV1	<i>Surveys with refugees from Ukraine: Needs, intentions, and integration challenges</i>	Refugees	368	F2F	January–March 2023	IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix
NL1	<i>State of education for displaced Ukrainians in the Netherlands and policy outlook</i>	Refugees	584 responses, covering 1,500 displaced Ukrainians among the 76,000 registered in the municipalities of the Netherlands (2% as of 4 July 2022)	Web	23 June to 27 July 2022	Opora Foundation
NL2	Initial monitoring of language education of displaced adult Ukrainians	50 municipalities and 44 people	50 municipalities and 44 adult education providers and interviewees	Web	Around July 2022	
NL3	<i>Needs assessment: Displaced people from Ukraine living in the Netherlands</i>	Refugees	565	Web	23 November to 19 December 2022	Opora Foundation and Tilburg University
NO1	<i>Assessing future migration among Ukrainian refugees in Poland and Norway</i>	Refugees	44 interviews with refugees in Norway and Poland	F2F	Between July and October 2022	
PL1	<i>Special report: Refugees from Ukraine in Poland – A sociological study</i>	Refugees	400	F2F	23 March to 3 April 2022	EWL
PL2	<i>Health of refugees from Ukraine in Poland 2022 – Household survey and behavioural insights research</i>	Refugees	1,800 households, 5,000 people	F2F	June–August 2022	Globsec
PL3	War refugees from Ukraine: One year in Poland – A survey study	Refugees	400	Web and phone	10–16 February 2023	EWL

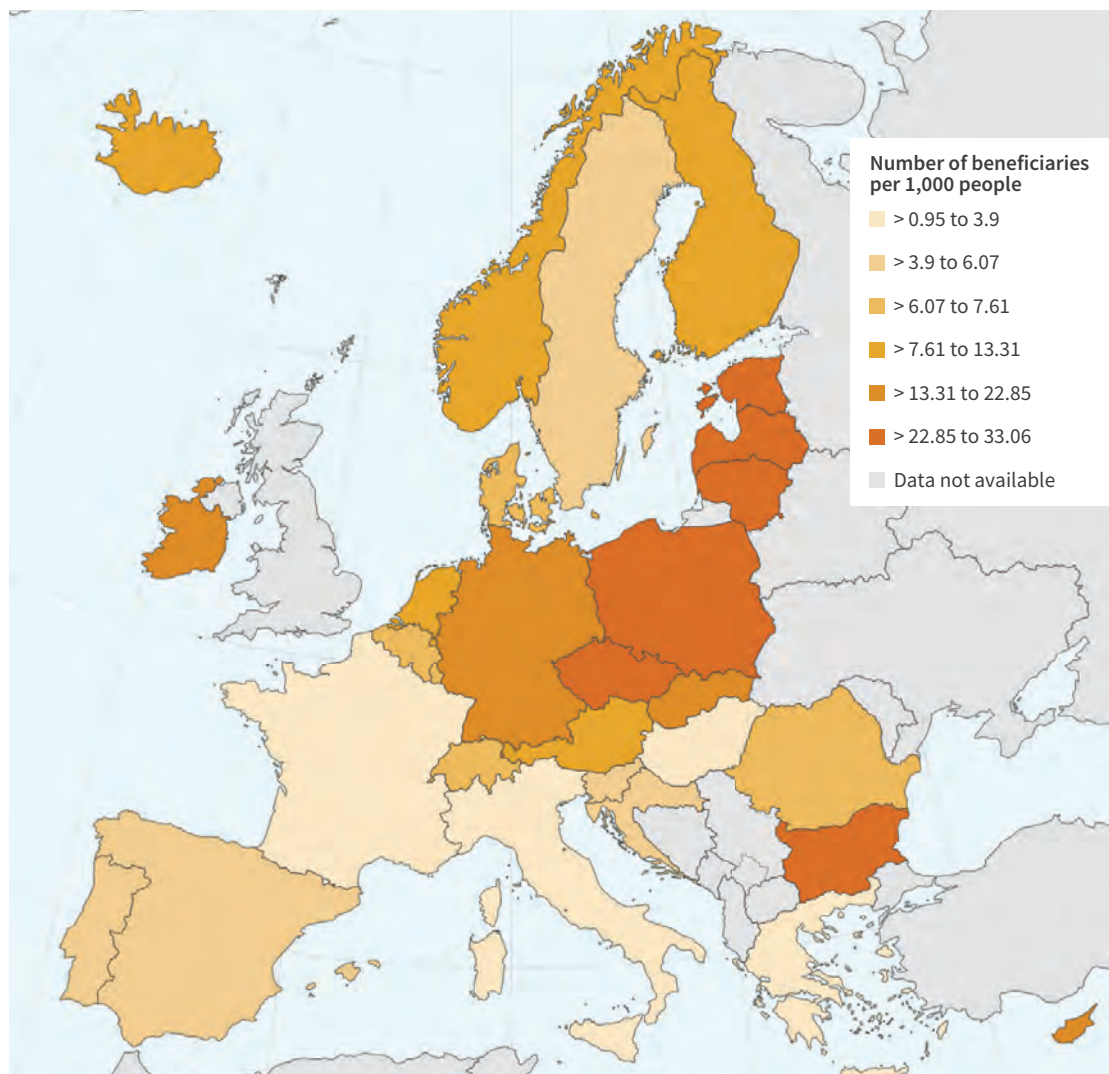
Code	Publication title (italic)/ survey title/topic	Respondents/ sample	Sample size	Mode	Data gathering period	Organisation
PL4	<i>Refugees from Ukraine: Vocational activation in Poland and Germany</i>	Refugees in country of current residence: Germany (50%) and Poland (50%)	400 in Poland and 400 in Germany	F2F	15–25 July 2022	EWL
PL5	Public perception and integration of refugees from Ukraine	Refugees in country of current residence: Poland (64.4%), Ireland (18.7%), Germany (13.9%) and other (4%)	523	F2F	30 March to 30 April 2022	UKREF
PL6	Poll on public attitudes towards those fleeing Ukraine	Representative sample of adult population in Poland	1,081		April 2023	Centre for Public Opinion Research and European Commission
RO1	<i>Fleeing Ukraine: Displaced people's experiences in the EU</i>	Refugees	Total: 14,685; in Romania: 1,488 respondents	Web	22 August to 29 September 2022	FRA
RO2	<i>Crossing to Ukraine: Surveys with refugees on destinations, length of stay and assistance</i>	Refugees	2,245 respondents	F2F	1 January to 31 March 2023	IOM
RO3	<i>Survey with refugees from Ukraine: Needs, intentions, and integration challenges</i>	Refugees	2,475 respondents	F2F	January–March 2023	IOM
RO4	Urban inclusion survey	Refugees	2,095 valid surveys	F2F	1 August to 20 October 2022	IOM
RO5	<i>Evolution of needs report</i>	80% female, 20% male; interviews conducted in nine countries and at three border crossings	10,097 interviews conducted	F2F	March–October 2022	IOM
RO6	<i>Survey regarding the social cohesion in the context of Ukrainian crisis</i>	Romanians plus refugees	405 Romanians and 527 Ukrainian refugees	Web	February–March 2023	Unicef
SE1	Ukrainians' life experiences in Sweden	Refugees	1,419	Web	February 2023	Ukrainian Professional Support Center
SE2	IOM survey in Sweden – Ukraine response	Adults with a temporary protection permit	4,746	Web and phone	April–May 2023	IOM
SK1	First representative survey on the inclusion of Ukrainian children in schools	Teachers at primary schools in Slovakia	6,000	Web	Spring 2022	Comenius Institute in cooperation with the research agency FOCUS and the EduPage school information system
SK2	School readiness for education of Ukrainian refugee children	Schools that educate children of Ukrainian refugees	328	Phone	18 April to 13 May 2022	Štátna školská inšpekcia (State School Inspectorate)

**Notes:** F2F, face to face; IAB-BiB/FReDA-BAMF-SOEP, Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung and Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung/Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, Familiendemografische Panel and Sozio-oekonomische Panel.



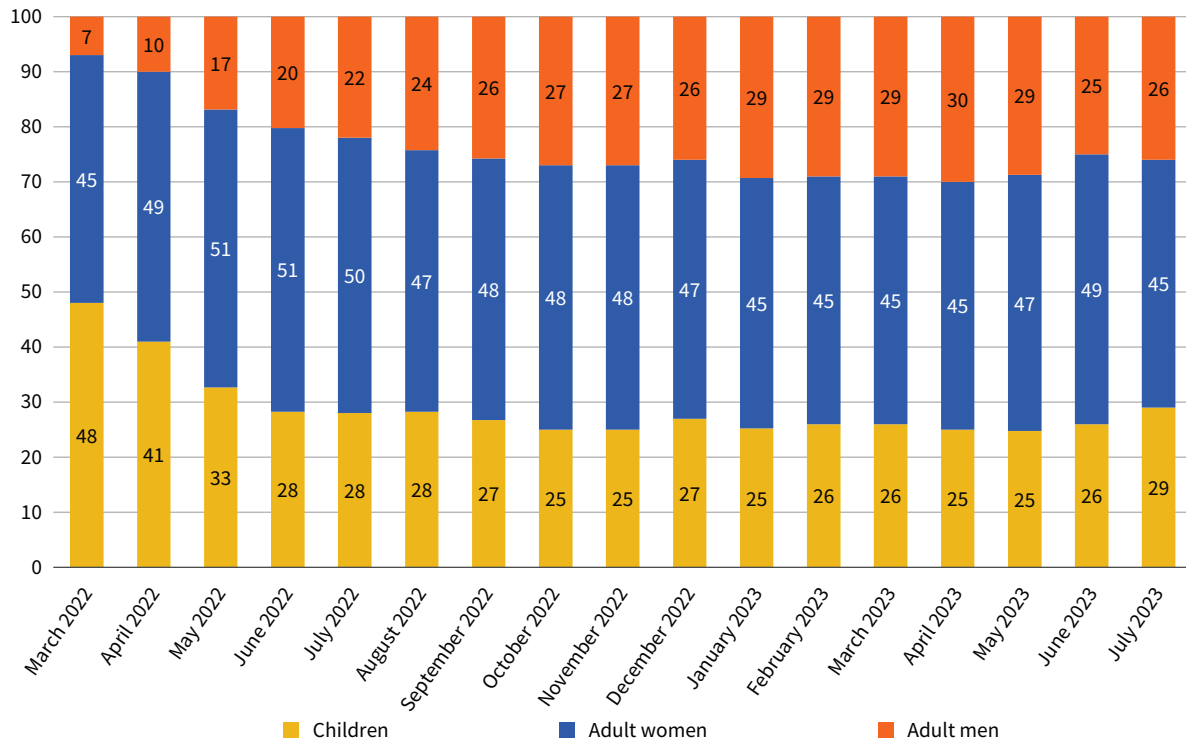
## Annex 2: Key data on displaced people from Ukraine in selected European host countries (September 2023)

Figure A1: Beneficiaries of temporary protection per thousand people in each receiving country



Source: Eurostat, 2023

Figure A2: Share of main population groups among people granted temporary protection in the EU (%)



Notes: EU total excluding: Ireland, Hungary: data by age group not available; France: data for minors generally not included; Germany: data not available from March 2022 to July 2022. Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.  
 Source: Eurostat [migr\_asytpfm]

## Annex 3: Sectoral pattern of Ukrainian refugees' employment in selected countries (ranking)

**Table A2: Sectoral pattern – Top three sectors employing Ukrainian refugees by their ranking in each selected country**

Sector	Countries where the sector accounts for the largest proportion of employed Ukrainian displaced people	Countries where the sector ranks second	Countries where the sector ranks third
Accommodation and food service	Croatia, Cyprus, Ireland, Latvia, <sup>a</sup> Portugal, Spain	Denmark, <sup>b</sup> Luxembourg	Italy, Norway, Sweden <sup>c</sup>
Human health and social work	Luxembourg, Norway	–	–
Manufacturing	Lithuania, Poland	–	Ireland
Construction	Sweden <sup>c</sup>	Latvia, Lithuania, Spain	–
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	–	Norway	Denmark
Transportation and storage	–	–	Lithuania, Poland
Wholesale and retail	Ireland	–	–
Administrative and support services	–	Poland	–

<sup>a</sup> Restaurant and mobile catering services (hotels and similar accommodation is another category, ranking fifth). <sup>b</sup> Hospitality only; however, travel agencies, cleaning and other operational services rank first. <sup>c</sup> Based on survey data (SE2).

**Note:** Since the sectors may not cover the same categories across the countries (see other notes), even the comparative ranking is indicative only.

**Source:** National contributions, unless otherwise indicated

## Annex 4: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

**Table A3: List of correspondents who contributed to the research**

Country	National correspondent	Organisation
Austria	Bernadette Allinger	Working Life Research Centre (FORBA)
Belgium	Dries Van Herreweghe	Research Institute for Work and Society (HIVA), KU Leuven
Bulgaria	Alexey Pamporov	Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
Croatia	Predrag Bejaković	Faculty of Economics, Business and Tourism, University of Split
	Irena Klemenčić	Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb
Cyprus	Alexandros Perdikes	Cyprus Labour Institute of the Pancyprian Federation of Labour (INEK-PEO)
Czechia	Jan Kubát and Danica Schebelle	Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA)
Denmark	Louise Fabricius and Nathalie Diana Kjærgaard Knudsen	Oxford Research Denmark
Estonia	Miriam Lehari, Ann Gertrud Norberg and Anni Kurmiste	Praxis Centre for Policy Studies
Finland	Elina Härmä	Oxford Research
France	Frédéric Turlan and Pascale Turlan	IR Share
Germany	Sandra Vogel	German Economic Institute (IW)
Greece	Penny Georgiadou	Labour Institute of the Greek General Confederation of Labour (INE GSEE)
Hungary	Nóra Krokovay	Kopint-Tárki Institute for Economic Research
Ireland	Martin Frawley and Andy Prendergast	Industrial Relations News
Italy	Sofia Gualandi, Alessandro Smilari and Marta Capesciotti	Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini (FGB)
Latvia	Krišs Karnītis	Economic Prognosis Centre (EPC) Ltd
Lithuania	Inga Blaziene	Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences
Luxembourg	Nathalie Lorentz and Gaetan de Lanchy	Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER)
Malta	Christine Scerri	Centre for Labour Studies, University of Malta
Netherlands	Thomas de Winter	Panteia
Norway	Åsmund Arup Seip	Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research
Poland	Agnieszka Makulec and Agnieszka Górniak	Ecorys
Portugal	Paula Carrilho and Ana Brázia	Centre for Studies for Social Intervention (CESIS)
Romania	Marcel Spatari	Syndex
Slovakia	Daniela Kešelová and Miroslava Kordošová	Institute for Labour and Family Research (IVPR)
Slovenia	Maja Breznik	Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana
Spain	Alejandro Godino	Sociological Research Centre on Everyday Life and Work, Autonomous University of Barcelona
Sweden	Nils Brandsma	Oxford Research

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This report focuses on the challenges that the EU Member States and Norway face when receiving and integrating refugees who fled Ukraine after Russia's invasion in February 2022. It investigates their labour market integration and access to and experiences with public services that are crucial for societal inclusion. The main aim is to explore and highlight the interplay between different areas of integration: employment, housing arrangements, healthcare (including mental health care), access to childcare and social assistance. The report uses information collected by Eurofound from the Member States and Norway and covers developments up to mid-2023. It examines the following issues: employment levels and barriers to labour market access for Ukrainian refugees; support measures for labour market integration; and the ways in which the Member States and Norway facilitate access to key services (housing, education, healthcare and social assistance) and the challenges that have to be overcome in this regard.

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**The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency established in 1975. Its role is to provide knowledge in the area of social, employment and work-related policies according to Regulation (EU) 2019/127.**

