# THE POLISH SCHOOL OF ASSISTANCE

## Reception and integration of refugees from Ukraine in Poland in 2022

Edited by:
Sarian Jarosz
Witold Klaus

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Świnoujście
Łomża
Wronki
Bolechówko-Potasze
Poznań
Płock
Warszawa
Lublin
Hrubieszów
Kraków
Rzeszów
Przemyśl

# The Polish School of Assistance

## Reception and integration of refugees from Ukraine in Poland in 2022

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

| | |
|---|---|
| **White Book** | A cross-sectoral report with legislative recommendations on the situation of refugees from Ukraine for the Government of Poland created as a result of the Local Government Roundtable in May 2022 in Wroclaw. |
| **Blue Dots** | Support sites for those fleeing the war in Ukraine with protection and access to necessary information (UNHCR, UNICEF). |
| **crisis management team** | A cell responsible for crisis management, usually consisting of representatives of various levels of government (e.g. municipal and provincial) |
| **full-scale war** | Armed operations that also extend to civilians, public infrastructure and are a priority for political action, here the armed actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine |
| **cross-sectoral cooperation** | Coordinated cooperation between sectors, e.g. NGOs, business, local governments. |
| **large and medium cities; small towns** | According to the Central Statistical Office, respectively: above 100,000 residents; between 20,000 and 100,000; below 20,000 residents. |
| **LGBTQIA** | An acronym and umbrella term for a diverse group that includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, among others. |
| **LSKPU** | Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine |
| **Migration Consortium** | a group of organizations with a long-standing commitment to working with and on behalf of migrants |
| **MOPS** | Municipal Social Assistance Center |
| **NGOs and INGOs** | Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) |
| **PAH** | Polish Humanitarian Action |
| **places of collective accommodation** | Here: places where refugees live/stay in large numbers (also: reception centers). |
| **PUP** | National Employment Office |
| **reception and integration (inclusion)** | Actions and policies aimed at welcoming refugees (humanitarian, emergency, rather short-term assistance, meeting basic needs) or integrating them (integrating them into the social fabric, long-term, e.g., education, cultural exchange) |
| **refugee** | An umbrella term for people on the move forced to migrate due to war in Ukraine. |
| **social organizations, CSOs** | Together: NGOs and informal social initiatives. |
| **Special Act** | Act of March 12, 2022 on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of the country, regulating residence, access to services, etc. Amended January 28, 2023. |
| **TCN** | Third Country Nationals, citizens of third countries (without EU, EEA, or Swiss citizenship) |
| **transit and destination towns** | Towns and cities with such specific migration characteristics that make migrants either stop in them on their way further on (transit) or stay permanently (destination). |
| **UMP** | Union of Polish Metropolises |
| **WOT** | Territorial Defence Forces |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## THE POLISH SCHOOL OF ASSISTANCE. RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE IN POLAND IN 2022

*Initially, there was a lot of enthusiasm (...) However, it is difficult to expect any long-term relief efforts from an ordinary resident, because this is the task, it seems to me, of the government and local authorities, and civil society organizations. On the other hand, I think the residents passed this exam with a straight A (public administration, a large city).*

It's been an even year since the outbreak of the full-scale aggression against Ukraine, resulting in nearly two million Ukrainian women and men seeking refuge from the war in Poland, 70 percent of whom now reside in Poland's twelve largest cities. The year was marked by unprecedented solidarity in Polish society and by cross-sectoral cooperation, navigating between the enormity of the scale of the refugees' needs and the social and institutional readiness to meet them instantly. After a year, we can already see that the *ad hoc* created infrastructure must hold for years to come, and thus we are entering a new and difficult phase of the long-term reception and integration process. In this phase, qualitative cooperation and a diagnosis of what has worked during the initial period and what needs to be changed are essential. However, this process is impossible without recognizing new needs, strengthening the cross-sectoral cooperation and communication, and including refugees and migrants themselves in decision-making processes.

The report shows the **tremendous mobilization of a large part of the Polish society** involved in helping those fleeing the war. It shows what we can feel proud of as Poles. But it also highlights the help that goes unnoticed – the aid for refugees from the Ukrainian community itself which had previously lived in Poland – both from people with migration experience as well as the Ukrainian national minority. The *Polish School of Assistance* report offers **a diagnosis of needs and good practices of** assistance and integration to those involved in these activities – local and central authorities, social and international organizations, representatives of business and migrant communities. The diagnosis is based on the voices and experiences they have gained by operating continuously since February 24, 2022. Thanks to the cooperation of the leading Polish research centers and the Migration Consortium, based on the analysis of the data found and the qualitative and institutional research in a total of eleven Polish towns and cities: large (Kraków, Lublin, Poznań, Rzeszów, Warsaw), medium-sized (Łomża, Płock, Świnoujście) and small (Bolechówko-Potasze, Hrubieszów, Wronki), we were able to analyze the scale and nature of the Polish aid and reception infrastructure in response to the mass arrival of refugees from Ukraine. The appropriate differentiation of the cities studied was intended to provide the fullest and most nuanced picture of the measures taken in response to the arrival of refugees after February 24, 2022.

The term "refugee" in this report includes, in the intention of the authors, all people fleeing war. In the Polish original version of the report, the word *uchodźczynie* is used (translated as "women refugees") to emphasize the fact that migration from Ukraine described in the report is highly feminized – mainly women with children and the elderly come to Poland. To emphasize this process, the report in Polish uses mainly feminine forms at the level of language. It is not reflected in the English translated version (for linguistic reasons).

## TWO PHASES OF ACTIVITIES: RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION

*It must be clear who is responsible for what, who is who. There must be tools for it, there must be meetings. There must be money. There must be a place. There must be communication* (civil society)

The unprecedented scale of mobilization of the Polish civil society after February 24, 2022, and the governmental as well as civilian response to the humanitarian crisis brought several social, logistical, and cross-sectoral challenges. **In the first phase of the** relief **effort** – the **reception** – the provision of humanitarian assistance and security to those fleeing Ukraine was crucial, and most of the efforts were undertaken on an *ad hoc* basis. This led to the creation of many parallel platforms for knowledge sharing and communication, and overlapping activities, an unclear division of responsibilities at different levels of public administration, overcrowding of rapidly created collective accommodation centers set up in halls and at railway stations, and a lack of adequate support for groups with special needs: minors and the elderly, the chronically ill and those facing additional discrimination (including representatives of the Roma minority, the LGBTQIA community). Many of what were intended to be temporary solutions or problems persist to this day, and the immense amount of work and responsibility that fell on civil society – including the Ukrainian minority itself – frequently has not been replaced at later stages by state and local government action. The people who were the pillars of refugee assistance gradually became its hostages.

We are now **in the second phase of the response to the crisis – integration**. It manifests itself in the need to create long-term solutions and forms of support that include refugees in decision-making processes. The following research in Polish cities and towns indicated that many actors – from community organizations and volunteers to local governments and crisis response staff – felt left on their own for months, with no guidance, no coordination, and no clear division of responsibilities or long-term support (structural, financial, know-how). CSOs relied on the support of businesses, international organizations, and hitherto intra-sectoral cooperation, without a sense of adequate participation in dialogue with central and regional authorities. Many interviewees particularly emphasized the role of businesses, which began to cooperate with the third sector on such a scale for the first time. At the same time, the approach of businesses was contrasted with the practices of many international organizations, including long decision-making processes. The need for intersectoral cooperation was strongly emphasized repeatedly and should be a priority in developing strategies for the successful reception and integration of refugees in Polish towns and cities.

## REFUGEES IN POLISH TOWNS AND CITIES

*The good always comes back in some other form. I think all this help was also because it could or would happen to us one day (a volunteer, small town).*

The scale of migration from Ukraine to specific towns or cities, as well as the willingness to accept refugees and integrate them, was determined primarily by the size, geographic location, and migratory nature of the town or city, as well as the presence of social organizations in it. In large cities, a receptive labor market, easier access to education, the presence of international organizations and, in sum, a larger offer of assistance to refugees, including those with special needs, were the attracting factors . Moreover, a large and well-networked migrant community was often already present in Warsaw, Poznań, or Lublin. Similarly, in the medium-sized cities studied here, the groups of economic migrants were large. The difference was the lack of integration policies, or a social sector dedicated to migrants. After February 24, the aid and integration infrastructure had to be created almost from scratch, and much of the responsibility rested with town or city authorities and local governments, and even local business. A separate group was made up of small towns, where actions were taken based on networks of trust and neighborly assistance, providing a barometer for future good integration and relocation practices.

What emerges clearly from the report is the huge role (and responsibility) that the **Ukrainian minority** itself**, as well as migrants and refugees themselves**, played in the cities and towns surveyed, often act-

ing as the first support (translation, mediation), best recognizing and pointing out the needs of those fleeing Ukraine, and taking up uneasy activities and new forms of cooperation.

## CROSS-SECTORAL COOPERATION

*This state of permanent crisis requires the cooperation of all of us (civil society).*

**Coherent and transparent cooperation between the various sectors was and remains a priority**, as stated by virtually all of those interviewed for this report. However, in most of the towns and cities studied (except perhaps Lublin), regardless of their size, cooperation and communication **between local governments and the social sector** rarely went smoothly: the third sector declared its willingness to be involved in decision-making processes and co-design medium- and long-term reception and integration activities, and local governments encountered difficulties in shifting to **crisis action mode.** There was also a lack of good cooperation between different divisions of the public administration, primarily between the central government and its subordinate governors on the one hand and local governments and civil society organizations on the other.

After months of grassroots efforts, **civil society has lost the strength** and resources necessary to maintain the aid infrastructure but has not been replaced to an adequate extent and at an adequate pace by the actors ultimately responsible for these activities, namely the central and local governments with the support of international organizations.

The presence of **international organizations and agencies** (UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF, etc.) was noted by the local government and non-governmental sector, especially in medium and large cities, but a **challenge to cooperation and communication was the deficit of trust** and the lack of clear rules of cooperation, as well as **the bureaucratization of** procedures necessary to receive and account for support in such a dynamic environment. Very much **appreciated was the cooperation with local and international businesses,** which sought cooperation with the social sector and offered dynamic, trust-based settlement systems, while acting **in its field of expertise** where necessary (cyber security, retrofitting reception centers, etc.).

**The government's activities**, represented mainly by the governors (*wojewoda*), were mostly present in large cities, where the governors were responsible for **coordinating reception and relocation centers**. These places – especially after the legislative changes regarding places of collective accommodation (due to take effect on March 1, 2023) – largely still **need to be improved**, especially in terms of access to services, sanitation, and people with special needs (unaccompanied minors, the elderly or sick, etc.). The study also found severely **limited access to public services, housing, and education** for refugees, which requires decisive government action and consistent cooperation across sectors. Centrally and locally, the need to monitor increasingly **anti-Ukrainian views**, including those that blame refugees for many of Poland's emerging problems, was also recognized. They should be countered by dispelling these myths. Political leaders, including the government, should get involved. The positive message about refugees coming from those in power cannot be overestimated.

**The hostilities in Ukraine are not going to end soon, and it is essential to have a long-term assistance and integration strategy** and to guarantee stable support for the entities that implement it. The following report is an analysis of activities and solutions to date, with recommendations where the given solutions and forms of cooperation have worked – or need improvement. The admirable spurt of Polish solidarity with those fleeing Ukraine must evolve into a Polish school of assistance based on gaining knowledge about the needs of refugees, exchanging experiences and skills, and cross-sectoral trust and long-term action planning.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis, we recommend the following:

- The government should **withdraw from the obligation,** introduced as of March 1, 2023, by an amendment to the Special Act of March 12, 2022, for **refugees to contribute to the cost of living** in places of collective accommodation. It is also necessary to bring the law's provisions in line with EU requirements.

- It is necessary to **prepare and introduce consistent local integration policies** at various levels of local governments, as well as to map the resources and local actors involved in this assistance (social organizations, local business, etc.). Priority is to be given to **long-term measures.**

- It is necessary to plan and carry out **improvements in refugees' access to services**: quality medical and social care, education and labor market, housing, and integration support, according to international standards and considering specific needs.

- It is necessary to **support social organizations** and their efforts aimed at helping and integrating refugees. This should take place at various levels, including financially, and should be offered by public institutions and international organizations.

- It is necessary to **improve intersectoral cooperation** in assistance and integration efforts, to make communication channels more consistent, and to **share knowledge** and good practices. **This cooperation must be based on trust**, simplified procedures, and the inclusion of migrants in decision-making processes. Civil society must be **significantly relieved** by local and central authorities in these activities.

- The government's plans and efforts to carry out **internal relocations** should be intensified, and should be based on cooperation with local governments and the voluntariness of the move on the part of refugees.

- It is imperative that those working with refugees be provided with support in terms of know-how and, above all, with psychological support. This is especially important for those with experience of migration, including those who fled the war in Ukraine. **Support in the form of psychological assistance** and counseling related to counteracting professional burnout should also be offered to all those working directly with refugees, including in public institutions.

**Migration Consortium**

# INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

The aim of *The Polish School of Assistance* is to highlight what reception and integration efforts aimed at people fleeing Ukraine were undertaken in Polish towns and cities, or more broadly in Polish communities at the local level, after February 24, 2022, and to indicate the scale and limitations of these efforts, as well as to show how they were affected by local specificity and the size of the towns and cities studied.

Both Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 and the huge number of people fleeing the war caused by it were unprecedented events in 21st-century Europe. They have also left a mark on the Polish society on various levels – from the fear of warfare reaching Poland to the overwhelming solidarity with Ukrainian people defending their country and those fleeing Ukrainian territory. Until now, Poland has been rather on the periphery of the main migration routes of various groups of forced migrants – we have hardly felt the effects of the war in Syria and the refugees fleeing from there, and we have similarly hardly hosted people affected by other political crises or military actions taking place in Iraq, Afghanistan, or African countries. For the first two decades of the 21st century, the main group that fled to Poland from persecution were people from the North Caucasus (Górny et al. 2017). This situation changed in 2021 with the emergence of a new migration route to the European Union through Belarus and Poland and the Baltic States. The Polish government responded to the arrival of those seeking international protection at our borders with push-backs and the sealing of the border (building a fence topped with razor wire, sending thousands of uniformed services officers over the border), which led to a serious humanitarian crisis. People fleeing to Europe in the hope of finding protection here have been forced to hide in the border forests. They are caught there by Polish uniformed services and pushed back illegally and without following the procedures prescribed by law, to be dumped on Belarusian territory, where they face violence and torture (Klaus 2021; Amnesty International 2022; Czarnota, Górczynska 2022). This situation continues uninterrupted to this day. However, this topic will not be addressed in this report, as it deserves a separate and in-depth analysis.

The policies of the state and the reaction of the Polish society to the situation of those hiding in the forests provide a backdrop against which the difference in their actions toward those fleeing Ukraine is extremely clear. The latter are welcomed, and the Polish border is basically open to them. The situation is quite different at the border with Belarus, where people fleeing from countries further away from Poland try to get through to the EU. Their lives and health are equally, and sometimes even more, at risk. These people are most often differentiated by skin color – as it is non-whites who usually cross the Polish-Belarusian border. This racist and inhumane approach of the Polish authorities, which is relatively little condemned by the Polish society, undoubtedly casts a serious shadow on the image of Poland as a country and of ourselves as its citizens and nationals. These double standards also apply to the helpers themselves, actively discouraged or even punished for helping refugees at one border, and supported in this task by the state from the very beginning at the other. When reading this report, therefore, it is important to remember that these reactions are also included in what the "Polish School of Assistance" looks like.

Another event that changed the landscape of migration to Poland was precisely Russia's aggression against Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Migration from Ukraine to Poland has been on the rise over the past few years, resulting in an increase in the number of people of this nationality living in Poland. Research by the Union of Polish Metropolises (2022) indicates that in January 2022 there were about 1.5 million Ukrainians living in our country. This number increased sharply in the following months. The scale of the arrival of refugees was unprecedented – only in the first two weeks after February 24, a million people crossed the Polish border. Such large migration movements had not taken place in

Europe since the end of World War II, for it must be remembered that people were also fleeing Ukraine across other available borders, and there were strong internal migrations as well – from the eastern to the western, more secure, part of that country.

Poland is the European Union country that has received the largest number of refugees. At its peak it was even about 2 million people. Some of them stayed in our country, others went further west, to other European countries, some returned to Ukraine after some time. According to the data as of February 6, 2023, there were more than 976,000 Ukrainian citizens and nationals registered in Poland as eligible for assistance for fleeing the armed conflict.

Hence the need for this comprehensive report, which answers the question of how the Polish society and the Polish state reacted in the face of this ongoing challenge of providing assistance to those fleeing Russian troops and bombardments, and how they coped with the challenge. The report uses two terms: reception and integration. The first means receiving those fleeing in the first weeks – meeting their most important and urgent needs right after they arrived: transportation, temporary housing, food, providing basic information about their situation and their entitlements. This is followed by the second stage: integration. It means support in making a life for oneself (if only temporarily) in Poland. It includes finding a more stable place to live, looking for work, education (especially for children), language support (translation and learning Polish), assistance in finding one's way in a new city and country. Integration doesn't mean depriving refugees of their national identity, so it' is necessary to ensure ties to Ukrainian culture. It is not one-sided, so it should include activities aimed at Polish society. Neither does integration imply permanence – it does not require determining that a person will permanently or for a long time bind themselves to Poland. It is aimed at jointly building a space in which a good, dignified, and safe life will be lived by all those who cohabit it, regardless of their origin and citizenship. In other words, it is a process of building a community based on solidarity, inclusion, and openness. A community to which each person will feel a sense of belonging and in which they will feel comfortable.

The report was called "The Polish School of Assistance." Its use of the adjective "Polish"" only means that the process took place in our country. This does not mean, however, that the assistance described here has been provided exclusively by people of Polish nationality. In the process of helping refugees to arrange their lives in our country, the Ukrainian community – both people from the Ukrainian national minority and migrants who came to Poland before the invasion – played a huge role. Also, refugees themselves joined quite quickly in helping their compatriots – as volunteers or employees of various institutions and organizations. Thus, it should be remembered that they, too, created this "Polish" school of helping, which was not limited to Polish actors only. For in addition to private individuals, various kinds of international organizations – those operating under the banner of the UN and many other, private actors – very quickly joined in the support. They showed up in Poland responding to the needs of both refugees and local communities, sharing their knowledge and experience and providing the financial and in-kind resources necessary for the aid efforts. This includes businesses, including large multinational corporations supporting the provision of aid in various ways.

This report shows the many challenges that are associated with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees in Poland, but also the benefits of the presence of new residents. Helping them is undoubtedly expensive – it is covered by both public and private funds. The Polish Economic Institute estimates that Poles donated some 10 billion zlotys to support refugees in just the first three months after the invasion began, and public spending for this purpose during that time reached about 1% of GDP. On the other hand, however, the presence of refugees also brings tangible benefits to the Polish economy – it is estimated that Polish GDP could increase by as much as 3.5% thanks to the potential of the

refugees. Their employment (about 60% of people of the so-called working age are working), additional consumption, but also the establishment of new enterprises with Ukrainian capital in Poland contribute to this growth – only between January and September 2022, the number of such new businesses was up by 14,000.

## Selection of Polish towns and cities

It was not possible to cover all Polish towns and cities in the study, so it was decided to select some, bearing in mind their diversity. Hence, the observations presented in this report certainly do not capture all the processes that took place in Poland in 2022 in response to the arrival of people fleeing Ukraine. Nonetheless, based on the reactions of individual towns and cities, the report undoubtedly shows broader and nationwide trends in how local communities living in Poland have responded to the arrival of refugees, encompassing not only Polish citizens and nationals, but also people of other nationalities living in Poland.

The towns and cities described in this report were selected for the study in a purposive manner, considering several criteria: their size (large, medium, and small)[11], the presence in them of social organizations working on behalf of migrants, refugees' perceptions of the town or city (destination *versus* transit town/city), relationship with the metropolis (towns/cities in the metropolitan area and outside it), geographic location (e.g., border, central). The identified characteristics were found to significantly influence both the way the towns and cities reacted to the arrival of refugees and the refugees' perceptions of the towns and cities (which shaped their decisions to stay there or to travel on). The diversity of the towns and cities surveyed was intended to provide the fullest possible picture of actions taken in response to the arrival of refugees after February 24, 2022.

Cities, due to their larger labor market (and higher wages) and easier access to services, were the natural direction of migration and often the destination for many migrants. A large group of them were already living in the cities selected for the survey – Warsaw, Kraków, Poznań, Lublin, and Rzeszów – before February 24. In addition, most of these cities had social organizations offering support to people with migration experience (except for Rzeszów). Kraków and Lublin were chosen as destination cities before the war because of their proximity to the Ukrainian border, receptive labor market, educational offer, and convenient transportation links. Other cities, due to their geographic location, were places where Ukrainians made investments, including in real estate (e.g. Rzeszów). All these features, including the large presence of economic or educational migrants from Ukraine and previous business contacts, became an important determinant in the choice of the destination city by those fleeing the war.

The second group analyzed in the report was the medium-sized cities of Plock, Łomża and Świnoujście. Situated in different regions of Poland, they were hosting migrants and economic migrants from Ukraine even before the war, while at the same time not carrying out any local government-initiated integration activities towards them before February 24. A unique feature of Łomża, located in Podlaskie Voivodeship, is the population of refugees living in the city for more than a decade, and the presence of a social organization supporting migrants. Świnoujście is characterized by its proximity to the country's western border with Germany – which is an internal border in the Schengen zone – and a receptive local labor market due to the city's tourist and spa socio-economic profile.

1 Town size is defined according to CSO (Central Statistical Office) terminology by population size: small towns – less than 20,000 residents, medium-sized cities – 20-100,000, large cities – more than 100,000 (CSO, 2016).

Bolechówko-Potasze, Wronki and Hrubieszów are small towns chosen for the study because of their diverse characteristics. Bolechówko-Potasze is a satellite town of Poznań, undergoing expansion in the last decade. At the time of Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine, there were no migrants living there, there were no large businesses, and the only active social organization was the local Rural Women's Club. It is worth noting that the community of 1,400 people hosted nearly 100 refugees in their homes, providing them with comprehensive support and acting entirely from the bottom up. Wronki had a completely different character resulting from the relatively large number of Ukrainian migrants living in the town before February 24. The reason for this was the operation of two large factories (Amica and Samsung Electronics Poland Manufacturing Company Ltd.) in the town. Hrubieszów is a small town that has regularly lost residents to larger towns and cities. Its location – just a dozen kilometers from the Ukrainian border – was crucial. A synthetic summary of the most important characteristics of the cities selected for analysis is illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1. Basic characteristics of towns and cities selected for analysis**

| Town/City | Population (2021) (data in thousands) | The migrant population before February 24, 2022 (In thousands) * | Population of refugees from Ukraine in thousands, after Feb. 24** | Presence of at least one migration-related social organization before February 24 | The nature of the city after February 24 | Other-important features |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Warsaw | 1850 | 130 | 100 | Yes | destination/ transit | Capital |
| Kraków | 725 | 43.5 | 30 | Yes | destination | |
| Poznań | 543 | - | - | Yes | destination/ transit | |
| Lublin | 340 | 20 | 8.4 | Yes | transit/ destination | Frontier |
| Rzeszow | 197 | no data | 6 | No | transit | Frontier |
| Łomża | 63 | 2.5 | 0,6 | Yes | destination | |
| Plock | 115 | 13 | 2.2 | No | destination | |
| Świnoujście | 37 | 0.7 | 2.1 | No | destination/ transit | Frontier |
| Hrubieszów | 17 | 0 | 0.2 | No | transit | Frontier |
| Bolechówko--Potasze | 1.4 | 0 | 0.1 | No | destination/ transit | Metropo-litan |
| Wronki | 10 | approx. 2 | 1.7 | No | destination | |

Blue indicates cities, yellow indicates medium-sized cities, green indicates small towns.

* Population estimates are from different years (mostly 2018-2021) and are based on sources described in detail in the images of each city (see Appendix 1).

** Data on the number of refugees are from the PESEL system and are as of December 2022.

## Methodological approach

The work on the presented report was divided into two stages. During the first stage, research on the selected cities was conducted, which included both desk research and the collection and analysis of elicited data, leading to the development of case studies for each city. The second stage consisted in

synthesizing the case studies and identifying general trends and phenomena that occurred in the cities in towns of different sizes, as well as formulating good practices.

In all the towns and cities, in-depth partially structured individual interviews were conducted among representatives of three groups: the local government and its subordinate institutions (code: public administration), social organizations, religious associations, informal neighborhood and local groups (code: civil society), and entrepreneurs involved in assisting refugees (code: business). In some cities, participant observation was additionally conducted. The data presented in the report was collected between February and December 2022. Most of the data was collected as part of various projects, and some was collected solely for the purpose of compiling this report (details of the number of interviews conducted in each city, and the projects under which they were conducted, are provided in Appendix 2). Based on the collected research material, individual authors prepared analyses on the cities selected for the study.

The collected research material was subjected to thematic analysis according to the issues listed as the subsequent chapters of the report. Additional sources of information were the following: websites of town halls and city halls and subordinate institutions, official accounts on social networking sites, local media, literature on the subject, available reports, and statistical data. Some of the data was provided to us by city halls and through correspondence with ministries.

## Language

Language is an important element in constructing reality. This report was originally published in Polish, where the authors, referring to refugees, used either neutral language or feminine forms. The term ”Ukrainian women”” and “women refugees“ used in this report in the Polish version includes not only women, but all persons fleeing Ukraine with Ukrainian citizenship. It had not been reflected in the English version of the report, due to the nature of the English grammar. The exceptions are the parts of the analysis where gender is a statistical category (quantitative studies).

This decision is dictated by a desire to highlight the highly feminized refugee migration, so different from many others in the world. This character of the migration stems from the policy of the Ukrainian government, which has barred the vast majority of men from leaving its territory, mainly on the grounds of military recruitment.

## The authors and creators of the report

This report is also unique because of the team of people who took it upon themselves to prepare it. It came about by combining the forces of a coalition of 9 social organizations working for years for the integration of migrants and refugees, forming the Migration Consortium, and the leading Polish academic units studying migration: The Centre for Migration Research at the University of Warsaw and the Centre for Migration Research at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (which also invited researchers from other research institutions, such as the MigLab Research Team from Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin or the Multiculturalism and Migration Observatory at the Kraków University of Economics). The report is based on scientific research (a list of which can be found in Appendix 2) and is supplemented by practical voices, resulting from the daily work with refugees from Ukraine over the past year. We would like to thank very much all the people who agreed to do interviews and share their experiences and knowledge.

## Chapter 1. Refugees from Ukraine in Poland

The outbreak of a full-scale war in Ukraine not only marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of European migration, but also became a turning point regarding the most recent mass arrival of foreigners to Poland. This chapter illustrates the causes, structural features, and significance of the refugee migration from Ukraine to Poland in comparison with similar phenomena in the region. This is crucial insofar as the case of Poland will likely be a reference point for the European Union's migration policies in the years to come.

The refugee and emigration phenomena that have been observed for many months are undeniably a consequence of the full-scale aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and the course of the hostilities. However, it should be clearly emphasized that the events in the area of mobility were both a derivative of what was happening in Ukraine and of the political decisions of the European Union countries. This was well illustrated by the reaction of the Polish authorities (with full awareness of the link between the decisions made in Warsaw and the arrangements at the international level). First, there was a very quick, in fact instant, decision to open the Polish-Ukrainian border. The restrictiveness of border control was drastically reduced, allowing mass arrivals from Ukraine to Poland. Secondly, an unprecedented legal framework was invoked, namely the activation, for the first time in history, of the Temporary Protection Directive (this was possible because it had been part of EU law since 2001). This directive was fundamental to the process at hand, as it was largely responsible for creating the structure of mobility for people coming to the European Union from Ukraine. Unlike other persons seeking international protection, those under temporary protection were able to enjoy far-reaching mobility, including returning to their country of origin and then re-entering the European Union. Ukrainian refugees[22] also gained access to social benefits and services and, crucially, the opportunity to participate in the labor market (Bukowski and Duszczyk 2022; Duszczyk and Kaczmarczyk 2022).

In the face of a real threat to life and limb, there was massive border movement and, significantly, it was in both directions. Of greatest significance, of course, was the arrival *en masse* from Ukraine of people fleeing the war, most of whom were women, children, and the elderly. In the first phase of the war, there was also a flow in the opposite direction, which included a statistically difficult-to-define group of men who worked in Poland and other EU countries and decided to join the Ukrainian Armed Forces. As is usually the case with mass migration processes, it is very difficult to clearly assess the scale and structure of this phenomenon. Methods for measuring mobility both from Ukraine to Poland and in the opposite direction are, unfortunately, imperfect. In addition, the relevance of the various methods has changed as the situation has evolved, and new tools have emerged to accurately analyze the phenomenon. It is therefore important to realize that all the figures cited here are subject to the risk of error.

Before defining the increase in migration from Ukraine to Poland after February 24, 2022, a caveat is necessary to understand the scale and structure of the analyzed phenomenon. It is the migration situation of Poland. At the beginning of 2022, there were more than 2 million immigrants in Poland, of which about 1.5 million were Ukrainians (Górny et al. 2020; CSO 2020). For those not involved in migration issues daily, this figure may seem abstract, so it is worth putting it into a context, comparing it with Poland's migration situation a decade ago. According to the 2011 Census, there were about 100,000 immigrants in the country, most of them citizens of the former Soviet Union, mainly temporarily resident migrant workers (Górny 2010). This means that the past 10 years have been a phase of radical change

[2] We use this term throughout the text with full knowledge, although due to the legal framework used, we are not talking about people with refugee status, but we mark the specific status of people under temporary protection in this way, also to distinguish this group from those who were in Poland before February 24, 2022.

in the migration status of Poland, which has gone from being a country with one of the lowest shares of immigrants in the European Union to becoming a European leader, especially in terms of the influx of foreign workers. This transformation, however, had another important dimension. This is because the literature began to describe Poland as a *new immigrant destination*. This term describes the influx of migrants to populations that are strongly homogeneous in the ethnic sense, and are characterized by the absence of an extensive ethnic economy. The characteristics of new destination countries also include underdeveloped or no institutions to support migrants (Górny and Kaczmarczyk 2018, 2020; McAreavey 2017).

As mentioned previously, at the time of the outbreak of the full-scale war, there were about 2 million immigrants in Poland, many of them seasonal workers. This meant that their needs and expectations at the level of integration efforts were quite different from those faced after February 24, 2022. The experience of 2014-2021, especially the mass migration from Ukraine, which intensified after the outbreak of the first phase of the war in the eastern part of the country, provided the necessary context for the report for other reasons as well. This is because the available statistical data made it possible to conclude that the presence of a very large Ukrainian diaspora in Poland could largely explain the scale and characteristics of the influx of refugees during the war, the size and nature of the assistance, as well as the nature of the current challenges.

The first attempts to assess the arrival of refugees from Ukraine turned out to be imperfect, as such was also the statistical data available. At the time, reference was made to the Border Guard data published basically daily and commented on in the Polish media and public space on an ongoing basis. They showed that from February 24, 2022, to the beginning of January 2023, there were more than 8.8 million border crossings from Ukraine to Poland and more than 7 million crossings in the opposite direction. This means about 2-million positive border crossings, but it is worth noting that this value has limited analytical utility. In fact, it represents the number of border crossings, not the number of people who arrived or left. It should be considered that from a certain point onward, circular migration patterns between Ukraine and Poland were renewed, and there were more and more cyclical visits to family members who remained (and remain) in their country of origin. The data also showed that a significant proportion of Ukrainian refugees who arrived in Poland did so within just the first 4-6 weeks after the war broke out. The following weeks and months were a process of slowly getting used to the difficult reality and adjusting to the changes in the war situation in Ukraine. This is how to explain the increased traffic from Poland to Ukraine that took place during the summer vacations, as well as in December 2022, especially in the time immediately preceding the holiday season.

Another method of measurement was used by the Union of Polish Metropolises, which commissioned several studies aimed at assessing the number of Ukrainian immigrant women and men residing in Poland's largest cities (see Sobestjańska and Sopinska 2022; Wojdat and Cywinski 2022, among others). These attempts have methodological deficits (and associated ethical problems), but especially in the first phase of the war, they were of fundamental importance, as they clearly indicated how much of a challenge Polish local governments faced. This is because they showed that soon after the outbreak of the war, there may have been more than 3 million Ukrainian citizens and nationals in Poland (3.2 million in March, 3.9 million in April and 3.4 million in May 2022), and this number included both those fleeing the war and those who had been in Poland before. As a result, the population of many Polish cities, especially large agglomerations, and towns and cities in the eastern part of the country, increased dramatically.

A breakthrough for the statistical analysis of Ukrainian refugees residing in Poland was the introduction of registration of Ukrainian citizens in the PESEL system (or, in fact, in a sub-registry of this system – PESEL UKR). Registration was not mandatory, but because it facilitated access to public services and

participation in the labor market it became widespread (cf. Klaus 2022: 38-39). The PESEL data shows that during the period of the most massive influx, that is, until the end of the summer of 2022, there were about 1.5 million people who fled the war and arrived in our country. This means that Poland's population increased by nearly 5% in just a few months (see Figure 1). The PESEL data made it possible to obtain data on the gender and age of those who reached Poland after February 24, 2022 (especially for those who stayed in Poland earlier).

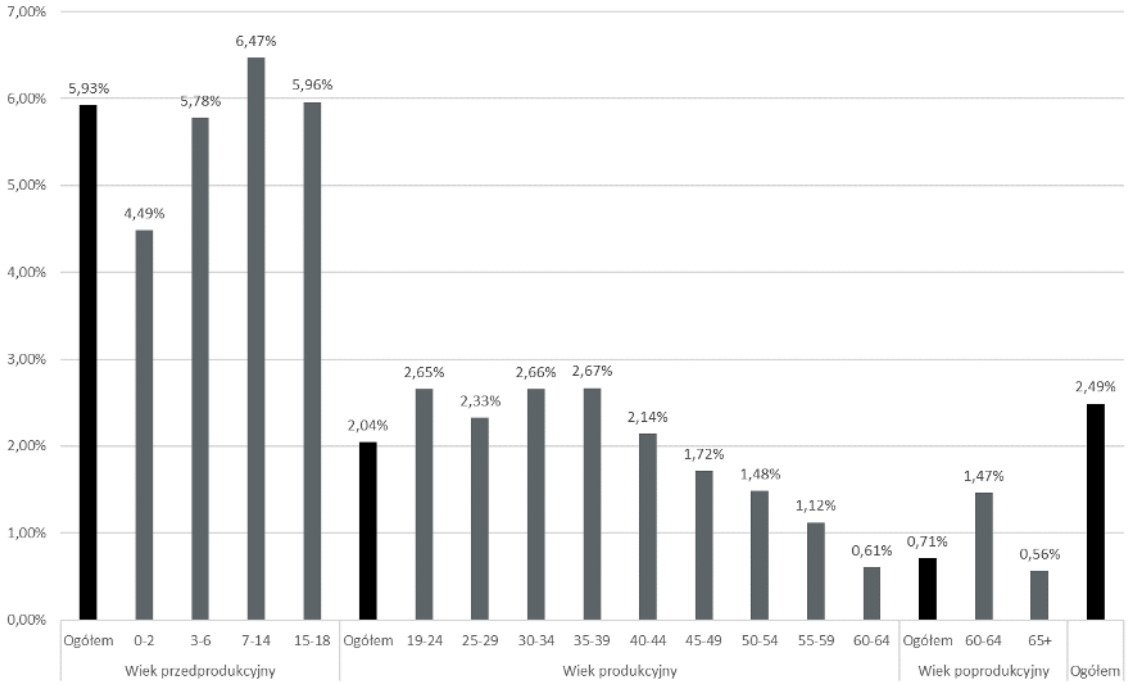
**Table 1. Age structure of refugees from Ukraine registered in Poland (as of the end of 2022)**

| | Number of refugees | Percentage hare |
|---|---|---|
| **Pre-working age (children)** | **432 621** | **45.57%** |
| **Productive age** | **455 834** | **48.01%** |
| Women | 361 145 | 38.04% |
| Men | 94 689 | 9.97% |
| **Post-working age** | **60 926** | **6.42%** |
| Women | 52 019 | 5.48% |
| Men | 8 907 | 0.94% |
| **Total** | **949 381** | **100.00%** |

Source: UKR PESEL register data compiled by PFR.

While earlier immigration from Ukraine to Poland was traditionally highly masculinized, the dominant group of people with refugee experience after February 24 were women (44% of the total and nearly 80% of adults). In addition, it was the first time in Poland's recent history that there had been such

**Fig. 1. Refugees from Ukraine registered in Poland by age group, percentage share in Polish population (as of the end of 2022)**




Due to differences in retirement age, the 60-64 category appears twice (for women as post-working age, for men as working age).

*Source: PESEL UKR register data compiled by the Polish Development Forum.*

a mass arrival of children and the elderly. This is of particular importance, since school-age children accounted for more than 6% of the corresponding population of Poland's residents, and this was by far the highest share among all age categories (see Figure 1). It is this figure that most clearly marks the scale of the challenges faced since the outbreak of the war. Available data from the Ministry of Education and Science show that at the end of 2022, there were 191,000 Ukrainian children in the Polish educational system, accounting for about 65% of all children covered by compulsory education, and a further 43,000 (50% of children in this age category) were placed in Polish kindergartens (data obtained courtesy of the Polish Development Forum [PFR]).

The PESEL data also allows us to roughly characterize the territorial distribution of refugees from Ukraine in Poland, and to assess how it has changed since the outbreak of the war. As Figure 2 indicates, people arriving from Ukraine are primarily concentrated in large cities. This is due to a wide access to public services (important for pre-school and school-age children) and a rich labor market. Refugees from Ukraine in Poland differ in this respect from other people seeking international protection reaching other highly developed countries. In a short period of time, about 60% of those who arrived in Poland after the outbreak of the war entered the Polish labor market. Considering the structural constraints (language competence, difficulties with the recognition of qualifications, the need to care for dependants and poor health), these figures should be considered exceptionally high (by comparison, current data on the population of Ukrainians in Germany indicate that less than 20% have taken up work, cf. Brücker 2022).

**Fig. 2. Refugees from Ukraine registered in Poland by age group, percentage of Polish population, as of the end of 2022.**


*Source: The PESEL UKR register data compiled by the Polish Development Forum.*

Significantly, in the early stages of the war (especially as shown in the first analyses of the PESEL data), there was a marked tendency among the refugees to stay in the border regions. It seems to have stemmed primarily from a desire to stay as close to Ukraine as possible and to regularly visit their relatives who were often unwilling or unable to leave the country. With time, there was a kind of internal relocation of refugees from Ukraine, who began to make more conscious choices, deciding on places that allowed for better living conditions (housing market, public services, labor market). The data also clearly shows the migration orientation of refugees. At the peak, the PESEL data indicated about 1.5 million refugees were in Poland, and by the end of 2022 this number had decreased to one million. This means that nearly one-third of refugees at least temporarily returned to their country of origin (this probably applied to most of this group) or left for other countries (in this case, there is still no reliable data to assess the scale of this phenomenon).

Thanks to the PESEL registration mechanism, we have a substantial body of knowledge about the structure and territorial distribution of refugees from Ukraine. However, this does not change the fact that knowledge based on this data is fragmentary and imperfect. It is very difficult to assess the mobility of refugees, and the data on border crossings indicate a very high level of this mobility (this is a consequence of the legal solutions applied, which distinguishes the refugee movement from Ukraine from other instances of contemporary forced migration). The registration data does not allow us to assess the plans, trajectory and especially the strategies of those who arrived in Poland fleeing the war. It is difficult to determine their financial and family situation, as well as their needs and expectations. Finally, with this data it is possible to assess labor market participation, as well as access to public services, albeit to a very limited extent. These data do not allow us to learn about other important factors, especially to identify special needs that require separate support programs. Among such needs, we can point to the issues of disabilities, loneliness of the elderly, the situation of unaccompanied minors (especially in institutional forms of foster care, living in large groups).

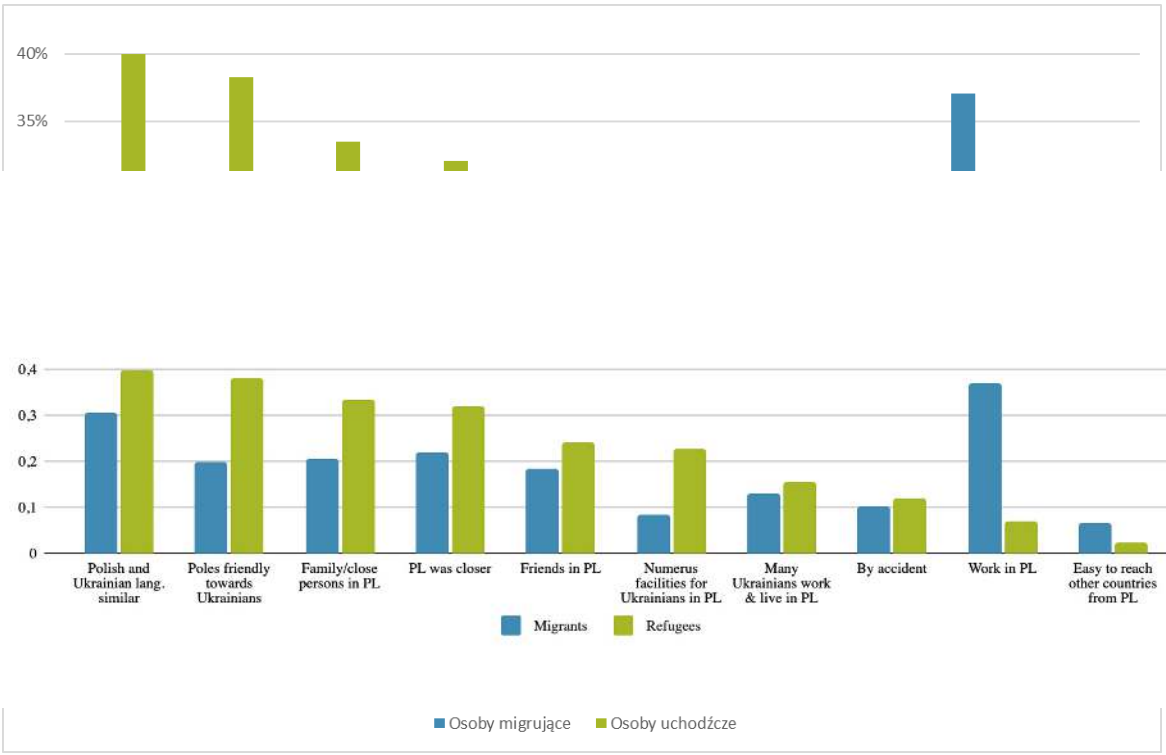
## Chapter 2. Migrants and refugees: needs and plans of Ukrainians in Poland

This chapter serves to outline the needs and plans of Ukrainians in Poland based on the results of a nationwide online survey of Ukrainian citizens in Poland conducted by the Centre for Migration Studies (OBM UW) and the Centre for Excellence in Social Sciences (CESS UW) at the University of Warsaw. The survey was conducted between July and September 2022 on a sample of 7617 people. The needs of this group are approximated by several illustrations relating to their reasons for choosing Poland and a particular locality in Poland as their place of residence, their housing situation, as well as by the declarations of the respondents themselves. In a similar way, giving voice to the respondents, their plans relating to the duration of their stay in Poland are described.

The most attention in the study was paid to refugees from Ukraine, but it should be remembered that before the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, many were already living in Poland, and the war affected the lives of this entire community. Therefore, the chapter is not limited to describing and analyzing the situation of those fleeing the war, however, it separates the groups of migrants and refugees. Based on the OBM UW/CESS UW survey, people who arrived before February 24, 2022, are treated as migrants. The term refugees is used to refer to those who arrived on the day the war broke out or later. The latter group made up the majority in the survey population – 63%. It is worth bearing in mind that the introduced division between migrants and refugees is not a sharp one, as almost a third of the refugee group had previously stayed in Poland for purposes other than just tourism.

Poland has welcomed the largest number of refugees from Ukraine among European countries, which - considering geographical and cultural proximity – is understandable. The similarity of the Polish

**Figure 1. Refugees and migrants from Ukraine by selected reasons for choosing Poland as their country of residence (data in %)**



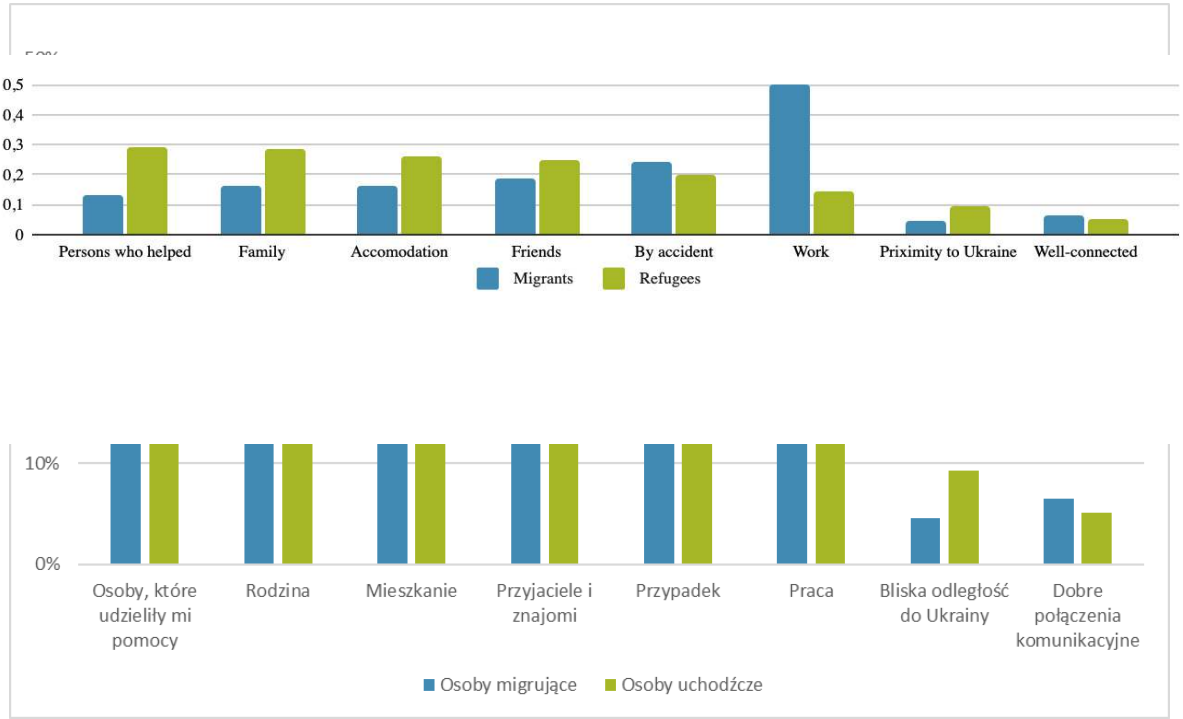

Notes: Percentages do not add up to 100%, as respondents may have indicated more than one answer.

*Source: own compilation, OBM UW/CESS UW July-September 2022 survey*

andUkrainian languages, as well as the geographical proximity, were among factors most frequently indicated by refugees as reasons for choosing Poland (Figure 1). They were indicated by 40% and 32% of those surveyed, respectively. In the case of migrants, these reasons were indicated less frequently, although they also ranked high on the list of reasons for choosing Poland. In their case, the most important factor was getting a job in Poland, a reason indicated by as many as 37% of migrants and 7% of refugees. For refugees, having a social network in Poland was key – 33% indicated family or relatives, 24% friends or acquaintances. For female migrants, the corresponding percentages were slightly lower (about 20%). At the same time, it is worth noting that 12% of migrants declared that they live in Poland permanently.

Social networks, in addition to labor market opportunities, are probably one of the reasons for the concentration of refugees in large Polish cities, as in previous years the immigration from Ukraine to Poland was dominated by migration to cities (Górny, Sleszynski 2019). In the first half of 2022, about 60% of Ukrainians and Ukrainian women resided in the 12 largest Polish cities (UMP 2022). According to the survey described above, almost half of the refugees reside in cities with a population of half a million or more, although in case of migrants this figure was closer to one third. Interestingly, while as many as half of migrants cited the availability of work as one of the three main reasons for living in a given Polish locality, for refugees it was only 14% (Figure 2). For those fleeing the war, social issues were more important – the presence of family (28%) and friends (25%) as well as people who helped them (29%). The availability of housing was also very important to them (26%), which was not very important for migrants. Finally, it is worth noting that proximity to Ukraine and good transportation links were the least frequently indicated reasons for choosing a particular locality in Poland by both groups. These reasons mattered when choosing Poland as a destination country, while the distances within Poland were seen by Ukrainians as relatively unimportant.

**Figure 2. Refugees and migrants from Ukraine by reasons for choosing the locality in which they stay in Poland (data in %)**



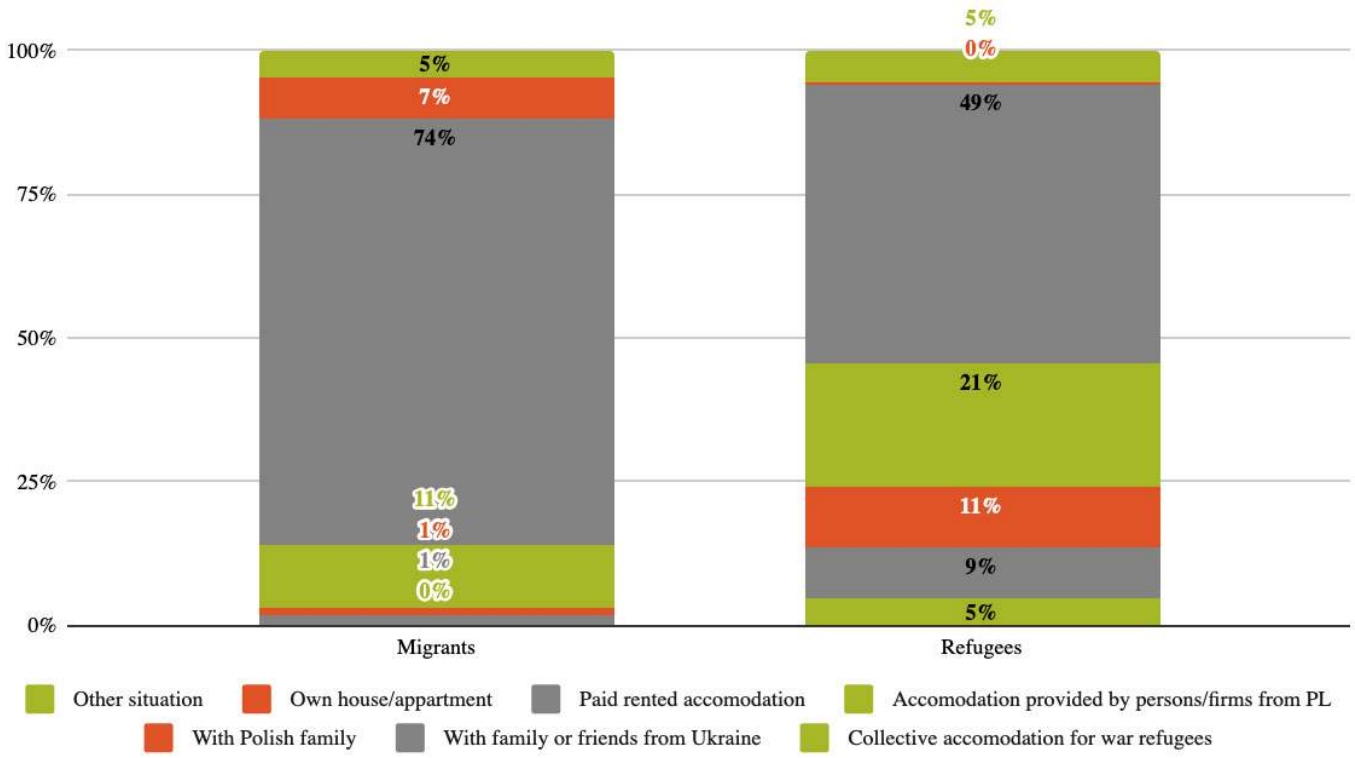

Notes: Percentages do not add up to 100%, as respondents could indicate more than one answer (at most 3 answers).

*Source: own compilation, OBM UW/CESS UW July-September 2022 survey.*

## Needs of refugees and migrants

The housing situation of refugees points directly to their high housing needs, as at the time of the survey a total of almost half of them were living in Poland in a place of collective accommodation, hosted free of charge by a Polish or Ukrainian family, by friends or in an apartment made available by individuals or companies from Poland (Figure 3). The latter situation was the most common, affecting 21% of refugees. The other half lived in apartments rented for a fee. In comparison, most female migrants – almost three-quarters – lived in apartments rented for a fee, and 7% owned their own apartment or house (only 0.5% of refugees).

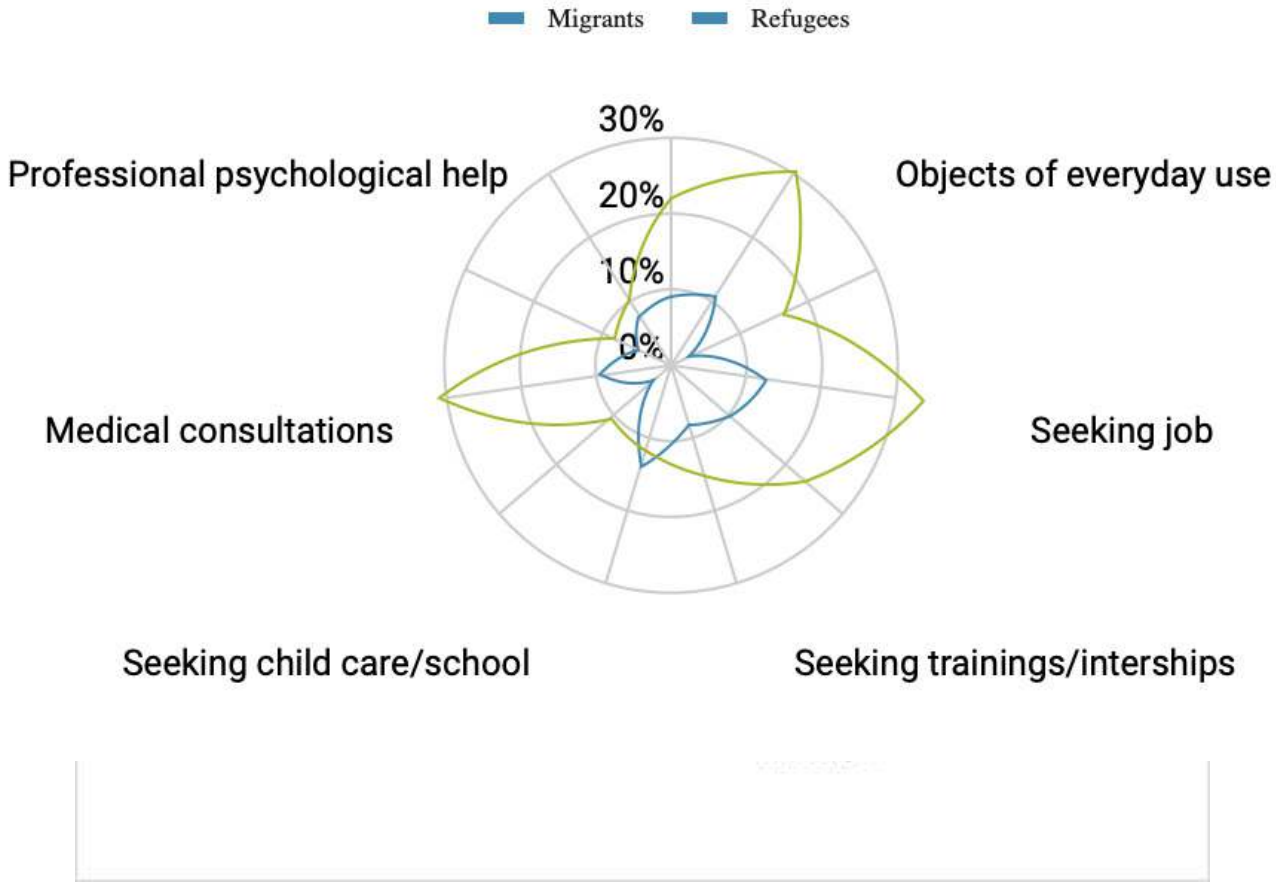
**Figure 3. Refugees and migrants from Ukraine by characteristics of the place of residence in Poland (data in %)**




*Source: own compilation, OBM UW/CESS UW July-September 2022 survey*

Although the housing problem among refugees is an issue that was pointed out by virtually everyone involved in helping Ukrainians, the refugees themselves only ranked ”housing search“ sixth among the types of assistance they needed (22%) (Figure 4). This does not diminish the importance of the problem, but perhaps points to the quite effective efforts undertaken by social organizations in this regard (during the survey period, i.e., between July and September 2022). It may also indicate the high social mobilization of Poles and Ukrainians who received refugees in their private homes, as well as the high level of activity involving social media.

**Figure 4. Refugees and migrants from Ukraine by type of assistance they need in Poland (data in %)**




Notes: The figure omits the question of assistance in learning the Polish language, to better visualize the data. This is because the shares of those indicating this need were particularly high among both migrants (23%) and refugees (58%); percentages do not add up to 100%, as respondents could indicate more than one answer.

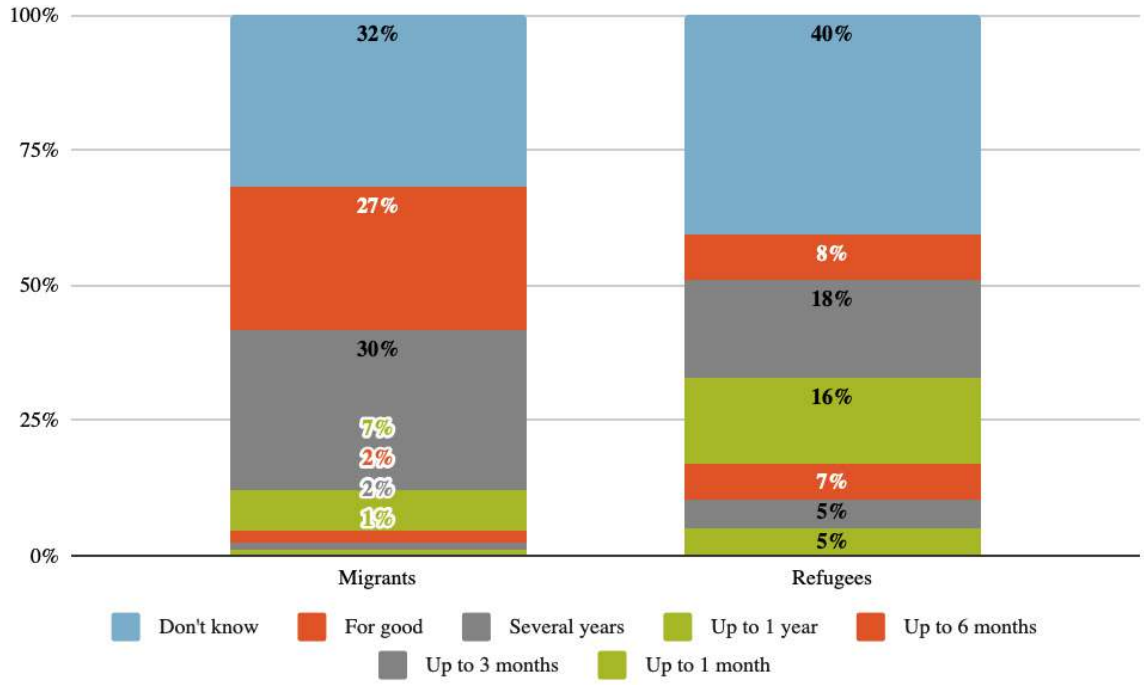
*Source: own compilation, OBM UW/CESS UW July-September 2022 survey*

Figure 4 clearly indicates that refugees were significantly more likely than migrants to need assistance in almost every area, except for assistance in dealing with formal matters at offices (12% of refugees and 14% of migrants). For the latter, this was the most frequently indicated range of assistance needed. The need to learn the Polish language was also indicated frequently and as a key type of assistance (58% of refugees and 23% of migrants). Further down the list, refugees indicated three areas in which they expected support: job search, monetary assistance, and medical consultation. Each of these was reported by about a third of respondents. It's worth mentioning that nearly a quarter of refugees reported needing help finding training and internships, indicating their desire to find their way in the Polish labor market. In addition, 15% of them needed help with formalities related to the recognition of professional qualifications. In the case of migrants, the share was half that. Refugees were much more likely than migrants to need help in finding care and school for their children (11% and 3%, respectively). It can be concluded that refugees in Poland need assistance primarily in matters concerning day-to-day living.

## Plans for refugees and migrants

Most refugees treated their stay in Poland as temporary. Only a quarter planned to stay in Poland for more than a year or forever (Figure 5). The figure for migrants was almost 60%, indicating that the Ukrainian migrant community was more settled in Poland than it had been in earlier years, especially before the Russian invasion in 2014 (Górny, Madej and Porwit 2020). What is noteworthy is the very large share of people who could not determine their plans related to their stay in Poland. This was the case for 40% of refugees and more than 30% of migrants. This indicated a high level of uncertainty about the future development of the hostilities in Ukraine. It also implied that the number of people who decide to stay in Poland for a longer period may be different than the cited declarations of the Ukrainians surveyed would suggest.

**Fig. 5. Refugees and migrants from Ukraine by their plans concerning the length of stay in Poland (data in %)**




*Source: own compilation, OBM UW/CESS UW July-September 2022 survey*

Among Ukrainians planning to stay in Poland for at most a year, the percentages of those who could not precisely define their further migration plans – permanent return to Ukraine, further migration to Poland or residence in another country – were very high (about 35% in both groups). As for refugees, half of them intended to return to Ukraine permanently. There was a noticeable share of those who, although they planned to stay in Poland for a year at most, intended to come to Poland in the future. This was about 9% of all refugees surveyed. Among those planning a quick return to Ukraine (up to a year since the survey), different strategies were observed for determining the timing of that return. One in three declared that they would return home after the war ended. Slightly smaller, but comparable, were the percentages of those who planned to return to Ukraine only when they could live there normally. There were also refugees who were considering returning to their country even before the war ended. In summary, the above results indicate a great deal of uncertainty, even vacillation in the

plans of refugees. In recent months, there has been a movement of refugees toward Ukraine, which corresponds to the above declarations of the respondents. At the same time, these declarations indicate that this is not necessarily a one-way movement. Some of them are likely to return to Poland.

In the case of migrants' plans, the same percentages are distributed differently. Among those with no long-term plans to stay in Poland, one-third planned to come to Poland in the future, and one-fifth intended to return to Ukraine permanently. Also evident among migrants was a relatively high share of those who intend to live in another country (13%). Compared to refugees, migrants were among those more strongly oriented toward international mobility.

# Chapter 3. Local governments and the reception of refugees from Ukraine

Local governments after February 24, 2022, faced a major, and for some of them new, challenge in responding to the needs of refugees. Several factors were crucial to their response: previous efforts to integrate migrants locally, existing channels of cooperation between local government and social organizations, and personally committed leaders who could facilitate or encourage officials to take action.

## Large cities

The largest number of refugees headed to Poland's major cities, so it was here that local governments had the most to do. Unlike medium-sized and small towns, large cities also had the greatest resources, including previous experience of providing public services residents with migration experience, as well as the presence of specialized social organizations (except for Rzeszów).

In May 2022, a Local Government Roundtable was organized in Wroclaw, where more than 120 invitees from the world of business, the non-governmental sector, academia, and local government collaborated on the creation of a so-called White Paper – a document containing recommendations for legal changes in response to the arrival of refugees. In June, the White Paper was handed over to the President of Poland.

### Large cities' efforts to aid refugees from Ukraine

The measures implemented by local administrations in major cities in response to the arrival of refugees were carried out in two stages. In the first one, which lasted several months, the focus was on providing the necessary humanitarian assistance, including organizing temporary accommodation, food, onward transportation and providing basic information. Efforts undertaken during this period were mainly *ad hoc*. The second phase involved medium- and long-term assistance integrating refugees into various areas of urban life, including the labor market, the education system, social welfare, and the provision of equal access to urban services, including in the housing system (although to a severely limited extent). Given the legal framework of the aid granted, including its temporary nature under the Special Act, the aid was oriented more towards reception than integration. Moreover, during the latter period there was a constant need to provide intervention assistance to newcomers.

### Organization of temporary accommodation sites

The Warsaw City Hall, like other city authorities, offered temporary accommodation for refugees in hotels, sports and recreation centers and other facilities owned by the city, such as the former IPN building at 7 Wołoska Street and the Ursynów Arena. In the first three months of the crisis, 33 such places operated in Warsaw, providing a total of nearly 160,000 person-nights. At the peak of the crisis, the city offered accommodations for more than 3,200 people per day. The Poznań City Hall provided the Wielkopolska Governor with several pavilions at the Poznań International Fair (MTP) and the Arena Sports and Entertainment Hall.

The city was reimbursed for the cost of operating these facilities. The city hall itself organized several smaller sites of collective accommodation in the halls of the Poznań Sports and Recreation Center – their equipment and material support for the refugees sleeping there were made possible by international assistance (including from Hannover, a partner city of Poznań). In Kraków, the City Hall with the Municipal Social Assistance Center (MOPS) established Assistance Centers for Ukrainians, which, among other things, offered collective housing to refugees. At the peak of the crisis, the city had about 1,500 beds per day, including at the former railroad Central Station, sports halls, former shopping centers (provided by private companies, such as Strabag at the Plaza Gallery) and city buildings, including the former hospital. In addition, contracts, handling and invoicing for more than 100 hotels and accommodation sites were prepared by the City Council on behalf of the governor.

The organization of places to stay for refugees was particularly important in towns that also served a transit function, including Rzeszów and Lublin. Some of the accommodation points created there were built based on municipal infrastructure, while others were created in cooperation with public and non-public partners, such as universities, social organizations, churches and religious communities, or entrepreneurs. In Rzeszów, thanks to donations and resources from the city hall, it was possible to create temporary accommodation for adults and a mother-and-child room equipped with cribs, a refrigerator, and a bottle warmer at the information desk at the train station.

> *I remember that a colleague brought in a bag of such, you know, such folding blocks, such... the kind you put on the ground for children to arrange themselves, to cover somehow the rubber and PVC floor in this room, so that it just gives a taste of some kind of children's room there, and there are also mattresses* (public administration).

A dispensing point for hot meals brought by residents was also arranged. However, the City Council did not set up other accommodation, and people arriving in Rzeszów were given information that they should go on and only if someone was in a worse condition could they stop for the night and rest. In Lublin, too, public accommodation sites were quickly set up, prepared also to receive people with disabilities and the sick. They were in sports halls or dormitories, among other places. As of mid-December 2022, the six locations of the collective accommodation sites still housed approx. 800 people.

### Collective accommodation: risks and reality

The establishment of collective accommodation facilities was the Polish response to the arrival of refugees. The government stated that no camps had been set up for them in Poland, but if one studies their way of functioning, while located in market halls, railway stations, sports centers and office buildings, it turns out these places served exactly this function. In the cold Polish climate, they guaranteed a temporary shelter for refugees, yet with a low standard of accommodation itself.

In the first months after the invasion both international human rights organizations and the Ombudsman Office visited temporary accommodation sites (Warsaw, Poznań, Przemyśl etc.) and reported their poor sanitary standard, lack of privacy, overcrowding and gaps in security procedures that could potentially create conditions for human trafficking and additional risks (Human Rights Watch 2022). *Anyone could walk in, scoop up such a disoriented person and walk out with them* - explained one of the social workers in March 2022, pointing to gaps in the registration system and the transportation of refugees. Some collective accommodation sites were located on the outskirts of cities or outside them, making it much more difficult to commute to the cities,

including to get help or find a job. Social organizations also pointed out that the sites were often run by different entities (city authorities, governors, businesses), leading to communication and logistical difficulties. Some of the places operated thanks to private donors.

As a rule, in the following months there was a significant improvement in security procedures and some coordination of activities at these facilities. The government declared that if the number of people fleeing Ukraine increased again, schools and sports centers, for example, could again be adapted to this role. Even then, however, the conditions of collective accommodation sites resembled the so-called *hotspots* in the Mediterranean countries, where temporary and makeshift places of registration and stay were transformed into monumental "storerooms." At the same time, some of such places have introduced exclusionary rules, such as at the Humanitarian Aid Center in Przemyśl, where accommodation can only be obtained by those who have registered there within 24 hours after their first (and only) crossing of the border. As a volunteer working there said about these regulations: *First everyone was allowed [into Poland] without verification, [and] now the problem is that not everyone is let in.*

On December 14, 2022, the Sejm passed an amendment to the Special Act, which, as of March 1, 2023, largely shifts the cost of collective housing to refugees themselves, while making a number of other unfavorable changes, e.g. concerning the application for temporary residence or the access to benefits. At the same time, visits to the now operating places of collective accommodation indicate their poor standard and some negligence, and the extremely difficult situation in the housing market (including very expensive rental housing) prevents many from finding alternatives. These provisions contradict the right to adequate housing guaranteed to refugees by the provisions of the EU Temporary Protection Directive. Under the amendment, after 120 days since their arrival in Poland, refugees who continue to live in these facilities will have to pay 50% (but no more than PLN 40 per day), and after 180 days – 75% (no more than PLN 60 per day) of the cost of staying in these places. According to calculations, the cost of living for a family of four in such a center would be about 7,400 zlotys a month, an unattainable amount in most cases.

### Organization of information and direct assistance centers

One of the most important activities of the cities was to provide the most necessary information on available assistance, including the collection and distribution of meals, clothing, and necessary in-kind assistance. This was done in cooperation between the city administration and community organizations and volunteers, and in some cases with provincial (voivodeship's) offices. Special points were organized for this purpose, providing a range of services – not just information but also direct assistance. Leaflets were distributed at the centers with multilingual information on how to receive assistance or get involved in the relief efforts.

In Warsaw, the city administration has opened main information points at the city's train stations: Eastern (in the main hall) and Western (at the Passenger Service Point). In the first weeks, however, the organization of assistance at these locations was primarily carried out by social organizations and volunteers. The administration was quick to get involved in organizing volunteer activities, such as the city's website ochotnicy.waw.pl or the launch of a mailbox dedicated to collecting information on donations and aid (darczyncy@um.warszawa.pl). Later, information desks began to be organized in offices and multilingual staff was hired to provide clerical services. The city also financed the provision

of assistance at the Multicultural Center, where, in addition to information, refugees could receive food, temporary accommodation, legal assistance, and help in finding employment or enrolling their children in school. By the end of May, a total of 338,000 people had been assisted at these points, and more than 14,000 volunteers were involved in providing assistance (Warsaw in Refugee Crisis 2022).

In Kraków, the key role in providing information was played by the relocation-information point launched by the city hall at the Central Station, where registration for accommodation and relocation took place. Places to rest and catering and first aid stations run by the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP) and Maltese services also operated there. An important role in providing information and assistance was played by the TAURON Arena Kraków refugee registration desk, which operated from mid-March to June 30, 2022. It was unique compared to other Polish cities, as it was an example of cooperation between various units of local and governmental administration, non-governmental entities and the UNHCR (which ran the Blue Dot point there). Although the ‚one-stop shop' approach, i.e., a single place where migrants can handle many issues was good, with the large scale of the influx of refugees it turned out that the place was simply overcrowded, with gigantic queues forming (for example, more than 31,000 applications for PESEL numbers were submitted there). As a result, the municipal authorities suggested submitting applications at other facilities. Because of the congestion, there was also friction between grassroots initiatives that stood outside (and handed out food, for example) and those managing the space.

As early as February 28, the Poznań City Hall launched a point to dispense donations, which were delivered by residents and companies. Over time, the site evolved into the Municipal Aid Point for Ukraine and began offering information support, legal advice, courses and Polish language tutoring. The OPEN Foundation became its operator, and the point employed, among others, people from Ukraine. An existing Facebook page Tender Poznań was adapted as a place to offer assistance and gather information about the needs of Ukrainian refugees. The UMP also recruited volunteers, with several hundred people signing up and then on duty at the reception desk at the Poznań International Fair. The UMP's Department of Health and Social Affairs also paid for an ambulance to provide medical consultations and assistance at places of collective accommodation.

### Przemyśl: next to the border with Ukraine

After 24 February 2022 Przemyśl, a city located 11 km from the border with Ukraine, has become one of the Polish cities that were the most affected by the mass migration from Ukraine. In March and April the border crossing in 60 000 Przemyśl was crossed by over 75 000 refugees daily. Therefore in the city the necessary aid infrastructure had to be created immediately and often ad hoc, with the information points, food and material depots and temporary accommodation sites included. One of them was the Centre of Humanitarian Aid (PCK) organized in a former Tesco supermarket, which was coordinated first by the City Council of Przemyśl and later by the Podkarpackie Department of Polish Red Cross. Just until August 2022 PCK has provided help to 250 000 people. The beginnings were difficult - sanitary conditions were below standards and volunteers not instructed or trained for such work. Nevertheless the mobilization of all the actors had allowed them to receive and support refugees, and create a functioning humanitarian infrastructure. As one of the volunteers from Ukrainian House has explained: *This permanent state of crisis demands our long-term cooperation, from all of us.*

A reception point with a 24-hour information desk was also set up at the train station on the orders of the Podkarpackie Governor. Gradually, the transportation of people from Ukraine to

other cities and countries was regulated – from the original full spontaneity (posing many potential dangers to refugees) to the current, much more regulated, and institutionalized forms of registration and verification of entities applying for transport assistance. Among the needs reported by community organizations and volunteers was the need to train helpers to work with vulnerable groups (elderly and minors, Roma people), improve sanitation (including free toilets and a room for a nursing mother), and open a permanent medical aid station at the reception desk.

Several social organizations are active in Przemyśl. The Ukrainian House, run by the Przemyśl branch of the Union of Ukrainians in Poland, has taken on the greatest burden of the aid effort. As its employee explained:

*We became a natural place for both refugees and other organizations to come to us. In the first weeks we collected volunteers and sent them where they needed to go. (...) Since August, we have been running a 'hostel," 50 beds, in addition to several projects (...), legal aid, tutoring, a cultural center, so that there is also some normality in it, not just [humanitarian] aid alone.* The hostel alone was used by about 1,000 people a month.

The Przemyśl organizations were particularly positive about cooperation with businesses (including Google, Avaaz, Netto), emphasizing the flexibility and transparency of the cooperation and financial settlement rules. They postulated the need to simplify the administrative path with grants from large international organizations, arguing that *we work here non-stop, and this is work in very rapidly changing conditions, intervention activities. More than half of our efforts and time cannot go into these multi-stage financial settlement processes, because then we are less effective*. The need for long-term and integration activities, such as language courses and increasing local employment prospects for Ukrainians, was also highlighted.

Representatives of the Przemyśl City Hall in January 2023 were prepared to receive the next larger group of people fleeing Ukraine, especially since their past actions had confirmed their ability to mobilize the resources of those delegated to this task. Representatives of the third sector, however, saw a need to improve this cooperation: *We would like the City Hall to also work more with us, with the [social] sector (...) Here this cooperation is often lacking, we find out by chance what is planned* (social organization).

### Hosting new residents in the city

From the first days of the crisis, local government administrations of major Polish cities launched multilingual hotlines, opened new dedicated websites, and translated existing websites into Ukrainian and Russian. In Warsaw, the local government administration additionally made available, for example, a Ukrainian version of the Municipal Contact Center 19115 (after training by the Polish Migration Forum team), launched the Ukrainian module of the municipal mobile application "Your Warsaw," containing information not only about aid and information points, but also about the history of Warsaw. Multilingual websites of the City of Warsaw were also opened.

The situation was similar in Kraków, Poznań or Lublin, although in the latter city the website of the City Hall in the Ukrainian language version was already in operation before February 24, 2022. New hotlines run in Ukrainian were set up to provide information on the forms of assistance available and where

they are provided. In the first days after the invasion, the hotline launched by the local administration in Lublin was presented by the central administration as a government hotline and listed on government websites, but in other cities (e.g. Kraków and Warsaw) there were several separate hotlines run by different entities. The 24-hour hotline in Lublin was established on February 25, and during the first month it handled more than 12,000 calls in Ukrainian, Russian, and English. The hotline was divided thematically and covered such issues as:

- information in the field of such issues as living conditions and welfare, psychological and medical support and legal assistance for people arriving from Ukraine;

- Lublin City Hall's Contact Center on recruiting volunteers to staff the city's accommodation facilities for Ukrainian citizens; applications from residents to make a room, apartment, or house available for a temporary stay for refugees;

- requests for items needed by Ukrainian families for those who have taken Ukrainian refugees under their roof;

- database for employers looking to hire refugees and for refugees looking for work.

**The Legal Intervention Association** launched an online legal aid website aimed specifically at aid workers. Through a form available on the site, volunteers and individuals affiliated with informal initiatives, as well as aid organizations, institutions, and offices, could ask questions about the law, for which they received express advice from on-call experts. The website was available in three language versions (Polish, Ukrainian, and English). Answers were posted to the most frequently asked questions about current laws, their interpretation and application in practice. Through the website, it was possible to submit a request for training on migration and anti-discrimination law, access to benefits or the labor market. In 2022, 630 people were trained. The website was launched a week after the outbreak of the war and proved particularly useful during the information chaos in the first months of the invasion. But also, a year later, some 2,000 people searched for information there daily. In many Polish cities, including Warsaw, Poznań, Kraków, Lublin, and Rzeszow, on a smaller or larger scale, cities offered free access to public transportation for refugees, covering, however, only people with Ukrainian citizenship.

In some of the cities, refugees were offered access to cultural services. In Lublin, these activities were not just assistance, but their goal was to include refugees in the life of the city. A special website, spilnakultura.pl. was set up as a platform for information on cultural activities, and the Spilno Lublin center offered activities aimed at all young residents of Lublin regardless of their nationality. The Municipal Public Library provided books in Ukrainian, a multicultural library was also established on the initiative of migrants.

In Rzeszów, performances with audio description in Ukrainian were organized, and in Kraków, the Nowa Huta Cultural Centre together with UNICEF and the Internationaler Bund Poland and the Department of Education organized summer workshops and activities for refugee children.

Some of the measures designed on an *ad hoc* basis in the first months of the crisis evolved into sustainable solutions for integrating refugees into urban life in the medium to long term. Such solutions included increasing multilingual access to city services, together with the education system or labor

market. In other cities, urban integration initiatives, including those related to culture, appeared somewhat later (e.g., Rzeszów).

### Education of refugee children from Ukraine in Poland

*It's not that we accept [children from Ukraine,] because we want to and think they will be able to learn normally and enjoy the lessons, but because that's the law* – a teacher.

Due to the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian refugees in Poland, the Polish education system faced an unprecedented challenge. The 10 largest cities estimated that in the 2021/22 school year, the number of students in schools and educational institutions increased by an average of 10% compared to the previous school year. By the end of November 2022, nearly 200,000 Ukrainian students were attending Polish schools. And it should be remembered that Polish educational regulations (in the version in effect since March 2022) assumed that students who fled Russian aggression against Ukraine could study in a Polish school or remotely in a school functioning in the Ukrainian educational system. It is estimated that about half of the children remain outside any educational system – no one has control over their performance of compulsory schooling in either system

**Education of refugee children in the cities described in the report.**

As of December 2022, almost 18,000 children from Ukraine were studying in Warsaw's public educational institutions, more than 7,500 in Kraków, and almost 6,600 in Poznań. On average, in these cities they accounted for about 5% of the total number of students. To provide them with access to the education system, the municipal authorities had to take several preparatory measures, corresponding to the scale of the challenge. Warsaw established 150 preparatory classes in almost 90 schools, each class with up to 25 children (previously up to 15). Additional Polish language classes were provided, and Ukrainian teachers were hired as intercultural assistants (teacher's aides) for refugee children. The City Hall prepared bilingual information about the public education system in Poland and the offer of psychological and linguistic support for children and their parents. Similar activities took place in other cities.

Local governments undertook cooperation with UNICEF, which provided support for children and youth from refugee families (by increasing the availability of nurseries and kindergartens, psychological support, staff training, integration activities, etc.). An integrative- language day camp for refugee children was prepared, this offer covered 17 smaller towns:

*We consider this program a huge success, considering how such programs are lacking outside the metropolises* (civil society, big city).

Lublin was the first local government in Poland to hire Ukrainian teachers back in March 2022. In September, there were 80 employed teachers in cooperation with the PCPM. The local government of Kraków has created a special database of contact details of Ukrainian teachers living in Kraków, thanks to which more than 130 of the 500 teachers registered there have found jobs.

The Teacher Training Center in Poznań prepared online materials for teachers, organized training and workshops (both in schools and remotely), and cooperated with local community organizations to conduct activities to include children and youth. Many schools prepared welcome packets for new students. Among other things, a Ukrainian-language textbook created in 2015 in cooperation with the Freedom and Democracy Foundation was used to work with refugee children.

**Challenges and needs of the Polish education system.**

Pupils – not knowing the Polish language – were forced to fulfill their compulsory schooling in Poland or continue their education remotely in Ukraine, which is very difficult in most cases due to the ongoing armed conflict there. Polish schools lacked textbooks and materials in Ukrainian, intercultural assistants, and the infrastructure necessary to open the preparatory classes recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science: *They don't have books in Ukrainian, the classes are taught in Polish, and whether anyone understood anything or not – that will become clear later.* (Intercultural assistant)

The following challenges of the education system have been diagnosed:

1. There was a lack of reliable information on how many school-age Ukrainian children residing in Poland were either studying remotely in the Ukrainian education system or were completely out of compulsory education (it is estimated that there were about 150-200 thousand children outside the education system).

2. There have been documented cases of refusal to admit Ukrainian pupils to Polish educational institutions (schools and kindergartens) on the grounds of overcrowding, lack of infrastructure or staff, or the preferences of the institution, among other things. Not only was this incompatible with Polish regulations, but it also made it difficult or impossible for parents, most of them single mothers, to take up gainful employment.

3. There was a lack of a sufficient number of preparatory classes – special temporary classes for foreign students with intensive Polish language courses (compared to the 2021/2022 school year, their number dropped from 2,414 to just 956, and about 15,000 Ukrainian children had access to them). There was a shortage of full-time intercultural assistants: according to the Ministry of Education and Science, 354 people filled the position in the third quarter of 2022, about one-third of the needs declared by the ministry. One mother of a 10-year-old Ukrainian student said: *I asked the principal directly why this [school] year, there is no longer an assistant [teacher] in the classroom. She replied that for this year there is no such financial possibility, there is no provision for it in the budget.* The training of intercultural assistants offered by the Polish state is also insufficient.

4. There was a lack of available educational materials, either bilingual or in Ukrainian. More than 85% of teachers surveyed by Amnesty International said they felt "left behind," with no preparation or knowledge of available educational materials in Ukrainian.

5. Difficulties can be seen in preventing discrimination based on nationality. In some places, instances of hate speech, name-calling, and stereotype reproduction against people from Ukraine have been documented, with a lack of systemic solutions and targeted anti-discrimination and intercultural education training for the entire school community.

6. Ukrainian culture and identity were insufficiently supported in schools – both through appropriate Ukrainian language classes in Polish schools and through support for the establishment of Ukrainian schools.

It should also be a priority for the Ministry of Education to develop unambiguous and fair methods for class ranking students with refugee experience, considering their different levels of Polish language proficiency, as well as to revise the strategy for verifying their skills in the process of enrolling them in secondary schools (the so-called ”eight-grade exam”).

For more on this topic, see the report by Amnesty International Poland .

### Labor market

In view of the need to support the professional activation and rapid entry into the Polish labor market of refugees from Ukraine, the local administrations of large Polish cities have taken several measures, including enabling remote work and supporting the business activities of migrants. Labor offices in Warsaw, Poznań and Kraków launched places where refugees could register as unemployed and receive support in finding job offers. In Poznań, job-search support extended not only to the city itself, but also to surrounding municipalities. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy launched a green line connecting labor offices with refugees.

The County Employment Office (PUP) in Warsaw has established cooperation with external providers of employment intermediation services (including job websites), career counseling and support for Polish employers wishing to hire refugees (including social campaigns and information support).

In Kraków, PUP employees were on duty at information points for refugees, which proved to be a more practical solution than waiting for them at the office. Similarly, in Poznań, the Municipal Help Point for Ukraine took over some of the tasks related to vocational activation of refugees, including the organization of language courses (by July 2022, more than 300 people had participated in Polish language courses, and since the summer it has been about 600 people per month). In Lublin, from March 2022, there was a specially prepared website through which volunteers matched information obtained from potential employees to job offers submitted by employers, and supported contact between them). Experts pointed out the need to organize specialized educational classes for adults and prepare job fairs for refugees in large cities.

Other entities have also been involved in helping refugees find jobs, such as MOPS in Kraków, which has almost taken on the role of an employment agency. In Poznań, as early as March, the county office began cooperating with a local social organization, Migrant Info Point, from which it ordered Polish language and vocational activation courses for refugees. Remote workspaces equipped with basic office equipment (including computers with Cyrillic fonts) and Internet access were available in Warsaw. Co-working spaces were provided by the Smolna Entrepreneurship Center and the Targowa Creativi-

ty Center. In addition to a ”desk to work at,” information support was available on site, including on business activity and employment in Poland. It turned out that among the refugees there were representatives of specialized professions particularly desirable for relief efforts, such as doctors, of whom about 600 (January 2023) were enabled to have their diplomas recognized (validated) faster and were granted the right to practice their profession.

### Aid organization and cross-sectoral cooperation

To effectively organize assistance in large cities, those administrative units that were engaged in activities for residents with migration experience even before the outbreak of full-scale war were mainly used. In addition, crisis management teams were established, and periodic meetings were held between units involved in providing assistance. As early as February 24, 2022, a Crisis Management Team meeting was held in Warsaw, which evolved into weekly coordination meetings with the directors of the district OPS. In Warsaw, the Office for International Cooperation was responsible for all matters relating to refugees, although individual city units coordinated topics within their areas of responsibility. In Kraków and Poznań, as in many other Polish metropolises, the cities' activities on behalf of migrants were managed by the departments in charge of social policy, and after February 24 they took over the coordination of humanitarian aid.

In Kraków, the MOPS also played an important role, especially in organizing group housing, and the Crisis Intervention Center offered psychological assistance. In Poznań, on the other hand, the Department of Health and Social Affairs was mainly involved in assistance activities and joined in the work of thematic working groups with the participation of social organizations and neighborhood councils. Individuals from other departments were involved in the work, but they did so in their free time (if an employee/staff member volunteered during the day, they had to make up for their duties in the evenings, or they volunteered only after working hours). In Rzeszów, the coordination of municipal assistance was handled by the Department of Social Policy and the Department of City Brand, Economic Cooperation and Tourism, and in addition, on February 25, 2022, a Crisis Management Team was established, which included city officials.

In the case of Lublin, as early as the first day of the invasion, a meeting of representatives of the local government and local social organizations was held in the office, where it was decided to establish the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine (LSKPU), defining itself as an informal (“without a stamp, headquarters or office“) social movement ”supporting the public assistance system.” The committee became a remarkable example of effective action, with its members emphasizing the importance of the informal and formal networks of cross-sectoral co-working generated in the pre-invasion era among local leaders, activists, and officials.

#### Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine

On February 24, the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine (LSKPU) was formed. It was composed of three local CSOs that have been working with migrants for many years (Homo Faber Association, Fundacja Kultury Duchowej Pogranicza [Borderland Spiritual Culture Foundation], and the Rule of Law Institute Foundation), as well as officials of the City of Lublin, delegated to this task. For the headquarters of the Committee, the city designated most of the premises of

its subordinate Cultural Center. The three organizations that first formed the Committee came from completely different circles in Lublin, but their ideological distinctiveness became the basis for effective operation across divisions. In a later phase, other local organizations joined the Committee, including: the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP), the National Scout Organization of Ukraine PŁAST, the Foundation for the Development of Central and Eastern Europe, the Polish Red Cross of Lublin, the Center for Crisis Intervention, and the District Bar Association.

Social contacts and networks proved crucial in organizing relief activities in Lublin. A significant number of individuals and organizations affiliated with LSKPU knew each other from previous cooperation or cross-sectoral activities carried out in the city. Also helpful was the fact that the city government had employed people with migration experience before the outbreak of war. Some of the people cooperating with LSKPU, such as the staff and employees of the Homo Faber Association, had gained experience providing a knowledge and competence base for current activities in Grupa Granica (the Border Group), engaging in humanitarian assistance in the Polish-Belarusian border region.

LSKPU became a central entity and pioneer in helping refugees in Lublin. The committee immediately began intensive activity in 17 thematic areas, assigning a separate coordinator, chosen according to their competence, to each of them. At the most dynamic moment, some 30 areas were active. Their subject matter and number changed dynamically depending on the demand and external situation. Some of the departments focused strictly on helping refugees (both immediate and long-term aid), while others were tasked with optimizing the functioning of LSKPU as an entity: contacting foreign organizations and media, coordinating the work of volunteers, handling social media, psychological support for volunteers, learning Ukrainian for those involved in the Committee's work. Without this task division, it would be difficult to obtain the funding necessary for the aid efforts:

*A lot of different representatives of some world humanitarian organizations, some international organizations, institutions, companies came to Lublin right away, and they said: „We want to help, so what do we do?" And our strength was that we could quickly form a team of two or three people who were able to respond to this. Also, a website was created in three or four languages with information on how you can help, and not only how you can help from the point of view of an individual, but how you can help from the point of view of a large organization. (...)The effect of these meetings was that we had money in the account.* (civil society)

Immediately after the LSKPU was constituted, steps were taken to launch a volunteer effort. The same day, a meeting was organized, which was attended by dozens of people wishing to join the relief effort. They were people from various backgrounds, including the Ukrainian and Belarussian students from the universities of Lublin. They became key activists, also due to their language skills. For the efficient management of the activities of LSKPU, as an informal platform of cross-sectoral cooperation, the key factor was the principle of subsidiarity. In order to improve the flow of information, for the first two months of LSKPU operational period, the briefing meetings were hold on a daily basis and in presence of all the coordinators from every department, and the scope of the ongoing work was discussed. The meetings allowed us to solve problems unsolvable at the level of volunteers and coordinators assigned to specific subjects. Consensus

was fundamental for the decision-making process. The Homo Faber Association became the financial operator of the Committee.

*We knew that a strong hierarchical structure is essential. There must be department coordinators, that those departments have to be properly designated, that we need a contact list and a clear division of responsibilities. We need to know who is who and responsible for what. For this, we need tools and meetings. We need money and space. We need communication (civil society).*

Such a huge scale of assistance efforts was possible in large cities precisely thanks to the networks of cooperation created before February 24 linking the city administration and social organizations, and the Ukrainian diaspora, , as well as using the financial and human resources of international organizations. In Kraków, for example, it was the Open Kraków Coalition, in Warsaw it was the Sectoral Social Dialogue Commission for Foreigners. In Poznań, the city had a long-standing partnership with the main local organization working on behalf of migrants – Migrant Info Point. For many years, Lublin has developed active inclusion policies, particularly aimed at Ukrainians living in the city. There was also an active Civic Dialogue Commission on the city's system for integrating immigrants .

What proved crucial was the cities' previous experience in providing public services to refugees, such as the Warsaw Family Support Center (WCPR), which has been implementing individual integration programs offered to people under international protection for more than a dozen years. Cities also benefited from previous experience gained during international study tours for administrative staff. As the only Polish city, Lublin belonged to the Intercultural Cities network and measured its previous activities addressed to residents with migration experience with the Intercultural Cities Index.

It is also worth highlighting the personal involvement of city officials in aid activities and the openness of administrators to undertake new and sometimes innovative initiatives to facilitate the organization of aid (such as the support for LSKPU in the form of making city space available to cultural institutions, the secondment of officials, or the development of a model enabling the employment of Ukrainian teachers in schools).

In most cities, it proved a challenge to coordinate the highly decentralized assistance efforts provided by multiple public entities (local and governmental), community organizations, individuals, and volunteers. The coordination of activities and exchange of experience was particularly important in the context of involving new actors, including large international aid organizations that had key resources (including financial and organizational) but had not yet operated in Poland. What turned out to be important in this situation was to develop cooperation and professionalize support on the one hand, to benefit from the knowledge and experience of local organizations, including migrants, and on the other hand: *Suddenly, we have a non-governmental organization that has money, and it's just a matter of coordinating with different entities. That's what we do. It's cool, because we build on our competence, on their competence, and so we can achieve a lot more for a lot less* (public administration, big city).

In the months that followed, many Polish metropolises decided to outsource specialized services aimed at refugees to social organizations. From the perspective of the cities' public expenditures, this had many advantages, such as lower costs for the services provided, but generated additional risks, which included uneven quality of the services provided and delivering them in an unstable project system. This is well illustrated by the example of Poznań. When public tenders were announced by the City

Hall, bids were often submitted by organizations without competence, presenting overestimated costs – although it was the city's task to properly evaluate proposals and select partners. As a result, it was difficult to verify whether integration activities actually took place and, above all, what their quality was. The question of the city's continued funding from UNICEF remained open, which will be settled after the support project ends, in June 2023.

Despite the good familiarity and previous cooperation between local government administration and social organizations in large Polish cities, the challenges that existed before February 24, such as the lack of exchange of information about the tasks and competence of individual local government units and the lack of coordination between them, have only intensified during the crisis. In Kraków, for example, officials participating in the survey stressed that they were aware that residents, individuals from social organizations or informal groups often did not know who to turn to in the city hall when seeking help or wanting to get involved in providing assistance. Some social organizations, however, stressed the importance of the "human face" of the city hall, appreciating the possibility of direct contact and less formalized relations with key people. As a representative of one organization said: *There is no one, whether in the City Hall or the Małopolska Provincial Office, who would not help us. But the key question arises, should we [organizations] do all this?* (civil society). This question of the extent of responsibility for the implementation of public tasks, which has often been shifted to civil society organizations, is an extremely important topic that needs to be discussed.

### Regression in the cooperation of local governments with social organizations

In many towns, regardless of their size, grassroots aid activities (whether formalized organizations or informal groups) in the initial period of the war in Ukraine and the development of local humanitarian aid systems in Poland had the character of cross-sectoral cooperation. Previous experience often determined its scale and scope of joint actions with the local government, but it was based on mutual trust. Informal structures, acting under pressure, bypassed the entire system of the hitherto known and very much formalized social participation along with its tools, abandoning not only the official ones contact paths, cooperation programs, but also partly crisis management systems. As it clearly indicated the mechanisms that were inefficient and were replaced by other forms in the event of a crisis, this should be one of the key points of the evaluation process.

After a year of extremely strenuous work, often with cross-sectoral features, in many cities and towns, a slow process of return to the previous status quo was observed. disappointment. The importance of many activists and representatives of social organizations was the greater the more intense the experiences of cross-sectoral cooperation and, despite the differences, satisfactory. The more this experience showed that other formulas are not only possible, but they are more efficient and more efficient.

Sometimes the sudden return to the status quo was counterintuitive and, due to the reports of many social organizations, incomprehensible and backward. The experience of working in rapidly emerged local cross-sectoral aid structures has also revealed the inefficiency of cooperation programmes and participatory practices to which reality seemed to return. Carnival of Solidarity is over, and with it have gone into oblivion, worked out during the first months of 2022 coop-

eration practices. As stated, it was far from what the local government could provide using the repertoire of practices available during the war crisis, but it is worth noting that the "conditions of cooperation in crisis" brought a broader reflection on the state of such cooperation, including client relations and the administrative approach of local government to civil society. Returning to the status quo is not only a regression in the area of tools, but also to deteriorating trust. The loss of such capital may be of great importance in the near future and hit with great force.

## Medium-sized cities

Those medium-sized cities that, prior to February 24, had residents with a migrant background in their population, or specialized organizations providing services to them, appeared to be better prepared for the arrival of refugees. One of such cities was Świnoujście, which had a relatively large community of male and female foreigners from the EU (especially Germany) and third countries (especially economic migrants from Ukraine). However, the city did not have any specialized organizations working for this group.

Another example of a city with a migration experience was Łomża, inhabited for decades by refugees of Chechen origin. The city had a specialized aid organization (Ocalenie Foundation), but – due to political differences – Its cooperation with the local administration did not go well. In the case of Płock, less experience around migration translated into a lack of specialized institutions and procedures for providing public services.

Typically, mid-sized city authorities undertook similar activities to those in large cities, albeit on a smaller scale. Among the most common recurring activities were:

- Organizing an information system using tools such as hotlines, websites, and leaflets. The system offered refugees information on social and welfare matters, psychological and medical support, legal assistance, and contacts to local institutions and entities. A special hotline for parents of refugee pupils and students operated in Łomża. In addition to the hotline, cities created special information services in Ukrainian (e.g. Plock, Łomża) and translated official city websites into Ukrainian (e.g. Świnoujście).

- Hotlines for people offering to help. They included offers for female volunteers and were directed to those willing to provide accommodation for refugees (e.g. Świnoujście, which encouraged the local hotelier base to do so) or to employers who wanted to announce employment opportunities. Local governments coordinated charity collections and redistribution of donations (e.g. Humanitarian Aid Points in Łomża) or provided information about the location of such collections (e.g. Świnoujście).

- Preparing a cultural offer for refugees. In Płock, cultural institutions - Książnica Płocka and Płocki Ośrodek Kultury i Sztuki (the Płock Center for Culture and the Arts) – organized classes for refugees, Polish language lessons, a neighbor's day, and animations for children. In Łomża, the cultural offer was aimed primarily at children. Free broadcasts of fairy tales and films with

translation into Ukrainian were organized at the Hall of Culture in the Old Market Square. In Świnoujście, activities for Ukrainian children were organized mainly by social organizations, and a Polish-Ukrainian Integration Fest was held at the Concert Shell (a concert venue on the main promenade).

- Organization of humanitarian aid shipments to Ukraine, mainly to partner cities (e.g. from Świnoujście to Truskavets or from Plock to Zhytomyr). Most often, local governments organized and coordinated only the collection of donations, which were then transported to Ukraine.

- Organizing the payment of allowances and special benefits, such as for the feeding of children and young people in kindergartens and schools, and targeted benefits.

- Also noted, although usually on a smaller scale, were activities aimed at vocational activation, for example, in Świnoujście or Łomża activities in this direction were undertaken by county employment offices (PUP) in cooperation with various partners.

Authorities in medium-sized cities took care to communicate about the current situation, activities and needs through websites and with the help of municipal institutions (e.g. municipal family assistance centers and county employment offices [PUP]), as well as using social media accounts (e.g. in Świnoujście).

In order to adequately organize the aid effort in the very first weeks of the crisis, the authorities usually established bodies to coordinate teams organizing assistance (e.g. a task force to implement assistance for the Ukrainian refugee population arriving in the Municipality of Płock) or special plenipotentiaries (e.g. in Świnoujście for contact with the Ukrainian community). In the medium-sized cities included in the survey, more formalized relations linking the local government and community organizations were not established, and coordination of aid activities was taken over by municipal offices (e.g. Plock or Świnoujście).

Most of the measures taken by the local governments of medium-sized cities were *ad hoc* in nature and rarely took the form of medium- and long-term systemic measures. A counter-example is Świnoujście, where a program of support in the refugee crisis for Ukrainian citizens who arrived in Świnoujście as a result of hostilities in their country, „Together Towards a Secure Future," has been expanded. The program will run until October 31, 2023, and is co-financed by European funds. In the city, it is being implemented by the Municipal Center for Family Support (MOPR) in cooperation with, among others, the social sector.

There are several reasons for the difference in the level of local government activity in the aid effort for refugees. These include the personal involvement of city officials, as in the case of the mayor and one of the vice-mayors of Świnoujście, who were involved in the aid efforts and their coordination, as well as communicating with residents through social media and press briefings. Also significant were the previous relationships (friendly or, conversely, strained) linking the local government administration with community organizations or the local Ukrainian diaspora.

The support and assistance activities in medium-sized cities were often initiated mainly by the residents themselves (e.g. in Świnoujście), acting individually or as part of social organizations. An analysis of how medium-sized cities acted in response to the arrival of refugees shows that the approach of city

authorities to cooperation often took the following course: organizations, institutions or companies were coming forward to offer support, and then the authorities (city halls) administered or coordinated this assistance, sometimes supplementing it with their own resources. Strained relations between local administration and social organizations made even such cooperation impossible. In some situations there were difficulties in coordinating activities (e.g. in Płock there were two collection points operating at the same address – one organized by the Polish Red Cross, the other by the city) or overt reluctance to map and utilize each other's aid resources (e.g. in Łomża). Occasionally, cooperation networks based on cooperation between NGOs, universities or the business sector were formed. It was less common for local governments of medium-sized cities to cooperate with other entities – county offices, marshal offices or provincial offices.

## Small towns and villages

The activity of the local governments of small towns was largely conditioned by the scale of the challenges related mainly to the town's location. Note Hrubieszów, located very close to the border with Ukraine, which received some 80,000 refugees. Although the town was only a transit point for most of them, such a huge scale of refugee influx made it necessary for the local government to undertake extensive relief efforts. On 24 February 2022, a meeting of the crisis management team was held, and the Hrubieszów Town Council passed a resolution to condemn Russian aggression against Ukraine. The next day, an information point was set up at the Hrubieszów Sports and Recreation Center (HOSiR), which was soon – by the governor's decision – transformed into a reception center. Both the Town Hall and local organizations (Rural Women's Club and Volunteer Fire Brigade) and volunteers were involved in its operations. All were supported by the police, the military (mainly WOT) and international organizations (World Central Kitchen).

The situation was different in Wronki and Bolechówko-Potasze, where the number of refugees was smaller. In Wronki, where several hundred refugees arrived, an information point was organized on the initiative of private individuals and in cooperation with the Town and Municipality Office, targeting both refugees (offering information about support) and male and female residents (serving as a place for coordination). In addition, on the initiative of the town authorities, a collective accommodation site for 40 people was launched at the Wronki Cultural Center. The same institution launched a "kindergarten" – a day care center for Ukrainian children, run by refugees in cooperation with a child psychologist, also a refugee.

In the village of Bolechówko-Potasze, inhabited by 1,400 people, in response to the arrival of 100 refugees, residents and authorities acted mainly by offering personal support, in cooperation with the village administration and, to a small extent, the Czerwonak municipality authorities. The municipality's activities included the creation of a special e-mail address for volunteers (solidarity bank), as well as providing information (e.g. about donation collections and legal information). In addition, the local government was responsible for paying benefits, issuing PESEL numbers and organizing food and donation distribution points.

Interviews conducted with local actors indicate that the relief efforts were considered a success, and, despite critical moments, many activities were successfully implemented. Strong community involvement – including local government officials – was cited as the main reason for the success.

The topic of inter-institutional coordination and cooperation did not come up often, perhaps because of the existence of informal ties between individuals. Lack of cooperation with other local government

units (e.g., between the municipality and the county) and vague information and guidelines from the central government administration were cited as the main problems hindering action.

## Challenges facing cities and towns in continuing to help refugees

The rapid population growth of several or more percent in some Polish towns and cities, and the obligation to provide refugees with access to public services, posed a challenge to the local government administration. This was particularly true in the areas of housing, financing, planning, implementation, and professionalization of activities. It is worth emphasizing that although some of the challenges mentioned are beyond the capabilities of local authorities, others – including medium and long-term ones – can be addressed with political and social goodwill (e.g. integration activities). Some Polish cities addressed such challenges before the outbreak of war, creating local or cross-cultural integration strategies and following the example of pre-existing initiatives and actions for migrants (e.g. Gdańsk).

A challenge often overlooked by the administration staff participating in the study was planning and taking action to include refugees in city life. In none of the medium-sized cities surveyed was this issue addressed explicitly. On the contrary, in Płock, for example, the local authorities avoided the topic, indicating that creating integration policies is the task of the state, i.e. the central, not the local government. Some cities (e.g. Rzeszów), due to the need for relief efforts, received a boost to initiate inclusion measures – which prior to the invasion had not been recognized or undertaken on a large scale regarding foreigners ("resourceful" economic migrants or foreign students).

For small towns, the biggest challenge was the inability or sluggishness of municipal institutions, such as community centers, which were involved in providing direct assistance to refugees, to carry out non-statutory tasks.

## Housing

One of the key challenges faced by the authorities of major Polish cities has been to provide housing for refugees. In Warsaw, the number of rental offers had more than halved and prices had risen by almost 20% by March 2022. In other major Polish cities, the number of apartments for rent fell by as much as 80% (Monitor Deloitte 2022). Although in the first months of the crisis most Poles (67%) got involved in providing assistance to refugees, and some (3%) hosted them in their homes, this enthusiasm quickly waned (Union of Polish Metropolises, 2022b). Residents are no longer providing housing in such large numbers for free, some are renting commercially, and some people are wary of renting apartments to refugees, especially those with children. Although refugees can receive additional points when applying for social housing, the waiting list is very long, and the waiting period often extends beyond the time for which temporary protection is granted.

Supporting housing solutions that include only refugees can lead to social tensions. Such solutions must also include Polish citizens. Various ways of solving housing problems have been pointed out, such as renovating old tenements, which can be done with money from international organizations, but not every city has such resources (lacking in Rzeszów, for example).

### Access to and financing of social services for refugees

Despite the implementation of new programs and the expansion of existing ones, the main challenges faced by city authorities have been in financing short- and long-term services with insufficient support from the central government. Expenditures on education or social assistance are directly borne by local governments but are not exclusively financed by them. Meanwhile, funds transferred from the state budget have proved insufficient in the opinion of local governments. It is estimated that the cost of refugees' access to public services may amount to PLN 15.9 billion per year, or more than 6% of Poland's GDP (PIE 2022).

One example is the situation of Warsaw's education system, which has been joined by some 18,000 refugee children. The city estimates that the construction of a kindergarten capable of accepting 200 children would cost several million zlotys, and an elementary school for a thousand students would cost tens of millions. These figures illustrate the scale of the financial challenges facing local governments in Poland.

Another problem is the provision of social benefits to refugees. While the Special Act allowed them to benefit from welfare on the same terms as Polish citizens, it did not provide for the transfer of funds to local governments for the benefits payment and their handling. There were two exceptions: additional one-off benefits in the amount of PLN 300 and benefits for persons hosting refugees (however, the funds provided for their handling or processing by local governments were small – PLN 6 and PLN 16 respectively). Such expenditures are difficult for most local governments to bear, especially at a time of economic crisis and a decline in revenues to local government budgets due to recent tax changes.

In all the towns and cities, a significant challenge has been to provide refugees with access to public services. Existing barriers included the quality and extent of multilingual information provided in city halls and on city websites. Lack of access to up-to-date information hindered the use of public services and reinforced a sense of confusion among refugees. Monitoring the state of refugees' knowledge and awareness of the services and information offered to them by the city also remains a challenge. As one survey participant representing the administration noted:

> *[Refugees] most often talk about the language barrier, that is, the need for support in dealing with official matters, at the Employment Office in particular [...]. Very often foreigners speak precisely about the fact that there are people working in offices who do not speak foreign languages. The greatest demand, as I have noticed, is now for English and Russian.* (Public administration, large city)

Despite a number of measures taken to support the employment and vocational activation of refugees from Ukraine, securing work that is in line with their experience and qualifications remains a significant challenge. Analyses show that most refugees found jobs below their qualifications. This was largely due to language difficulties and the need to confirm professional qualifications and education credentials (Hospitality Poland Report, 2022+). A solution to this problem would be to provide access to Polish language courses free of charge, ensure access to childcare facilities (crèches, kindergartens), provide services for refugees with attention to their individual needs such as serving clients with PTSD or LGBTQIA individuals. It would also be advisable to provide access to multilingual consultations with career counselors, support entrepreneurship, provide information about the labor market and the demand for specific professions, which could translate into increased economic independence.

### Collecting data and designing activities based on data analysis

Programming effective policies at the local level requires collecting reliable and relevant data from public statistics, assessing needs and challenges at the local level, and evaluating ongoing activities (Cichocka et al. 2022). Local governments (and central authorities) face the task of developing effective systems for collecting, analyzing, and using data on migrant residents (including refugees), their plans to stay in Poland, their education, or other relevant socio-demographic factors. On the one hand, these data are needed to obtain a full picture of the needs of the Ukrainian community; on the other, due to the lack of data the potential of this community is unknown, e.g. from the perspective of the labor market.

Until February 24, 2022, Polish cities generally did not collect or make publicly available detailed data on their residents with migration experience. One exception was Kraków, where the Observatory of Multiculturalism and Migration (OWIM), run as a joint initiative of the University of Economics and Kraków City Hall, has been operating since 2019. The institution publishes reports on migration processes and multiculturalism transformations in urban space on an ongoing basis. After the escalation of the aggression against Ukraine, Warsaw also began collecting statistical data related to the crisis and prepared a report covering the first 3 months of efforts. The Strategy and Analysis Office of the City Hall has also launched a continuously updated panel containing statistics related to the arrival of refugees from Ukraine and data on their use of public services.

#### Anti-Ukrainian sentiment on social media: a challenge "on hold"?

A significant challenge that the civil society and local governments, as well as the central authorities, can expect is the rise of anti-Ukrainian sentiment in Polish society. Estimates of its current scale vary widely, from alarmist positions proclaiming widespread aversion (Sadura & Sierakowski 2022) to more nuanced diagnoses (Helak 2022). What is indisputable, however, is the need for social policies to include measures to mitigate the emerging resentment – the political exploitation of which may be feared in the context of the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Sentiments hostile to refugees from Ukraine find expression primarily in the social media. Research conducted by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the B. Geremek Centrum Foundation and SecureLex confirms the large scale of the phenomenon. Between February 24, 2022, and January 1, 2023, nearly 90,000 thousand Twitter posts were recorded having features of anti-Ukrainian hate speech – and even this figure may be an underestimate.

Among the most important motifs noted in the narratives were:

- Historical themes – statements referring primarily to the history of 20th-century Ukrainian nationalism (Stepan Bandera, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, the Volhynian slaughter), reinforcing the stereotype of a Ukrainian as an anti-Polish nationalist. In the most radical ones, a tendency to use the rhetoric of revenge can be noticed – or at least a call for a "blockade of empathy."

- Economic themes, narratives of privilege – diagnosing migration from Ukraine as a huge economic problem for the Polish state and its citizens. The postings on this topic can be broadly divided into two groups. On the one hand, there are general, abstracted posts of

such as “Ukrainians are taking our jobs,” “Ukrainian women come to Poland only for the social benefits,” and the like. Alongside them there are rapidly spreading “real-life” urban legends – unconfirmed hearsay.

- Threats related to migration – the threats cited in anti-Ukrainian statements were not exclusively economic in nature. There were mentions of disease contagion (especially polio) and an alleged increase in crime, for which Ukrainians were said to be responsible. The latter theme was particularly popular in May, with a high-profile murder case that happened in Warsaw’s Nowy Świat street.

- The great replacement theory – the hashtag “#StopUkrainizationofPoland” has become very popular on Twitter. “Ukrainization” can be related to many different narratives found in users’ posts. It can refer to economic and labor market issues, as well as to the field of culture and symbolic domination associated with the alleged omnipresence of Ukrainian national symbols. In some statements, it takes on a meaning related to the demographics of Polish society, alluding to the theories of great replacement popular in radical right (*alt-right*) circles.

It is worth noting that hate speech and disinformation are tools that the Russian Federation uses to stir up conflicts between the Western and Ukrainian societies. Hateful narratives usually allude to the resentments and prejudices present in societies, as this is the ground where hate speech becomes the most widely spread and the most deeply rooted. At the same time – apart from narrative research, data leaks or journalistic investigations – there are no ways to unequivocally prove and attribute hateful and toxic content to Russian authorship – most profiles are anonymous, while even overt publication of content can be explained by the personal views of the person running the profile.

For more information, see the report on anti-Ukrainian hate speech on the internet being prepared by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the Geremek Center Foundation and SecureLex.

# Chapter 4. The residents' response to the arrival of refugees

In the first months of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine, there was an unprecedented and profound mobilization of Polish civil society in a wide range of relief efforts. People acted on an individual level, creating informal initiatives, and engaged in the activities of already existing NGOs and public institutions. On many occasions, individuals created *ad hoc* solutions where there was a lack of action or attention from the state and international organizations, and grassroots and spontaneous actions were able to grow into months-long initiatives. It can be said that, especially in the first weeks, it was this social mobilization that the assistance to refugees was based on, and other actors – both local governments and the government or international organizations - became gradually involved in this effort.

## Commitment to volunteering

The most widespread form of support for refugees was volunteering through self-organization of direct assistance, as well as getting involved through municipal institutions, social organizations, and religious communities. A volunteer working at a reception point in Hrubieszów described the beginnings in this way: *On-call could last as long as three days and three nights, as we all know. I think it was just that [everyone] wanted to help, and it works on the principle that good always comes back in one way or the other. I think it was also because [we knew] it could or would happen to us at some point.*

Volunteering included *ad hoc* assistance to refugee families at reception and information desks, train stations and places of collective accommodation – it was the work of volunteers that formed the backbone of these sites' operations. For example, a visible area of grassroots support was the Poznań Main Train Station, where dozens and, at peak times, hundreds of residents provided *ad hoc* assistance to refugees arriving by train (especially the overnight train from Przemyśl). Many people came to the station regularly – every day after work, every night, or every weekend. These people self-organized on the Facebook group "PKP Poznań – Volunteers for Ukraine." Many local restaurant owners and provided hot meals, while residents and locals (often groups of friends or school classes) prepared sandwiches and brought them to tents set up by the fire department in front of the entrance to the old part of the station. The tents contained several beds on which those planning to travel further could rest. Counters were set up in front of the tents, from where dry provisions, hot drinks and a warm meal were issued. A similar system was set up in Warsaw and Kraków.

Volunteers also assisted at places of collective accommodation (e.g. in Poznań). Based on schedules spread over shifts of several hours, a dozen or more people did volunteer work, preparing and serving meals, sorting donations, cleaning facilities, organizing time for children, and helping adults. Some volunteers ended up in these places as members of organizations – the scouting movement (ZHP, ZHR), Caritas, and companies as part of employee volunteering. Others applied through specially created e-mail accounts, online recruitment systems or social media groups. In larger cities, local governments created or used existing sites and e-mail addresses where volunteers could register. In Warsaw, for example, as many as 12,000 people signed up to help (through the Warsaw Volunteers service), and an email address "wolontariat_arena" in Poznań, concerning only one collective accommodation facility, received more than 600 applications. Many people also applied to individual social organizations, such as Dom Ukraiński (Ukrainian House) in Warsaw. The necessity to thoroughly vet all the applications proved a challenge for social organizations with their limited resources, at a time of rapid expansion of activities and responsibilities.

It was not always possible to properly utilize the skills of volunteers. Those assigned to coordinate efforts had to efficiently manage many people who had no experience working together, did not know

each other, and had different availability schedules. One coordinator indicated that it was easier for her to work with a pre-organized group: *Volunteers from secondary schools turned out to be really good*, *they came with a mentor from their volunteer club, [they were] very well organized and willing to help*. There were also such reports: *I was surprised by some situations, such as the necessity to clean the floor 24/7. Before a cleaning company was hired, college professors had to do the cleaning. And in the morning, someone had to serve tea, food* (the person working at the reception center, big city).

A separate issue was the experience of coordinators. An example of management difficulties was the arrival of the international organization CORE in Rzeszów, whose first action was to take over the coordination of volunteer work at the train station from the city. This had a negative impact on the quality of work, compounding the impression of chaos and the feeling that decisions were being made by people with little experience and knowledge of how these places operate. It was emphasized that the experience gained by the previous team and the know-how they developed over time was wasted. One of the volunteers, who was present at the Poznań dormitory from the very beginning until its closure (often for several hours each day), stressed that thanks to the development of effective solutions and procedures, the place run very smoothly. He stressed that this was not used at all: *The experience of the entire team created added value, and this was very much wasted.*

Lublin's experience is different, benefiting from the experience of volunteers gaining their shine in humanitarian work. Many of them have been employed in aid organizations (similarly in Rzeszów), but also at still-operating collective accommodation sites (or integration support sites – as in Poznań). In addition, in Lublin, the volunteers themselves received professional support quite quickly. In other cities, it was offered less frequently or not at all.

### Unprecedented mobilization of volunteers

The Lublin Social Committee for Aid to Ukraine launched a volunteer enrollment platform in the first days of the war. In a very short time, several thousand applications came in. Two people were delegated to the task of managing volunteers. Initially, their task was to verify applications and quickly deploy volunteers. Because of the system – specific coordinators managed specific activities – volunteers were delegated to specific departments. An online system of duty schedules was created, and the Homo Faber Association, which managed all the work, signed volunteer contracts.

As most of the volunteers were students with migrant experience (mainly from Ukraine and Belarus), who had paid for their studies in Poland and who had left employment to engage in assistance, a system of benefits – vouchers to be used in stores – was implemented. The system was public, managed by a person delegated to this task. In addition, volunteers were required to undergo supervisions. Underlying the decision for mandatory supervisions was not only the concern for those for whom this was their first humanitarian activity, but also the fact that many of them had families in Ukraine. The stress level in such situations was unusually high. The above rules applied to all, regardless of national and ethnic origin.

Hot meals were also ordered for the team. At first these were donations from Lublin restaurateurs and private individuals, mainly vegetarian/vegan dishes. Volunteers also participated in training courses, including on international humanitarian standards

The Committee's experience was used to launch a program in Lublin to develop standards for cooperation with volunteers: "Lublin Volunteers" funded by the budget of the City of Lublin. The groups of volunteers were very diverse: secondary schoolchildren, college and university students, migrant and refugee communities, employees of institutions (such as city halls or universities) and companies, parents with children, foreign volunteers who came for a shorter or longer period (*volunteer freelancers*). Among them were people who had not engaged before, as well as those with experience in social organizations and volunteer structures. Numerous outreach initiatives provided comprehensive assistance: housing, food, psychological support and help in finding work. An example was the Bednarska 11 initiative in Rzeszów. Individuals, with the support of community organizations, created a help desk with an accommodation site where dozens of refugees were able to stay overnight for the first few days. In total, more than 400 people benefited from accommodation, food, logistical, medical, and legal support, and one refugee woman gave birth to a daughter at the site. It is worth noting that solidarity networks established in 2021 during the humanitarian crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border proved useful in some cities.

### The Analog Collective in Poznań

An example of a grassroots initiative for refugee families is the Analog collective in Poznań. It involved up to 200-300 people, some with connections to the initiators, while others were complete strangers who learned about the initiative from social media. One of the people involved in the creation of the initiative said: *I was touched by the mutual help – we were helped by a lot of new people that I would not normally associate with*). The collective began to form in March 2022 among people who organized a play area for children and a rest area for their mothers every night at the train station after the invasion. In the words of one of the initiators of the collective: *It was very important for the girls to be able to rest, they had often been on the road for four days* (community organization, large city). At the help desk there was a small *freeshop*, or "store" without charge, created from donations made by people, where refugees could choose the things they needed. Most of the helpers were women who brought mattresses, toys, clothes, and for the first three weeks were at the station all night. Sometimes they managed to arrange accommodation for the refugees in the homes of their friends (one night as many as 14 people found such shelter). One of the initiators recalls: *We called ourselves the Analog collective, because we did everything in an analog way: we carried cardboard boxes with things on a streetcar or bicycle, and we performed theater for children.* This spontaneous activity evolved into long-term projects, including a day care center on the premises provided by the Stonewall Group, used by more than 200 refugee families, and a Belarusian-Polish-Ukrainian art and theater group, which created a play shown at Poznań's Teatr Ósmego Dnia.

The main challenges in organizing and coordinating volunteering turned out to be a lack of experience in assisting, including assisting refugees, and a lack of competence and knowledge (e.g. about available social benefits for refugees, legal regulations, support for children's education, or opportunities for professional activity). The experience that prepared some of the social organizations to organize humanitarian aid was their previous involvement in the activities of Grupa Granica (the Border Group) helping refugees on the Polish-Belarusian border. However, it did not involve many entities.

Further difficulties arose from the high turnover of helpers due to physical fatigue and emotional burnout, as well as the turnover of coordinators resulting in a deterioration of the support organization system. People from Ukraine were working in even greater danger, as they were adding to the stress of caring for loved ones left behind in Ukraine.

In summary, the forms of most assistance activities and the degree of involvement of residents of Poland's large and medium cities and small towns were similar. The main difference was that in smaller towns, activities and initiatives were often coordinated and led by a small and knowledgeable community, while in larger cities, the need to organize support for refugees resulted in the formation of new intersectoral collaborations and grassroots initiatives.

## Hosting refugee families

In all the towns and cities analyzed, hosting refugee families and assisting with official and daily matters came to the fore. Despite provincial and municipal institutions launching places of collective accommodation (housing from a dozen to even a few thousand people) in almost all localities, a significant number of refugees stayed in private homes where they were invited by Polish and Ukrainian families. According to an April/May 2022 study, some 525,000 refugees used shelter provided by the residents of just 12 major Polish cities, not including smaller towns (Sobierajski et al., 2022). Among the large cities, Lublin stood out, where a small part of the arriving refugees resided at collective accommodation sites, and the majority found shelter in private homes. The organization of accommodation with residents was taken care of by one of the departments of the Lublin Social Committee for Aid to Ukraine, creating a database of people offering to take in refugees (a similar database was available at the Ukrainian House in Warsaw). The system was constantly updated and verified; in addition, bilateral lease agreements were also translated. Interestingly, only 10% of those hosting Ukrainian families in Lublin applied for government funding to cover their living expenses.

> *97% of refugees in Lublin live in private homes, not collective accommodation sites. The largest accommodation in Lublin was 350 people, and right now [September 2022] we have more than 100 people – that's the largest place! This is a world record. This simply did not have the right to happen, but it is the result of the fact that there were people [...] and a whole team that invited these people, not from a database, but by sitting down across from each other, talking to each other* (public administration, big city).

In Bolechówko and Potasze, small towns in Greater Poland, hosting refugee families in private homes was the primary form of support: as many as 97 refugees found shelter in the village of 1,400 residents, with three families still living with host Polish families as of December 2022. The assistance was not limited to providing shelter and food but included extensive integration and emotional support. Among other things, the host families assisted in finding places for children in kindergartens and schools, arranging formal and administrative matters, providing transportation (lending unused cars or offering lifts) or finding jobs with the help of personal contacts with local employers.

In many cities, the owners of empty apartments provided them free of charge to refugees, also sometimes providing them with other necessary assistance or directing them to people who could provide it. In Łomża, one interviewee indicated that the search for housing was done through private contacts: *Close relatives, acquaintances, friends, we were already organizing apartments [...]; I found eleven apartments for donation for Ukrainian women, indefinitely, for free. Well, this is a city of just*

*60,000 people but I did manage to find these eleven apartments* (a social organization, a medium-sized city).

A good practice developed by the community of Bolechówko and Potasz was the introduction of an institution of a "partner family" supporting host families. The partner families were families who, for various reasons, could not host refugees themselves, but were willing to help. Each host family was assigned a partner family that they could count on for support, thus succeeding in reducing the phenomenon of compassion fatigue.

## Organization of collections

Another area of involvement for the volunteers was the organization of collections – in-kind and financial, as well as related assistance in receiving, sorting, and giving out donations. Collections were held in every Polish locality. A report by the Union of Polish Metropolises indicates that 67% of residents of the 12 largest cities were involved in various initiatives to help Ukrainian refugees. The most common forms of support included donating food (59% of the total in a multiple-choice question), in-kind assistance in the form of clothing or home furnishings (44%) and donating to and participating in fundraising for refugees (32%) (Sobierajski et al. 2022).

In Hrubieszów, people almost immediately started bringing in-kind help to the information desk (and later the reception center) organized by the City Hall – *at first, we had absolutely nothing, just beds, sleeping bags* (person working at the reception desk, medium city). Over time, residents provided toys for the children, and the *Rural Women's Clubs began to bring bigos [cabbage stew], borscht and other warm foods* (person working at the reception desk, medium city), some of which the Hrubieszów residents carried in their own cars to the border crossings to the aid points operating there.

In Wronki, donations were provided by local families and companies, fully equipping the collective accommodation site and setting up a dispensing point. In Świnoujście, similar initiatives were organized by cross-sectoral cooperation and were sometimes linked to charity events (such as the match held in June 2022). In Kraków, informal online groups joined in the collections, such as "Kraków – Oddam za Darmo" [giving away second-hand items for free] which launched a section for Ukraine along with coordinating deliveries to pick-up points run by social organizations.

Items and money collected in larger and smaller cities were given directly to refugees, to the Polish-Ukrainian border or to institutions, organizations, and individuals in Ukraine. Residents pointed out the disadvantages of the collections, such as overloaded points with items not always thoughtfully or efficiently sorted. In some localities, authorities appealed for thoughtful donations of good quality items or stopped collections for fear of littering.

One of the channels for self-organization and coordination of grassroots assistance were groups and chat rooms on social media (e.g. Facebook, Telegram). Groups were formed in all cities, sometimes using already existing chat rooms and forums. An example was the group "Help for Ukraine, Допомога Україні: housing and other assistance to the citizen," which was established on February 24, 2022, and similar groups in the regions and cities, such as "Aid to Ukraine🇺🇦❤️🇵🇱 Plock and surrounding area." Social media allowed rapid exchange of information about needs and the assistance offered, as well as legal and language consultations. In the larger cities, social media groups were formed in large numbers, some with a narrower scope of activities.

## Changes in the assistance provided

City residents responded with a wave of selfless aid from the first days of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine and the arrival of refugee families in Poland. For example, the most committed people in Łomża were already organizing transportation for refugees to bring them back from the border on February 24. In the early weeks, the scale of involvement of Polish residents was enormous. It is worth noting the influence of the media on the social mobilization of refugee aid. Images of what was happening in Ukraine, at border crossings, railway stations or collective accommodation points in Poland triggered people's desire to help.

> *In the early days, (...) great enthusiasm, help, lots of willing volunteers. They came, they brought stuff, even private individuals with their cars (...), offered accommodation. With time, well, of course, it's natural that this enthusiasm cooled down a bit (...); it's also difficult to expect any long-term relief efforts from an ordinary resident, because this is the task, it seems to me, of the government and local authorities, and civil society organizations. On the other hand, I think that the residents of Rzeszów passed the exam with an „A" in terms of this ad hoc aid of this kind at the time when the biggest wave reached the city* (business).

According to the reports from representatives of the institutions, while the involvement of residents was very high in the first month, by the end of April the number of people involved had decreased significantly, and then the assistance largely shifted to the institutions and social organizations.

> *People lost their enthusiasm for helping, the economic situation in Poland began to deteriorate, and there were voices suggesting that refugees were offered too much, and that Poles, after all, have problems too. There was certainly a growing indifference, sometimes weariness of helping* (volunteer, medium-sized city)

According to those interviewed, the above reaction is a natural one, caused by the expectation that after the reception stage, the burden of caring for refugees will be taken over by the state and specialized entities. According to such an assumption, assistance activities should be professionalized and structured. In May and June 2022, the aid effort already involved mainly institutions (government offices, cultural institutions, social assistance, fire departments, social organizations) and individual persons. According to a statement from a local government representative: *In the beginning it was: "Why don't you help?" and then it was: "Are you still helping?" It was also because of the media, at first it was nonstop about the war, and then it stopped*. This comment highlights the large role and responsibility of the media in the process of mobilizing solidarity actions and organizing long-term aid.

## *Assistance from the Ukrainian community*

A very important area of assistance to refugees was the aid effort of people of Ukrainian nationality. In the wake of Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine, there was an unprecedented mobilization in these circles. This included people from the Ukrainian national minority in Poland, as well as immigrants from Ukraine who resided in Poland before February 24, 2022. An example was the Ukrainian students in Lublin who joined the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine (LSKPU) in great numbers.

Mobilization took place around existing institutions, as in Kraków, where community organizations and Kraków's Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches provided "natural" centers for assistance and information. Other initiatives arose spontaneously, such as Poznań's "Sztab Aniołów" (Team of Angels) which brought together nearly 100 young Ukrainians.

It is worth noting that the involvement of Ukrainians in aid activities went in two directions. On the one hand, there was ongoing humanitarian and instrumental assistance (finding housing, placing children in educational institutions, etc.) and integration (such as art workshops). Many worked with various social organizations and institutions – initially as translators, then taking on more responsibilities and activities. At the same time, Ukrainians were active in organizing humanitarian (and sometimes military) aid to the residents of those areas of Ukraine where hostilities were taking place. There were fund-raisers and initiatives for the retrofitting of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, the purchase of medical equipment and medicines for Ukrainian hospitals under fire, and personal protective equipment for Ukrainian soldiers fighting at the front. These activities were often conducted jointly or in cooperation with Polish and international initiatives and organizations.

### Ukrainian House in Warsaw

The Our Choice Foundation, which runs the Ukrainian House in Warsaw, was founded by Ukrainian migrants in 2009. From the very beginning, its mission was to support the integration of people with migration experience into Polish society, to dispel stereotypes and create lasting forms and channels of Polish-Ukrainian cooperation, as well as to support democratic transition in Ukraine.

The Foundation responded to the crisis in line with its experience, but on a scale previously unimaginable. In a short period of time, it was overwhelmed by both requests for help and offers of assistance from individuals, companies, international and social organizations, state institutions and the media. The two-person consultation point has grown to a 20-person team which has provided 50,000 telephone consultations and 15,000 face-to-face consultations since the escalation of Russian hostilities. In response to the immediate need for shelter, a specialized unit was established to provide a roof over the head for 11,000 people as part of short-term solidarity efforts.

In addition, the foundation has organized 46 Polish language learning groups for children and adults, as well as six Ukrainian Women's Clubs (five in Warsaw and one in Piaseczno), it runs a Saturday Ukrainian school, and together with the Club of Catholic Intelligentsia (KIK) co-organizes a Ukrainian school in Warsaw, where both children and teachers are people with refugee experience.

By December 2022, the foundation has introduced a team of family assistants for people in long-term need, as well as a staff support program. In addition, it has set up a program of integration and cultural events at the Ukrainian House in Warsaw, provides short-term psychological support for refugees and psychological supervision for those working. Those running the organization describe the last 12 months like a cyclone hitting. Most of the organization's employees are Ukrainians, the Ukrainian minority in Poland, people with refugee experience, and migrants. Many of these people initially joined as one of the 5,000 volunteers who offered their help after February 24.

As one of the leaders said: *We want to express our deep gratitude to them for their sense of duty and support. We express our admiration for those who remained in Ukraine, our families and friends who are changing the course of history for their suffering and for their courage. We also*

*wish to pay tribute to those who, in extraordinary Polish solidarity, from individuals to organizations and institutions, have helped and are helping Ukrainian women and men fleeing war, some of whom are mentioned in this report.*

*We urge that the same solidarity be shown to all those fleeing war and tyranny to Poland. We would also like to point out some of the flaws and faults in the Polish response to this crisis, resulting from the lack of systematic long-term measures and strategies for integrating migrants into Polish society, so that the fate of many refugees and organizations that support them remains very uncertain.*

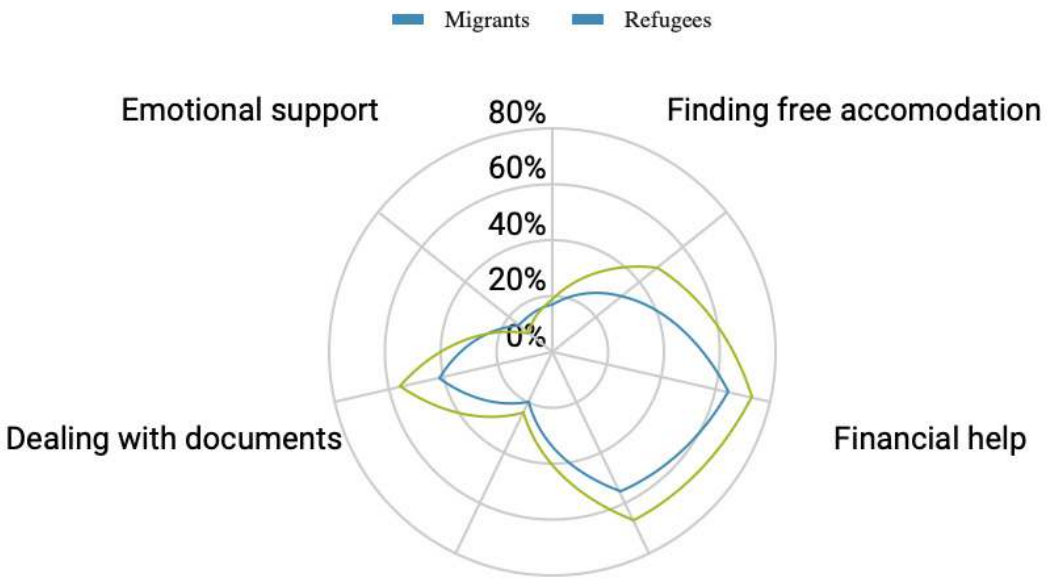
*Ukrainian House is an organization based on community building but also on introducing forms of support for diverse groups of Ukrainian refugees and migrants to respond to their needs in the new and difficult situation they face.*

## Chapter 5. The role of the Ukrainian community in refugee reception

This chapter deals with the assistance that Ukrainians have received and provided in connection with the war in Ukraine, based on the results of the OBM UW/CESS survey (see Chapter 3). It again juxtaposes two groups: Ukrainian refugees and migrants. After the outbreak of full-scale war in Ukraine, Ukrainians were able to count on help coming from various directions. According to the results of the OBM UW/CESS survey, 44% of migrants could count on assistance, including a third of those surveyed who said they did not need help. Among refugees, the situation was different – 85% received war-related assistance in Poland, and only 5% indicated that they did not need it.

It is worth noting that although migrants received particular types of assistance less frequently than refugees, its nature was similar (Figure 1). Both groups most often indicated receiving assistance in cash (73% of refugees and 65% of migrants) and in the form of daily necessities (67% and 56%, respectively). Relatively often, refugees (56%) and migrants (42%) indicated receiving assistance in dealing with municipal or government offices. Unsurprisingly, refugees were more likely than migrants to be helped to find free housing (48% and 32%, respectively). Ukrainians were less likely to receive assistance in finding paid housing and jobs. On these issues, the percentages in both refugee and migrant groups were similar, at around 20% for each range. Interestingly, migrants were more likely than refugees to report receiving emotional support (15% and 10%, respectively). The reason may be that as people with experience of coming to Poland, and therefore having friends in Poland, they had a larger support network than newly arrived refugees.

**Figure 1. Refugees and migrants from Ukraine who received assistance in Poland, by type of assistance (data in %)**



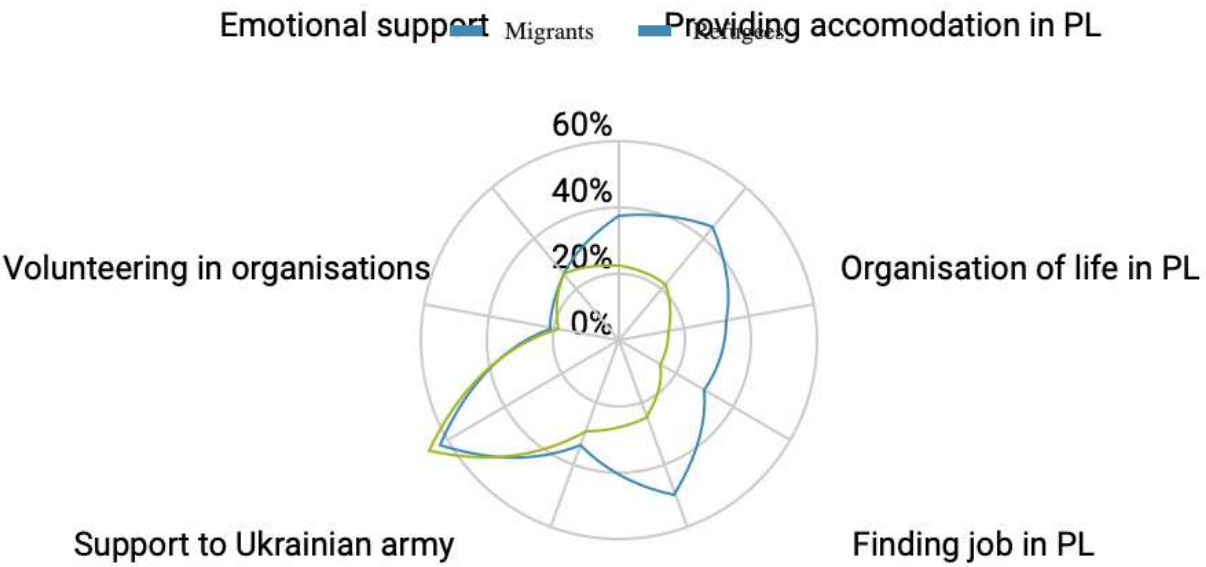

Notes: Percentages do not add up to 100%, as respondents may have indicated more than one answer.
*Source: own compilation, OBM UW/CESS UW survey, July-September 2022*

Strangers played the largest role in helping refugees. This was true for every type of support: finding housing (56% of refugees received this type of help from strangers), jobs (53%) and emotional support (49%). The last observation clearly shows solidarity between Polish and Ukrainian society in the face of the war that hit Ukraine. Monetary aid flowed to refugees and refugees primarily from the state (central government) (65%) and international institutions (56%), while daily necessities were provided primarily by social organizations (65%). Friends (46%) and family (18%), on the other hand, played the largest role when looking for paid rental housing. In this regard, strangers met only after arriving in Poland were key (45%).

For migrants, the support provided by specific groups and institutions was similar. The key difference was that friends and acquaintances played the role that strangers played towards refugees. This is particularly clear in the case of assistance in finding a job (53% of migrants received it from friends and acquaintances) and with emotional support (56%).

It is worth noting that refugees and migrants were helped by both the Polish and Ukrainian communities. According to the assessment of respondents from both groups, Poles accounted for an average of about 60% of those helping them and their relatives. This, of course, does not diminish the role that Polish society played in selflessly helping millions of people fleeing the war. However, it also shows the huge role that the Ukrainian community has played in this process, including in the mutual support of Ukrainians fleeing the war. Among those surveyed, only 7% of migrants and 20% of refugees admitted that they had not helped others in or outside Poland due to the ongoing war.

**Figure 2. Ukrainian refugees and migrants assisted in connection with the war in Ukraine, by type of assistance (data in %)**




*Source: own compilation, OBM UW/CESS UW survey, July-September 2022*

Among the Ukrainian nationals and citizens living in Poland who helped, the most common way of helping, by uniting the two groups – refugees and migrants – was the support of the Ukrainian military, which was declared by more than two-thirds of helpers from both groups (Fig. 2). To a similar extent, refugees and migrants were involved in organizing assistance in Ukraine (30% and 34%, respectively), emotional support (26% in each group) and volunteering to support Ukrainians in Poland (19% and 21%, respectively). For other types of assistance, as expected, migrants were noticeably more likely to help, as those who undoubtedly had more opportunities and resources, also due to their previous experiences of coming to Poland.

Migrants helping in connection with the war in Ukraine especially often (in addition to helping the Ukrainian army) engaged in material assistance given to other people staying in Poland (49%) and provided a place to stay free of charge (44%). As many as 30-38% of helping migrants took part in arranging for others to come to Poland and live in Poland (housing, documents, medical appointments, kindergarten) and helped newcomers find work. Noteworthy is the fact that the percentages of refugees organizing arrivals in Poland, providing free accommodation, and engaging in material assistance were also high: they reached 22-25% of those helping. They had a slightly smaller share in providing support in organizing life in Poland and finding a job (about 15%). The results presented here indicate that the Ukrainian community shared its resources with refugees, and that this did not apply only to experienced migrant migrants. It is worth noting that Ukrainians did not limit themselves to helping family and friends, and most of the support was directed at strangers (about 60% in each group).

### Polish Migration Forum (PFM): Employing refugees to support other refugees

The war brought a surge in demand for specialized support for arriving refugees and social organizations were unable to respond to it with existing resources. People were needed who were able to communicate with refugees in the language they felt most comfortable with and in which they wanted to communicate.

Numerous organizations, including PFM, decided to hire specialists who came from Ukraine for psychological and information services. While this seemed logical, it was initially difficult to envision how to work with teams largely composed of people who had just become refugees. And from an employer's perspective, this is a vulnerable group that requires attention.

Refugees from Ukraine proved to be extremely committed workers. They claimed that work was a way for them to participate in the war – a field where they could make themselves useful. This very personal, strong motivation was admirable, but at the same time it fostered overworking and job burnout.

Working with refugees in crisis is difficult. It's even more difficult for someone who's on the phone everyday checking bomb alerts in the city where she has parents, or who starts the day by calling loved ones to see if they're alive. The emotional burden of working in a permanent fear for loved ones is immense. Some had the sense of leading two parallel lives: here and there. Each day brought (or could bring) a radical change in the emotional state of the workers – this translated into the ability of individuals to do their jobs. Under the conditions of the ongoing war, it was difficult to maintain cross-cultural teams. An additional challenge was the use of the Russian language. In parts of the organization, such as the Polish Migration Forum, previously developed work standards were in place, and clients were served in many languages, including Russian. In the current situation, the use (or not) of Russian was sometimes a source of conflict.

## Chapter 6. Activities of social organizations for refugees in Polish towns and cities

Regardless of the size of the town or city studied, social organizations active in assisting refugees after February 24 can be divided into those that had previously been active in the sphere of supporting people with migratory experience and those that were established or reorganized after that date. The first group had years of experience working with migrants and migrant women, local communities, local and government institutions, international organizations, and sponsors. Some of them had worked closely together for years, such as those affiliated with the Migration Consortium .

Social organizations from the second group developed the scope of activities from similar areas (e.g. from working with socially excluded people to activities for refugees from Ukraine with this experience of exclusion), expanded the target group (like educational organizations, which began to support schools in working with children with refugee experience), and some started completely new activities. As one member of such an organization put it, it was *totally ad-libbed – we, as a cultural association, collected medicine without having any idea about it* (community organization, medium-sized city). There were known cases of organizations that undertook relief efforts unrelated to their previous experience and competence, only to withdraw from them after some time (and return to their main statutory activity) or to seek synergies between their previous activities and the needs of refugees. According to a survey conducted in May 2022, which covered 36 organizations in the Greater Poland region, the majority (59.5%) of those involved in supporting refugees from Ukraine had an activity profile unrelated to activities aimed at people with migration experience or humanitarian aid before February 24. These were organizations that worked with children, women, LGBTQIA people, people with disabilities, the elderly, and promoted health and civic engagement.

### LGBTQIA refugees: tailor-made assistance

Some of these people lost their homes for the second time (...) Here we want to show them that the whole group and whole community stands behind them. (Lambda Warszawa Association, big city)

The situation of LGBTQIA people leaving Ukraine requries special attention and assistance. This is because its representatives are often exposed to discrimination, in consequence to both their psycho-sexual orientation or gender identity, and because of their experience as refugees. Importantly, this group is heterogenous, as it includes people with non-Ukrainian citizenship, which widens the spectrum and diversity of experiences and needs.

One of the first challenges in the first weeks after the invasion was the difficulty - and in some cases the impossibility - of crossing the border for intersex and transgender people, particularly transwomen and non-binary people with male gender markers on their identity documents. IOM estimates this group as around several hundred. These people mostly have declared a fear of being recruited into the Ukrainian army due to transphobia. Crossing the border was determined both by whether they had a diagnosis (known as F64) and the necessary medical and legal documentation, as well as by factors completely beyond their control. Those who managed to reach Poland (often by intentional loss of their documents or offering bribes to Ukrainian border guards) faced new challenges. These stemmed from differences in the transit procedure and limited access to hormonal means in Poland, in comparison with Ukraine. Lack of medication could,

in some cases, lead to hormonal imbalance and severe health issues, or to attempts to obtain and dose them on their own: *In Ukraine, since 2016, hormones are dispensed like paracetamol, without* a *prescription, so coming here complicates a lot,"* explained a Transfusion Foundation employee. *Then we help to find specialists, [with] regulating the dosage, and this is also followed by psychological support, and often a translator or lawyer* (social organization, large city).

LGBTQIA refugees faced difficulties right from the stage of finding specialized support and information available in groups on social networks or social organization websites. It was also crucial to find suitable housing without risking exposure to discrimination or violence. Two organizations offering such assistance, the Lambda Warsaw Foundation, and the Stonewall Group in Poznań, had an intervention hotel (Lambda) and a directory of so-called "alliance housing" (Stonewall) available. The Stonewall Group also offered a substantial discount (up to 60%) for the use of the hotel it ran. However, all these were temporary solutions. About 900 people had used the intervention hotel by November 2022, while 148 people had used the housing coordinated by the Stonewall Group. In addition, LGBTQIA people were offered psychological and legal assistance, as well as help in finding employment free from queerphobia. Inclusion classes and Polish language classes were held in Warsaw, and a dedicated day care center operated until May 2022.

A major obstacle to aiding refugees has been the atmosphere of hostility and hate against LGBTQIA people that Polish organizations face. This causes them to fail to engage in ongoing cooperation with central authorities (ILGA 2021). To carry out aid activities, they rely on donations and short-term (up to six months) grants from international organizations (IOM, AllOut). *This allows us to function, but we can't plan,* explained a Lambda Warsaw employee. *We are committed to financial self-sufficiency, and at a certain point in the crisis, emergency aid is not enough,* added a Stonewall Group employee.

An additional issue remains the deficit of competence reported by the organizations in offering emergency assistance and working with people with refugee experience and facing intersectional discrimination, and thus the need for support in terms of training, translation work and providing access to assistance in Ukrainian or Russian. There are refugee claimants in Poland seeking refuge because of persecution due to their LGBTQIA status, but there is a lack of good practices in working with them, and there is suspicion of systemic discrimination to which they are subjected.

The organizations declared a willingness to cooperate more extensively with local authorities, as well as the need for anti-discrimination training for Border Guard officers in working with LGBTQIA border crossers. On a long-term scale, it was also pointed out that legislative solutions (amendments of laws on bias-motivated crimes or enactment of the Gender Recognition Act) could serve to permanently integrate these people. In contrast, maintaining an atmosphere of systemic hostility towards LGBTQIA people and smear campaigns will only have a negative impact, while defying existing constitutional standards and human rights.

Assistance to refugees was also provided by large organizations such as the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP) and Caritas, which, in addition to providing in-kind support and lodging, recruited volunteers from the Caritas Circles community. In the small towns we surveyed, assistance was organized by Rural Women's Clubs and Volunteer Fire Brigades, providing support in coordination at train and bus stations, as well as co-organizing the transport and providing premises to organize collections of needed products. After February 24, 2022, regardless of the size of the city or town surveyed, nu-

merous more or less formalized organizations were joined by grassroots initiatives – neighborhood or district ones. Some expired after a few months, while others formalized their activities or entered partnerships with pre-existing organizations.

The second criterion for dividing organizations organizing relief activities for refugees is the scale of involvement of people with migrant experience (and sometimes even refugees from Ukraine themselves) or people from ethnic and national minorities within these organizations. They joined already existing initiatives (including migrant or minority organizations), created new ones or transformed previously existing ones. In large cities, Ukrainian organizations in particular were involved in relief efforts. The scope of activity of many migrant or minority organizations before the outbreak of the war was primarily cultural and educational. Hence, after the outbreak of the war, they had to change (or supplement) the profile of their activities (such as those centered around the Nić bookstore-café, which promoted Ukrainian literature and art, or the Poznań-based Socio-Cultural Association „Poland-Ukraine") or get involved in and support the activities of other organizations, or join broader initiatives (like members of the Lublin Ukrainian Society or various branches of the Union of Ukrainians in Poland). In Warsaw, an important role was played by the Our Choice Foundation, which runs the Ukrainian House in Warsaw, where extensive assistance to refugees was launched. In Kraków, it was the Polish-Ukrainian Zustricz Foundation, the former informal Ukrainian Club, which undertook its first humanitarian activities as early as 2013, after the outbreak of the Ukrainian Maidan. Plast (Ukrainian Scout Organization in Poland) was also active in that city as well as in Lublin.

In the first months after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, in all the towns and cities, regardless of their size, the activities of social organizations were aimed at holding (24-hour) shifts at train stations, providing legal and translation support, as well as meeting the basic needs of refugees: collections of foodstuffs, necessities and money, storage and distribution of collected products. The focus then shifted to housing needs. The organizations took on the task of filling the leisure time of refugees and their children, first at collective accommodation sites, then in other spaces in the city, organizing integration activities and workshops, and in some cases awarding scholarships to their charges. An important area of activity for social organizations – usually specialized in these areas – was the provision of psychological and legal assistance, as well as offering Polish language classes, vocational activation, or assistance in regulating residence status, finding work and a stable place to live. Some organizations (such as the Lublin-based Homo Faber Association) additionally provided intervention and monitoring activities, including in cases of violence (including sexual violence), assistance at clinics and offices, and organized safe accommodations for women who had experienced rape by Russian soldiers.

Among the problems reported by social organizations, the most frequently mentioned – especially in the initial phase of assistance – were lack of financial resources for activities, lack of knowledge (especially in organizations not specializing in assisting migrants) and language competence. Aid efforts relied primarily on volunteers, which created problems with good management (e.g. scheduling availability). In addition, there was a great deal of information chaos, especially from various types of public entities and a lack of coordination of their actions. This was compounded by a heavy mental and emotional burden (including that resulting from a lack of previous experience working with persons affected by war and PTSD) and emotional burnout resulting from overwork (cf. PISOP, 2022). A major obstacle reported by the organizations was the non-inclusion of crisis management coordinators in local government structures.

Civil society organizations also undertook humanitarian activities in Ukraine or on the Polish-Ukrainian border, organizing collections of products exported to Ukraine or reception points at the border. Often coaches or cars with donations were used on their way back to help refugees get to Poland.

The activities of social organizations have often focused on several areas simultaneously, requiring a large and rapid mobilization of resources or an increase in staffing, made possible by efficient cooperation with local governments, businesses, or international organizations.

A major challenge highlighted by survey participants was also the marginalization of the needs of other refugees (from Afghanistan, Chechnya, or people from the Polish-Belarusian border) and other migrants. This created a sense of injustice among those in need of assistance, such as refugees from Belarus who were fleeing persecution in their country. And yet, as one interviewee from a social organization emphasized: *Other groups, migrants, did not disappear. At first, fewer of them came to us, they felt they shouldn't. But there is [in them] a lot of resentment, a feeling that it's not fair* (civil society, a city).

### Rapid growth and expansion of NGOs supporting refugees

By 2022, the Polish Migration Forum (PFM) had grown six-fold, from a dozen people in January 2022 to about a hundred a year later (the process was fastest in the spring). The organization's budget also increased six-fold. This posed an unprecedented challenge, for several reasons:

1. **Personal competence.** The people managing the community organizations were not qualified or experienced in leading such large teams. Most organizations supporting migrant women before the war numbered a few to a dozen people. Their boards had to quickly acquire the knowledge and skills to carry out such growth. Some organizations were helped by businesses that offered consultation and support (e.g. Google and Citibank helped PFM). As a rule, however, the organization's leaders acquired the imagination, leadership skills, and knowledge necessary to build large teams as they went along, using their intuition and learning from their mistakes. The process of self-education took place very quickly. Often the good advice of the business sector could not be applied by social organizations – everything happened so fast that solutions had to be built on their own, adapting management knowledge to crisis conditions.
2. **Need to build internal procedures, standards, processes.** You can build work based on likeability and trust in a team that you have known for years. In a newly built group of a hundred employees you need clear rules – you need to establish and write down the previously unwritten rules of work. The catalyst for these processes was often international organizations transferring funds – they required procedures, e.g. to prevent bullying, money laundering, unjustified personnel and purchasing decisions, and others. In small, friendship-based organizations, such procedures simply did not exist. The challenge was not only to create work standards but also to train newly formed teams.
3. **Team communication.** Communication was becoming an endeavor. The exponential increase in team size meant that the work style of an organization based on direct, informal contacts had to change. It wasn't just a logistical challenge, but also emotional. People with long experience in the organization often felt a sense of loss and missed the sense of community from before the war. At the very same time, the communication had to be conducted clearly in two, and sometimes three languages.

4. **Recruitment.** The rapid expansion of the teams meant a fast pace of recruitment and flexibility in taking over of responsibility by newly hired people. The new employees learned to organize while being immediately put into action, often given a significant field of responsibility. Consequently, it was much easier to make mistakes and every mistake was a loss of precious time. Rapid growth changed the balance of power within the organization and created a new dynamic. Creating anew the internal cohesion required much more attention and work.

5. **Planning.** The pace of change made it difficult to plan work rationally. It was easy to succumb to external pressure, but also (often) to the large resources in offer. The moment the team grew beyond management's control was difficult to notice. Among the challenges of growth was rejecting financial support and withholding further activities to sustain the stability, mission and values of the organization. It was difficult for social organizations to "take a step back", but at the same time, no organization was able to meet all emerging needs.

## Large cities

### Assistance, collections, and distribution

The main activity of social organizations in large cities was the organization of collections and distribution of items. In Kraków, for example, independent warehouses were run by organizations established in various points of the city, such as the Nidaros Foundation and the Multicultural Center (which received premises from the city for this purpose). In Warsaw, an important specialized entity was the SOS Food Bank, which, as part of the project "Surviving with Dignity. Food for People from Ukraine" collected food with long expiration dates and carried out collections in stores. Similar cooperation, with the Podkarpackie Food Bank, took place in Rzeszów, while in Przemyśl the collection and distribution of food was carried out by the Salvation Army .

An interesting initiative undertaken in many cities was the "community stores" (free stores) run by volunteers, where refugees could "purchase" needed products for free. An example of such activity was Kraków's Szafa Dobra. It was was opened in mid-March 2022 by Internationaler Bund Polska. This social clothing store operating in a former shopping center leased for PLN 1 by Strabag was equipped by IKEA and offered space for children, fitting rooms, and professional service. Other initiatives of this kind included a "store for one smile" run by the Dobro Zawsze Wraca foundation in Kraków, and Free Wear & More in Rzeszów, operating on the initiative of the Spójnik and Młoda Lewica – Podkarpackie (Young Left – Podkarpackie) organizations. Also operating on a similar basis was the Warsaw Relief Center Puławska 20 (run by Fundacja Rozwoju Kinematografii [the Foundation for the Development of Cinematography] and in operation since the first weeks after the invasion), the Wolne Ciuchy (Free Clothes) initiative in the Olimp shopping mall in Lublin, or a similar outlet in Poznań run by the Social Emergency Association (in cooperation with the City Hall).

### Accommodation needs

The second area of needs that social organizations responded to was the provision of accommodation. In response to the willingness of residents to accommodate refugees in their own homes, social organizations worked to increase security and smooth the flow of information between refugees and those offering them a roof over their heads. The Habitat for Humanity Poland Foundation launched

a program to support refugee families in finding housing through social tenancy, supplementing housing assistance with systemic support, including vocational activation. It also launched a housing hotline to network those in need and hosts. Another example of a similar initiative was the Refugees Welcome Poland program, in operation since 2016, run by the Ocalenie Foundation. Its goal was to connect, through an internet platform, refugees in need of housing with hosts willing to rent a room in and around Warsaw. In Kraków, a grassroots initiative by people associated with the Slot Art Festival event known as the Slot Hospitality Network started a system to rent apartments it was renovating. It implemented an "Adopt a Family" system, often connecting foreign donors with refugee families in Poland. In Warsaw, volunteers organized networks of residents willing to provide housing, such as the Warsaw Volunteers. From the beginning, one of the key areas of activity of the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine was the creation of a list of housing resources and the connecting of those offering with those needing a roof over their heads.

A separate category was the involvement of social organizations in servicing and running the places of collective accommodation (officially managed by local governments and provincial governors). The Center for the Promotion and Development of Civic Initiatives (PISOP) supported an accommodation site at the Poznań International Fair (MTP), providing more beds, blankets and hygiene products, and collecting the items needed from various companies. According to an interviewee from PISOP, the system was unorganized, and if it had not been for the will of the organizations and their contacts with companies, there would have been no food or drink for refugees at MTP. The coordinator from the provincial office focused on organizing tenders (in which contracts were awarded to private companies and not to the social enterprises that had provided free meals and donations from the very beginning). This caused great disappointment. The PTAK Humanitarian Aid Center in Nadarzyn, near Warsaw, functioned in a similar way: although officially run by the provincial governor, it was in practice managed by social organizations and volunteers.

In Lublin, the Lublin Volunteer Center (Lubelskie Centrum Wolontariatu) was engaged by the governor in supplying the reception and information points with food and basic necessities. The ZHP (Polish Scouting and Guiding Association), among others, was involved in organizing the city's accommodation sites (preparing beds, logistics).

In Kraków, the first accommodation site with an information desk was established on the initiative of three social organizations (Salam Lab, Zustricz and UAinKraków). It should be emphasized that, unlike in other cities, this was not an initiative of the local or government authorities, but an activity independently conducted by social organizations. Refugees were directed from the „Reception Point at the Main Railway Station - platform 4" opened by the Kraków local government to the premises in the J. Słowacki Theater, made available by the theater's management to the above-mentioned social organizations for an unspecified period of time. The site began operating as early as February 24 and became a key place of accommodation during the first three months of the war (in addition to the information desk and medical, psychological, and legal assistance provided there)

### Integration activities

In the area of integration efforts, a wide variety of activities could be seen, depending on the specialization and profile of each organization. The type of assistance provided often evolved over time as well, moving from emergency assistance to actions aimed at activating refugees, providing psychological support and legal assistance, organizing integration or training centers, or organizing meeting places. This resulted from the changing needs of refugees and the development of activities provided by other entities.

Much of the work of social organizations has been directed toward vocational activation of refugees. For example, the Julia Woykowska Foundation in Poznań, which had previously been involved in vocational activation of women and girls, suspended many of its existing programs after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in order to be able to support Ukrainian refugees. The foundation began by preparing hygiene kits for refugees, but as part of a more long-term effort, it organized a course in IT basics to improve their skills and increase their chances of finding employment that would be better than unskilled manual labor and, in addition, flexible in terms of place and time. Migrant Info Point in Poznań (which has been conducting integration activities for migrants since 2013) organized an intensive massage course for 20 refugees. This gave them a chance to quickly enter the labor market without good Polish language skills. The project included a series of training sessions (partially subsidized by Allegro), the purchase of massage beds, ongoing counseling, and support in promotional activities. In Warsaw, the Polish Center for International Aid Foundation (PCPM) assisted those willing to work in the catering industry in getting epidemiological sanitary clearance. Comprehensive career counseling (in addition to other types of support) was provided by the Warsaw Multicultural Center (run jointly by several organizations).

In all the cities studied, places were organized where Ukrainian children and young people, as well as their mothers, could spend their free time, integrate, and take part in various activities. An example of such initiatives was Podkarpackie Stowarzyszenie dla Aktywnych Rodzin (the Podkarpackie Association for Active Families) in Rzeszów, which, with Fundacja Pomosty, ran a day care center called Kraina Beztroski (Carefree Land) in a large lobby of a shopping mall made available free of charge. The organization additionally ran the TUTU Center for Psychophysical Development for refugees and residents of Rzeszów. In Poznań, the Better World Association, together with the Social Animation Group „Rezerwat" (an organization of street educators), implemented animation and educational activities for refugee children and youth from Ukraine and workshops for adult refugees (including psychological support and coaching, and relaxation classes), based on previous experience working with refugees from Afghanistan. In the same city, Migrant Info Point supported non-Polish school-going teenagers (about 50% of refugee and refugee youth in Greater Poland) in the form of day camps, youth meeting clubs and career counseling.

In Lublin, there have also been activities focused on designing and implementing long-term integration activities for refugees and including them in the life of the local community. An example was the initiative of Fundacja Kultury Duchowej Pogranicza (the Foundation for Spiritual Culture of the Borderland) to establish a Ukrainian Saturday School (a similar, only Sunday school had been operating since 2003 and was run by the Ukrainian Society and the Orthodox Parish of St. Metropolitan Piotr Mohyła; a Ukrainian Saturday school had also been operating in Warsaw for many years, run by the Our Choice Foundation). There was also a full-week Ukrainian school in Warsaw working according to the program of the Ministry of Education of Ukraine, which was run by the Our Choice Foundation in cooperation with the Club of Catholic Intelligentsia (KIK) and the Ukrainian Education Center Foundation.

It should be noted that some social organizations have specialized in assisting social groups with special needs. For example, the Warsaw-based Center for Assistance to Refugees with Disabilities and the Kraków-based Mudita Association provided support to people from various marginalized groups, including people with disabilities and their parents, as well as non-Ukrainian refugees (e.g. the Roma minority or the Jewish diaspora from Ukraine). The Jewish community in Lublin directed their aid at Ukrainian refugees with Jewish roots. The Roma Educational Association "Harangos" from Kraków took care of refugees of Roma origin. Some social organizations organized support for people of African descent fleeing the war in Ukraine; in particular, one should point out the Alliance for Black Justice in Poland, bringing together such organizations as Black is Polish, Stowarzyszenie Rodzin Wieloetnicznych

Family Voices (Family Voices Association of Multiethnic Families), Centrum Interseckonalnej Sprawiedliwości (Center for Intersectional Justice) or Fundacja na Rzecz Różnorodności Społecznej (Foundation for Social Diversity).

### Roma refugees from Ukraine

Despite the warm welcome given to Ukrainian refugees by Polish society, this hospitality was much less extended to Roma people. Their experience of escaping from Ukraine was marked by exclusion and systemic violence, mainly due to deep-rooted negative stereotypes of the Roma. These stemmed from the stereotypical portrayal of Roma people as ”nomads“ or ”non-citizens,” which regularly led to anti-Roma attitudes (cf. Kołaczek, Mirga-Wójtowicz and Talewicz 2022; McGarry 2017). This can be seen, for example, in the statement of one of the volunteers at the Przemyśl Central Station: *Somehow, I don't feel very sorry for them. I think to myself that maybe for them it's the norm.* According to the opinions of social organizations, it was discrimination in Poland that, for many Roma people, was the reason for their return to Ukraine or departure to other European countries.

In some of the reception centers, managed or financed by provincial or local governments, there have been cases of Roma people not being allowed to enter the facilities because of their ethnicity. Such a situation occurred, among others, at the PTAK Humanitarian Aid Center in Nadarzyn (CPH PTAK), at centers coordinated by the Polish Red Cross in Przemyśl, Warsaw and Kraków. At CPH PTAK, the refusal was justified by the lack of appropriate stamps in the passport from the border crossing – however, in the first months after February 24, many refugees did not receive such stamps, and they were not denied assistance. The CPH (Humanitarian Aid Center) in Przemyśl, on the other hand, only accepted first-time border crossers within 24 hours of arrival, depriving Roma people of support. As a result, families with children and the elderly stayed overnight for several or more days in one of the corridors of the Przemyśl Central Station: *No one helps them here. At the center they don't want them, we don't know how to work with them. They sit here all day, and even when we help them get on that free train to Germany, they send them back – and so on and so forth,* explained one of the employees of the crisis management team at the Przemyśl Central Station.

Social organizations working with the Roma community and largely run by the Polish Roma stressed that Roma people also experienced discrimination from some volunteers in the aid centers themselves and at the border. They received smaller portions of food or inferior clothing and were accused of stealing. Volunteers avoided providing them with assistance, information, or any contact with them. These problems, however, were not noted by central or local authorities; in one interview, a representative of the local authorities in charge of emergency operations openly used downright romophobic comments, saying: *They come here for welfare, nothing more. They are not refugees; they are economic travelers.*

Similar attitudes and negative or stereotypical comments from central and local government officials, including from the staff of the Mazovian Governor or the President of Poland (who

tweeted about Ukrainian Roma who "stole a tank from the Russians"), reproduced prejudices and created of atmosphere of hostility (systemic acquiescence to discrimination).

The Ministry of the Interior and Administration assured that measures were being taken to eliminate double standards of assistance. These included establishing cooperation with Roma organizations (including the Foundation Toward Dialogue), which was expected to reduce the risk of discrimination and unequal treatment. It is worth noting that assistance to Roma people fleeing Ukraine was provided in Poland mainly by Roma individuals and organizations, supported by international activists. However, there was still a need for assistance from the Polish state, which should not have relied on social organizations in this regard.

For more, see the reports by Amnesty International and the report of the Roma organizations.

### Coordination, cooperation, and specialization in large cities

In the cities studied, social organizations attempted to coordinate and thematically organize their aid efforts. The organizations knew that through good cooperation, including with local authorities, it is possible to maximize the effects achieved, avoid overlapping of activities, and communicate well with institutions offering financial and material support. However, attempts to do so in smaller cities and towns tended to have a less lasting effect.

A model site for efforts based on coordinated blocks of activities was the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine. For the Warsaw organizations, the key task was to coordinate the numerous assistance activities carried out by organizations that had been operating for years and specializing in providing assistance to migrants, as well as new entities that joined in these efforts after February 24, 2022. The coordination function was performed by the Coordination Support Center (CWK), established in early March 2022, and operated by Fundacja Inna Przestrzeń (Other Space Foundation). Working teams for various areas of support were established at the CWK. The CWK started mapping the initiatives and types of assistance available to refugees in the city (Information Guide Warsaw Ukraine), as well as organized meetings aimed at consolidating the community helping refugees and exchanging information. A nationwide aid mapping project was also conducted by the Warsaw-based CultureLab Foundation. In Kraków, in the first days after the invasion, community organizations and other social actors formed a loose structure called the "Open Kraków Coalition" (which included city officials). Subgroups for specific activities were quickly formed. At its peak, 70 organizations belonged to the Coalition. However, attempts to make the Coalition a permanent, formally coordinated entity failed. In the second half of 2022, UNHCR was asked to conduct periodic meetings (every two weeks), which largely replaced bottom-up attempts at coordination within the Coalition.

*People needed a coalition to get empowered in dealing with the city. The coalition was there to give a logo that was trusted. That is, if someone joins a coalition, they are not a fly-by-night company. […] There were a few attempts to make the coalition more than just a chat room for exchanging information. Then it actually boiled down to that. Anyway, most of the time, this is its main function* (civil society, big city).

Leaders of social organizations recalled that at the beginning of the war, in this dynamic, loosely coordinated system, "everyone did everything." After a while, however, activities became more specialized,

with mapping and identifying e.g. organizations specializing in providing psychological support, providing assistance to Roma refugees from Ukraine, or organizing hostels or collections.

In Poznań, unlike in Lublin, Warsaw and Kraków, organizations helping refugees mostly cooperated informally through networks of personal contacts or for individual projects, but no single coalition was formed. An important role in some partial coordination was played by: Migrant Info Point (which, at its peak, worked seven days a week for 12 hours at a time), the crisis management team set up by the Wielkopolska Voivodship Office (the Office of Wielkopolska Province), and the City of Poznań newly created Municipal Help Point for Ukraine, which was operated by the OPEN Foundation. Similarly, in Rzeszów, no single organization or coalition of social organizations has emerged to become the core of relief efforts, although there have been attempts at such coordination, e.g. through the Podkarpackie Social Crisis Management Team or the newly established Parasol Federation (Podkarpackie Federation of Civic Organizations for Ukraine). Difficulties in coordination and cooperation stemmed (at least in part) from the fact that before the outbreak of the war, there were no social organizations in Rzeszów specializing in working with migrants. There was a lack of communication channels both between the organizations themselves and between the organizations and the city.

### Coordination, cooperation, and specialization in medium-sized cities

An analysis of the activity of social organizations in the three medium-sized cities studied showed an apparent similarity to the aid activities undertaken in large cities, although their scale was appropriate to the size and nature of the cluster. In Płock, the largest of the medium-sized cities studied, although individual residents were strongly involved in relief activities, community organizations were not very active. Particularly active was the Płock scouting movement, which supported volunteers in collections and distribution of food and basic necessities. In addition, the Water Volunteer Rescue Service (WOPR) and the Przystanek Rodzina Foundation were involved in relief efforts. This relatively low level of involvement of organizations was influenced by the generally low level of social activity in the city. An additional factor was the policy pursued by the City Hall in Płock, which, since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, has shown an aspiration to coordinate all aid, including that carried out by social organizations. A separate category of social organizations that provided assistance to refugees in Płock were churches and religious associations, especially the Old Catholic Mariavite Church, which provided housing and care for a large group of refugees and organized collections of food, medicine, etc. Individual parishes of the Roman Catholic Church also helped, organizing accommodation for refugees and collections of items (such as the Congregation of the sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Stara Biała).

Help for refugees was different in Łomża, where the Ocalenie Foundation, which specialized in helping migrants, had been operating for years. Faced with the mass arrival of refugees, the organization worked on an ad hoc basis, organizing collections of products, as well as helping to find housing. To this end, the foundation's activists often used networks of private contacts. The foundation also tried to help on a long-term basis, brokering job searches, and extending to refugees from Ukraine the whole range of activities it had previously conducted, targeting adults and children. The second important organization in Łomża was Caritas of the Łomża Diocese. Its assistance mainly boiled down to providing accommodation and food in the two facilities it managed (which offered a total of about 200 beds) and organizing collections. Both organizations also distributed the Biedronka Foundation vouchers. Importantly, Caritas and the Ocalenie Foundation cooperated with each other to a limited extent, mainly in the field of informal information exchange, organizing (in cooperation with smaller community organizations) day camps for refugee children, concerts, and other one-off events. Another important social entity was the Center for Social Integration (CIS), which worked to help Ukrainians find their way in the Polish labor market.

Social organizations operating in Świnoujście had not been active in supporting people with migration experience. In the face of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, several of them (such as the Speak Up Foundation, Stowarzyszenie Kierunek Świnoujście, Fundacja Wiatr w Żagle, or Stowrzyszenie Aktywnego Wsparcia „Biegnijmy z pomocą") became involved in helping refugees. Their activities consisted of humanitarian aid and reception support (often in cooperation with entities from the public and private sectors), organizing collections, transportation, providing food. Meetings and day camps for children and young people were also organized, as well as support in the daily life of refugees (legal assistance, education, health care, labor market). A "charity (free) store for refugees" operated at the Green Market under the Clock. Social organizations benefited from the support of the local Ukrainian community, which was particularly important due to the need for communication in Ukrainian and translation. The main organizers of support and activities for refugees in Świnoujście were the residents themselves (either as individuals or through the organizations and businesses they ran), and the City Hall seamlessly joined in this assistance: Świnoujście's aid was based on the residents. Without this we would not have done anything (civil society, medium-sized city). There was a kind of synergy, resulting from the small local community, where many people knew each other as their next door neighbors. Support for Ukrainian refugees was also offered by parish communities of various denominations, and in one vicarage accommodation was organized for Ukrainian mothers with children and grandmothers, and a children's playroom was prepared.

### Coordination, cooperation, and specialization in small towns

In most Polish small towns before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there were no social organizations specializing in helping people with migration experience, as there were few or no such people among the residents of these towns. However, civil society organizations such as Rural Women's Clubs, Caritas, Volunteer Fire Brigade, and other local small organizations functioned efficiently. Faced with the sudden arrival of refugees, these organizations began to undertake relief activities tailored to the local situation and needs (mainly collecting food and money, providing premises for storage, issuing items and food, hosting refugees). Their smooth operation was facilitated by pre-existing structures, communication channels and the presence of local leadership figures. Small towns were unlikely to undertake long-term integration efforts, as many of them had no rental housing available, and the local labor market had little to offer. Moreover, some towns, like Hrubieszów, were transit oriented. In Hrubieszów, moreover, there were active organizations coming from large cities, such as the Ocalenie Foundation, which conducted activities with children at the reception point, but recruited local volunteers, too.

#### Invisible refugees: Belarussians fleeing Ukraine

*At first we had to escape from Belarus, now from Ukraine (...). And when you go somewhere and say that you are from Ukraine, they help you. And if you say: I am from Belarus, they don't want to help you, because it's „just for Ukrainians". And we are refugees as well! (...) Polish people have a short memory* (Belarussian refugee)

Belarussian citizen are the second biggest group of foreigners in Poland. Due to data of Foreigners' Office until June 2022 the number of foreigners with the permit to stay was around 50 000 people.

permits exceeded 50,000. Due to a wave of repression by the Belarusian government in the summer of 2020, many young people left the country. Between August and March 2020 alone,

Poland issued nearly 28,000 humanitarian visas to Belarusian citizens. But: *Some [people] fled to Poland, some to Ukraine. It was not easy, but somehow one could get used to it (...). And here is the war, and we again flee. Previously from Minsk to Kiev, [now] from Kiev to Warsaw* (refugee from Belarus).

Belarusians have faced increasing difficulties living in Poland after February 24, 2022: a rise in anti-Belarusian sentiment (including cases of physical violence and destruction of cars), blocking of bank accounts, denial of services, failure to renew residence permits, and refusal to rent apartments. In some cases, banks and companies have ripped up contracts, citing the Anti-Terrorism Law. Sometimes employers fired people from Belarus to make room for refugees from Ukraine, as they put it bluntly. One refugee from Belarus recounted that landlords, when they *heard the eastern accent, [they thought] they were helping Ukrainians (...). When it turned out that we're from Belarus, they stopped answering. Once they heard us say that we attacked Ukraine, and now we want help* (a refugee from Belarus).

The rise in anti-Belarusian sentiment (resulting from a negative assessment of the Lukashenka regime's policies) posed a huge difficulty. One representative of the NGO sector explained: *Two years ago, there was a big wave of helping Belarusians, and now it is forgotten that the situation there has not improved. It is important to help one without taking away [support] from the other* (a refugee woman from Belarus). The main problem was the small scope of support provided by local governments and aid organizations. The refugees from Belarus have not been covered by the Special Act. The situation was not changed even by Svyatlana Tikhanouskaya's call to correct the legislation. Hence, Belarusian refugees fleeing Ukraine found themselves in a legal vacuum for some time, as it was not until April 16, 2022, that a new type of temporary residence permit was introduced for them. Prior to that, some people decided to migrate to Western Europe out of fear of returning to Belarus or staying illegally in Poland.

The help of informal networks of friends (often with refugee experience) and organizations developing in Poland especially after 2020 (Belarusian HUB, the Belarusian House Foundation) proved crucial. Belarusian refugees communicated mainly through groups on the Telegram and Signal platforms, including organizing transports from the border. Also, some Polish NGOs, such as the Freedom and Democracy Foundation, have expanded their activities to provide aid for this group of refugees.

Social organizations (both minority organizations and those working with refugees from Belarus) are concerned about the weakening of government funding in the coming years. This is a major problem in continuing their activities, especially given the large number of people who are already in Poland. These are people who fled Belarus after 2020 (either directly to Poland or via Ukraine) and those who may start fleeing Belarus, as they will not want to fight against Ukraine under forced conscription.

# Chapter 7. Business and reception and integration activities

Business involvement could be seen in all city and town size categories, but the nature of support depended more on the size and type of business than the size of the locality.

Multinational corporations and large Polish companies engaged in assistance as part of corporate social responsibility (i.e. branding) – these companies reported to local governments, organizations running reception desks or community organizations. On the other hand, for small, local companies, especially in smaller towns, sourcing business support was often done using personal networks. As a result, in small towns, where businesses are also small, it was difficult to draw a clear line between business support and individual support from residents: *Rather, locals who were businesses helped. This is a friend of a friend, because we tend not to take [help from] others* (civil society, small town).

## Support from local business

In small and medium-sized towns without big business, support more often took the form of lending (e.g. storage space), providing a service (e.g. transporting refugees or donations) or offering work to refugees, rather than direct financial support or in-kind assistance. Small business support was more informal in nature, making the assistance provided faster and more flexible, while corporate assistance involved more paperwork. As a representative of a local government in a small town reported: *When we needed warehouse space, because suddenly donations were coming in, literally truckloads of donations were arriving, a phone call was enough, we made an agreement, and the formalities were handled later.*

The differences in the characteristics of business support were due more to the location of the towns than their size. In towns and cities along the Polish-Ukrainian border, a lot of support involved organizing collections, storing donations, and transporting them to Ukraine (food, medicine, medical equipment, electricity generators, etc.). Support was also related to emergency assistance at the border – e.g. the City of Lublin, in agreement with the Biedronka (Jeronimo Martins) store chain, organized sandwiches for refugees. It should be noted that local business support was usually temporary and faded after the first few weeks. In the case of international business, the assistance was more often of a long-lasting nature, although here, too, a tendency to decrease the scale of activities was noticed.

Business support for Ukrainian refugees included a wide range of activities, which can be grouped as follows:

1. **Financial support** provided to international or community organizations, by offering them grants, such as the Poznań-based company Allegro, which has awarded several grants to local organizations, or donations for a specific purpose (such as learning the Polish language), sponsorships (such as a musical band at a local festival integrating refugee families into the local community) and organizing charity events to benefit refugees.

2. **In-kind support.** Many international discount grocery chains provided food for the communal areas (e.g. Auchan and Aldi); Nestle provided children's items; IKEA furnished children's play areas and donated furniture and furnishings; Amica equipped the aid stations with household appliances and a mattress manufacturer with mattresses; construction markets donated cleaning equipment, tools, shelving or paints; catering companies and restaurants provided hot meals, and bakeries provided bread – one bakery organized a collection of flour, which

allowed 3,000 loaves of bread to be baked. Another nationwide action was vouchers to the Biedronka discount chain (Jeronimo Martins), distributed through social organizations and local government institutions (here it is worth mentioning that the vouchers generated enormous interest and a wave of inquiries about their different value, availability and documents needed to receive them, which contributed to chaos and consumed a huge amount of time of the entities responsible for their distribution). Some companies themselves organized donation collections among their employees.

3. A special form of in-kind support was **telecommunications support,** including the distribution of SIM cards and the possibility of cost-free telephoning within Poland and to Ukraine under special packages financed by mobile network operators. This form of support responded to a great need of refugees and would not have been possible without the involvement of large and specialized companies (such as Orange).

4. **Logistics support**. Lending office and storage space; offering transportation services for people and goods. The shopping centers lent their spaces for collections of in-kind aid or points for its distribution, so called free shops (e.g. in Lublin, Free Clothes in the Olimp mall or Szafa Dobra [Wardrobe of Good] in the Plaza mall in Kraków), but also to organize free time for children (e.g. the "HEJ!dzieci" point in the SKENDE center in Lublin run in cooperation with IKEA, or a similar place run in Rzeszów). The same Lublin mall hosted a cyclical fair of handicrafts made by refugees. The Kazimierz mall in Kraków provided rooms free of charge for the operation of the city's information and assistance center; the Karlik car dealership in Poznań, as part of its employee volunteer work, transported refugees between places of accommodation and for relocation to smaller towns. A specific form of such support was the free ferry crossings from Świnoujście to Ystad in Sweden offered by Polferries, a brand of the ferry operator Polska Żegluga Bałtycka S.A. Many organizations also received BP fuel cards distributed by the WIOSNA Association. In addition, Kraków's business sector provided management and logistics models that proved crucial to coordinating the dispersed activities.

### Hotel Ossa and unaccompanied minors

The Polish hotel chain Ossa, by the decision of its owners, took in 1600 unaccompanied children, mainly from the Kharkov area, including about 200 children with disabilities, to one of its facilities. It thus became the largest place of such support for minor refugees in Europe, also offering psychological support. Such business generosity, however, should be accompanied and supported by public authorities taking responsibility for the children and taking care of them by providing them with adequate access to the education system and to the peers, as well as other educational and developmental opportunities. The grouping of such a large number of children in one place could lead to risks that should have been identified and counteracted early on. After all, it is not without reason that care facilities counteracted early on. After all, it is not without reason that care facilities are often possibly small. Hence, this useful and generous initiative should have been surrounded by additional support and monitoring by specialized government entities aimed at ensuring good conditions - not just housing - for the proper development of minors.

5. **Human resources** support**,** providing translators, lawyers, doctors, drivers, coordinators, and career counselors, as exemplified by Samsung, which seconded a Ukrainian employee on a permanent basis to support coordination at a collective accommodation site in Wronki, hired two Ukrainian women to cook Ukrainian food at the site, and supported the site with translators; the District Bar Association and the District Chamber of Legal Advisors in Rzeszów, together with the Prawnikon Legal Advice Center, organized free legal assistance provided to refugees four days a week; Lublin-based Medimost, a company that recruits medical personnel from Ukraine on a daily basis, in cooperation with a local clinic, launched a medical advice center for refugees, where Ukrainian doctors saw patients; similarly, the MEDYK Medical Center from Rzeszów lent its employees as translators. Employees of the HR departments of large companies in Kraków offered career counseling to refugees; some large companies – such as Poznań's Allegro and Karlik – organized employee volunteering, encouraging involvement and delegating employees to aid efforts.

6. **Offering jobs to refugees,** in small towns with strong social networks, leaders of aid groups directly contacted employers they knew, inquiring about the possibility of hiring specific individuals and at the same time personally vouching for potential workers; often such employment was also accompanied by accommodation. In larger towns and cities, job offers, translated into Ukrainian, were collected on the websites of local governments, employment offices and chambers of commerce; some companies saw in refugees the potential and opportunity for development.

   *Now we have more than 3,000 [refugee] patients enrolled [at the clinic]. Well, it seems to me, there is a model where other cities could follow, on the one hand showing that these newcomers can do super important work in our country. And on the other hand, they provide medical care to their compatriots. They don't burden our health care system and our doctors, they have their own clinic where they can go, where they don't have a language barrier. (...) In every crisis there is some opportunity for those people who flee, but also for us as a host country for these immigrants* (business, medium-sized city).

7. **Supporting the families of Ukrainian workers,** large companies that employed persons from Ukraine prior to February 24 provided support to their families, including accommodation, in-kind support, and assistance with paperwork – applying for benefits, obtaining PESEL numbers, etc.

8. **Care and educational support for refugee children,** in one case a person from a medium-sized city mentioned private kindergartens and schools that offered places for Ukrainian children: *Municipal ones were still unprepared and didn't know what, how and so on, and the private ones were very willing, quickly accepted [children] free of charge* (public administration, medium-sized city).

9. **Integration support,** offering free Polish language courses by companies (e.g. a private university in a medium-sized city) and job activation courses (e.g. for medical staff by a private company recruiting Ukrainian medical workers).

10. **Support for the tourism sector** – hotels, hostels and leisure and recreation centers – for accommodation (including in Świnoujście, which has an extensive hotel base). For some hotels, the Polish government-subsidized accommodation for refugees was a chance to get out of stagnation after the COVID-19 pandemic and fill rooms in the off-season. The question remains, of course, how much of this was local business support for refugees, and how much

was economic strategy, especially that when the rates turned out to be lower than expected, it often ended with abrupt termination of such accommodation, even overnight: *Well, because the rate (...)[dropped] from 125 to 75 zlotys*, *and so the private owners of these lodging rooms found that it was not profitable for them* (public administration, medium city). In addition, accommodation usually ended with the beginning of the tourist season. This does not change the fact that hotels – like other local businesses – engaged in support, such as lending space for donation collections or supporting their, often numerous, Ukrainian employees and workers and their refugee families (e.g. the Cesarskie Ogrody Hotel from Świnoujście).

**11.** The business also noted the great need to **support** not just the refugees, but also the people helping them, i.e. **volunteers**. For example, on the initiative of Lublin restaurateurs, meals were delivered to the headquarters of the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine, in addition, members of the Committee received cell phones.

The completed research shows that the operation of information desks, reception points/centers and collective accommodation sites relied heavily on business support. A coordinator from one of the community organizations operating on the premises of the Poznań International Fair (MTP) (with places for 900 refugees) talked about cooperation with business in this way:

*The IT company would call the coordinators at MTP once a week and ask what the list of needs was, and they would buy brooms and dustpans at the beginning so we could clean the hall. Then [there was] a group of companies [that] asked for specific products. Auchan was a big support, they didn't have a good press but they delivered a lot of goods, dedicated products. [There were] even some initiatives by consulting firms like Franklin Templeton to prepare sandwiches for supper, and they prepared these sandwiches for several hundred people once a week, them with their canteen* (a social organization, a big city).

Thanks to cooperation with the municipal company Aquanet, drinking water in special cisterns was available at MTP. A total of 28 companies (global corporations, large nationwide companies, and smaller local businesses) were involved in supplying products to this largest reception and accommodation center in Poznań, and many small companies provided *ad hoc* support, without contracts or official partnerships. Often, company cars of bakeries, stores or catering companies drove up to the collective accommodation sites and brought bread, doughnuts, juice, or yogurts. Because this support was not fully coordinated – as one long-term volunteer noted – some of these products went to waste (especially the bread).

In Rzeszów, by mid-December 2022, 17,000 people had used the services of the Intervention Accommodation Site at Full Market Rzeszów, established by the private medical services company Centrum Medyczne MEDYK Rzeszów (and its Medyk dla Zdrowia Foundation). Due to the lack of municipal sites of collective accommodation, the place was unofficially called a "reception center" (in the absence of an "official" one): *We came up with the initiative, so the city simply accepted it as a gift* (business, big city).

A great deal of commitment was shown by companies that either already employed Ukrainian workers (such as the MEDYK Rzeszów Medical Center) or micro-enterprises run by migrants from Ukraine. For example, the bookstore-café Nić from Kraków, in addition to collecting in-kind and financial donations or co-organizing charity concerts, donated books in Ukrainian for children free of charge, and Ukrainian hair and beauty salons offered work to refugees.

Cities highlighted the lack of government support and very limited assistance from local governments (which themselves did not receive government funding).

However, cooperation between local government or community organizations and business has not always come to fruition – several reasons for such failed cooperation emerged during the research:

- **The company's ethically questionable profile or its hidden purpose.** Some of the organizations were aware of the necessity of verifying potential sponsor-partners, e.g. one of the Poznań organizations was approached by a local branch of a global company producing and trading in military items – the organization rejected the support; another offer of cooperation was not accepted because the company wanted to advertise its brand too obtrusively, so to speak, appropriating the organization's activities.

- **Unrealistic expectations of sponsors or support inconsistent with the organization's profile.** One sponsor wanted to pay for rental housing for refugee families but expected the social organization to act as a real estate agency, searching the market for housing and then renting it out to itself and taking full legal responsibility for it; the organization chose not to do so.

- **Excessive bureaucratization.** Global corporations (e.g. an American IT company) required the organizations to fill out extensive documentation verifying its activities (more than a 100-page document); a Poznań organization, already experienced in working with large partners, was able to cope with this requirement, but for many smaller ones with limited resources, it was too much of a challenge. As a result, many small organizations were not able to accept large grants – there was a discussion in the NGO community about the need to pass on information about such offers of support to each other and possibly split the funds.

- Sometimes big business support was not forthcoming because of **political tensions between company management and local authorities**, such as the limited involvement of the Orlen Group in Płock as compared to the scale of the company's commitment to refugee relief efforts nationwide.

- There were also situations in which business simply **refused to support** and chose not to engage in aid activities; or the scale of these activities was drastically disproportionate to the large capacity of the entity in question.

Certainly, however, the crisis, triggered by Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine, meant that many social organizations had the opportunity to cooperate with business for the first time, or that this co-working took place on such a large scale. This allowed organizations to broaden the scope of their activities and the circle of people they could support:

*The fear to cooperate with business has been overcome. Before that we thought: what right do we have to ask for something, if we don't know what we can offer from our side? After February 24, businesses themselves came to us to offer cooperation* (civil society, big city).

Many of the companies have established foundations to support Ukrainian workers and their families, including in Ukraine. Another result has been cooperation among various companies around relief efforts, such as the IT companies in Warsaw, which have banded together to help more effectively (they created an app for the Ukrainian consulate, launched an app for finding accommodation and humanitarian aid, and secured existing IT solutions against cyber-attacks) and to lobby (they presented their position on legalization of residency and on conditions of employment for refugees when the government worked on drafting the Special Act).

## The role of international business in aid efforts

*The business strategy that works in such situations must be 24/7/365. This means that if there is a crisis, a problem, we have 24 hours to decide, one week to find experts – and 365 days of continuous action. Not a week, not a month. Action must be long-term.* (Social organization, large city)

International business entities have played a huge role in relief efforts for those fleeing Ukraine, rapidly mobilizing resources (financial and in-kind aid) and their own employees, retrofitting reception and humanitarian infrastructure, entering partnerships with the social sector (e.g., providing it with office space) or taking on telecommunications security and cyber-security, and providing expert support (or actively seeking it). Among the largest international business entities analyzed here were Amazon, BNP Paribas, Google, IKEA, McDonald's, Meta, Microsoft, and Orange. The most important distinguishing features of cooperation between business and the social sector were found to be: the speed and scale of the response, the affordability of administrative procedures, the sharing of expertise and support for smaller organizations, and a holistic approach to the challenges and medium- and long-term action strategies. The following are examples of companies that have engaged extensively in relief efforts:

**Amazon.com,** a U.S.-based e-commerce retailer, has committed $35 million to relief efforts between Feb. 24 and Dec. 1, 2022, already committing $5 million to emergency relief organizations (along with $5 million in donations from employees) in the first week of the war and holding a meeting with Ukrainian government representatives. In March 2022, Amazon provided support for cyber security procedures for Ukrainian citizens and the government.

*If not for Amazon or Google, Ukraine would have lost its data. In today's world, digital data is the basis of statehood* (civil society, big city).

Amazon opened in-kind assistance centers in Katowice, Wroclaw and Pawlikowice and, in March 2022, a humanitarian aid center in Sosnowiec, and in June delivered and distributed 200,000 hygiene kits to refugees. In May, Amazon opened a hotline with free legal assistance for refugees in three languages. In addition to working with local governments, Amazon has partnered with PCPM, the Ocalenie Foundation and the Ukrainian House, among others.

**BNP Paribas,** a French bank and equity group, has been heavily involved in relief efforts, evacuating their employees from Russia and Ukraine, and then offering a simplified system for setting up and maintaining accounts for Ukrainian refugees. The bank has committed $10 million to relief efforts, partnering with the ANE Foundation, PCPM, Ocalenie Foundation, Homo Faber Association, Polish Red Cross, UNHCR and Doctors Without Borders, among others. They have also been involved in creating outreach materials for YouTube and became a partner of the UA SOS aid app.

**Google** has taken a holistic approach to its efforts in Ukraine, focusing on the strategy of "helping the helpers." To provide immediate relief and support for humanitarian operations, Google.org and Google employees and staff jointly pledged more than $25 million in donations and in-kind support. In the very first days of the full-scale war, Google.org transferred significant donations to the accounts of the Survivor Foundation and organizations affiliated with the Migration Consortium. It supported the Shipyard Foundation with one million euros to develop social entrepreneurship among refugees. At Google Campus, together with the Polish Migration Forum (PFM) and the Legal Intervention Association, Google organized counseling and legal information for refugees. The company gave some office space in various Polish cities to social organizations for free. In addition, it launched a a feature to donate money to one of the organizations through the search engine and from employee support of those employed. As part of its efforts, Google has donated $10 million for humanitarian aid and support for

refugees. In 2023 and 2024, it plans to launch a large grant system for social organizations working with migrants from Ukraine, with the Ashoka Poland Foundation as the main partner. In addition, Google has allocated millions of zlotys to support Polish fact-checking organizations fighting Russian propaganda, and with the help of Jigsaw created a campaign on FB, YT and TikTok against anti-refugee propaganda that reached almost every user of these platforms. Google created a special YouTube channel with educational materials for Ukrainian students in Poland and Polish teachers. It also provided the support of its engineers to expand its digital aid infrastructure. In recognition of its work in Poland and the region, Google received a peace award from the Ukrainian government and the world's most prestigious aid award, the Atlantic Council Global Citizen Award.

*It was crucial for us to find advisors right away. We made decisions locally and looked mainly for local, experienced partners who could help on the ground. This was also our modus operandi in other countries bordering Ukraine. (...) Trust-based work: lots of discussions with partners, but as simple procedures as possible. It is essential to trust – and hand over control* (business, big city).

IKEA, a Swedish company focused on the production and sale of furniture, has oriented its aid activities towards cooperation with social partners and in-kind assistance, engaging e.g. in furnishing and designing reception desks, and also working for vulnerable groups (minors, mothers with children). IKEA has cooperated with Save the Children, Happy Kids, Doctors Without Borders and the Ocalenie Foundation, the Homo Faber Association, and the Kraków Multicultural Center, among others. What's more, the company has launched a program of housing grants and integration grants for migrant initiatives, as well as strengthened a six-month internship and job training program for refugees and enabled employees to volunteer.

The actions of the American fast-food chain **McDonald's** focused on two areas: financial support of relief efforts to the extent of $2 million (May 2022) from the sale of the so-called Ukrainian Burger, and – through the actions of the Ronald McDonald Foundation in the establishment of two future hospital homes for parents with refugee experience. The chain also closed its outlets in Russia but offered free meals to refugees in Ukraine (the KFC chain, among others, did the same). In Poland, it cooperated mainly with the International Cultural Center, Fundacja Cyfrowy Dialog (Digital Dialogue Foundation), and the Grupa Centrum entities.

Digital and technology company **Meta** (formerly Facebook) has committed a total of $15 million to humanitarian efforts – $5 million to UN agencies, and another $10 million in the form of advertising credits enabling non-profit organizations to raise funds, among other things. What's more, it has launched a series of public campaigns about the situation in Ukraine, established the Meta Education Center, and engaged extensively in countering disinformation (including thwarting Russia's biggest disinformation plot in September 2022).

**Microsoft,** too, worked extensively in the fields of cybersecurity and countering disinformation, and in the first month of the full-scale war enabled free Skype calls for refugees. The scale of support is estimated at a total of $47.5 million (December 2022), which included $35 million in support for organizations (including the Red Cross and Polish Humanitarian Action, of which $18 million in technology alone) and $12.5 million from employee donations. Microsoft has also included aid activities for Ukraine in its long-term strategy beyond 2023.

**The Orange** telecommunications company, in addition to financial support of millions of euros from the Orange Foundation's funding, has focused on in-kind relief efforts, offering some million SIM cards and thousands of power banks to refugees fleeing in the first weeks of the invasion, as well as introducing a number of facilities, including cutting call costs by 80%, increasing digital data packages and cover-

age in the border zone, and engaging in countering disinformation and opening special hotlines for refugees. Orange cooperated with the Center for Women's Rights and the Polish Humanitarian Action, among others.

*Cooperation with Orange is smooth because they really understood the conditions under which we work. They benefit from our expertise, and we benefit from theirs (...). The procedures are affordable, so this assistance is simply not time-barred* (civil society, big city).

## Best practices for business engagement in aid efforts

Good practices and examples of business involvement in aid activities, based on the analysis and considering the different specificities of the entities described, include such aspects as:

1. **Immediate mobilization of resources in the face of a full-scale war.** Social and international organizations, as well as local government officials, were positive about the scale and speed of the humanitarian funds offered to refugees, including in-kind assistance.

*You can't respond quickly to these needs if you don't have the resources (...). Without these companies, this response would have been late; what worked here was that business can mobilize such resources, account for them, distribute them – and do it more efficiently than anyone else* (social organization, large city).

2. **Seeking cooperation and its good and transparent conditions.** The scale of cooperation with social organizations and supporting them – based on previously developed cooperation channels or on their evaluation – also in terms of local activities, on preferential terms, with transparent communication and management dynamics, and the possibility of flexible spending (in accordance with rapidly changing needs), have proved to be, in the opinion of social organizations, an invaluable and often unprecedented help in local activities.

*We here in Przemyśl wouldn't have done much if it hadn't been for Google. It's great working with them, they simply understand how fast we must make decisions here, how big the needs are (...). And maybe they not only understand, maybe they just trust us?* (social organization, large city).

*We decided that we would listen to NGOs (...) We said to ourselves: we will wait for them before we decide for ourselves what we think is best. And I think it really worked, that's why this aid goes where it needs to go* (business).

3. **Structural and development support (medium-term).** Systematic support to the third sector and international organizations for medium-term projects and grants, training, and development of the necessary infrastructure has proven to be a key component of assistance activities, highly recommended by social organizations.

*It is easier to come in the heat of the moment, donate a hundred beds or three hundred tablets, and when [it] quiets down a bit, say: the job is done (...). For us, it's important to think about this issue on a broader scale. Thanks to the fact that we have a project, the project is spread over six months or a year, we have proven workers, it makes any sense. That's what we need.* (NGO sector, medium-sized city).

4. **Delegating or specializing specific individuals or units to respond to the crisis.** The creation or strengthening of specific departments and individuals responsible for coordinating action and cooperation on behalf of Ukrainian refugees in companies such as Google, Orange, and IKEA, among others, has not only improved cooperation with the social sector, local governments, and international organizations, but has demonstrated a readiness for responsive, medium- and long-term action.

*These are no longer anonymous departments or some uncoordinated action, this situation has been [...] taken seriously – because that's what it is. They are better managed because of it, the company's image is better, and they also work better with us. This is managed by people who understand the situation, not guessing. And they understand because we report to them about it. Win-win* (community organization, medium-sized city).

*This is coordinated by people who speak both the language of business and the [social] sector* (business, big city).

5. **Profiling activities. Understanding needs, opportunities, and constraints.** In addition to a general aid effort, companies often choose to act in an area in which they were specialized - such as cyber-security (Google, Microsoft, Meta, Amazon), telecommunications (Orange, PLUS), reception area infrastructure and equipment (IKEA), fighting disinformation (Google) or banking services (BNP Paribas). This has proven to be of great value to both refugees and others involved in the relief effort. Recognizing one's own capabilities and limitations (often through consultation) in this regard in the process of developing a company's response strategy was also an important aspect.

*What worked was that we listened to NGOs and tried to respond not only where we were needed (...) but also in what we knew best. We already had action for children or environmental action, circular economy (...) written into our global strategy. We started from the assumption that the safe and comfortable home we care about, after all, is the one we offer to refugees* (business, big city).

6. **Human factor.** Strengthening employee initiatives at various levels, providing support to staff fleeing Ukraine, and supporting employee initiatives through donations and employee volunteering have proven to be of great value.

*I was able to come to the border and say [...] – I want to get involved here. And it wasn't just made easier for me [...]. For the first few weeks I helped as part of my job, and taught others how to do it. (...) I don't know if this was the case in other companies* (a volunteer, medium city).

When asked about the future, both representatives of business and those working with them emphasized the need to ensure long-term cooperation. They emphasized the different dynamics of cooperation between business and local governments, for example, due to the complexity of procedures. A major concern raised by community organizations was to ensure continuity of activities and planning for subsequent tasks in the long term.

*Now it's just right, we have a daycare center running, we're training staff and we have something to help (...). And what if suddenly we are no longer in the budget for the next period? The need won't disappear, people won't stop coming to us, all this effort and all this knowledge we have, it will just go like blood in the sand* (social organization, medium-sized city)

### Unaccompanied minors: new developments, uncertain solutions

Not all children arriving in Poland from Ukraine traveled under parental care. From the first days after the outbreak of the war, there were reports of minors crossing the border with grandmothers, relatives, family friends – or completely on their own. Their movement could at least partially be linked to the existing migration of Ukrainian citizens and nationals – the children were crossing the border to be reunited in Poland (or another EU country) with their family or trusted person. At the same time, large foster care centers were also being evacuated to Poland. These were commonly referred to in media reports as "orphanages," although in fact many of them involved children with disabilities or chronic illnesses who had been transferred to foster care by their parents.

Data from the Polish Ministry of Justice (regarding the appointment of temporary guardians) indicated that the number of children arriving in Poland without parents was in the tens of thousands. Their legal situation in Poland was becoming unclear, and their needs were great: shelter had to be provided, they had to be enrolled in school, health care had to be provided and they had to receive first aid benefits. The answer was to be the introduction of the possibility of appointing a temporary guardian for the children in the Special Act. This was a solution reserved exclusively for minor Ukrainian citizens who qualified for temporary protection on Polish territory.

There was a lack of coordination on the part of central authorities for the assistance provided by various entities. Support was to be provided by a central reception point for unaccompanied children in Stalowa Wola, operating from March to June 2022 thanks to the cooperation between the local government and the Ministry of Family and Social Policy. However, there was a lack of information as to the details of the operation – including the number of children helped.

In the case of children evacuated from group care centers (i.e. orphanages), from the beginning much of the responsibility for the assistance provided to them fell on local governments and social organizations (including SOS Children's Villages, Happy Kids, the Club of Catholic Intelligentsia in Warsaw), which meant an uneven standard of support provided. Evacuated children were accommodated in places provided by the local government or private entities, such as hotels or holiday resorts. Some of them remained there for many months, while others were moved to other places, including abroad. According to the information from the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, it is known that there are still children from 220 Ukrainian care facilities in Poland.

The lack of a special legal solution tailored to the situation of children evacuated from group foster care proved to be a significant systemic problem. This legal loophole led to a failure to maintain standards of care for them regarding, for example, the size of groups or the age of children in these institutions. There were situations where groups of up to several hundred children (including children with special needs) stayed for many months in holiday centers (e.g. Ossa near Łódź). For more information on unaccompanied minors from Ukraine, see the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights report.

## Chapter 8. The role of international organizations

International and intergovernmental organizations have played an important role in supporting Poland in receiving refugees from Ukraine (including Ukrainian citizens and nationals of other countries who fled the war in Ukraine). However, the scale of their direct and indirect involvement and presence varied from place to place. Organizations operating within the United Nations system like UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM were already active in Poland before February 24, 2022, but their country offices had just a few employees and the scope of their actions was limited. The escalation of the war in Ukraine has contributed to the need for more staff, including international staff, and the opening of local branches/centers. Organizations such as the Norwegian Refugee Council, the Danish Refugee Council, and the International Rescue Committee, among others, have become involved in Poland. To facilitate cooperation and coordinate the activities of various entities, the "Together for Poland and Ukraine Forum" was established. At the beginning of January 2023, the base of registered organizations numbered 166 entities, active in various sectors.

Given the forced nature of migration from Ukraine, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which conducted its activities at the regional level, should have played a key role in the process of supporting refugees. UNHCR's approach was based on coordinating thematic and cross-sectoral responses to the presence of refugees. Other specialized UN agencies, such as UNICEF and WHO, were also involved. In cooperation with local organizations, UNHCR co-managed the so-called Blue Dot points, which operated in Warsaw, Kraków, Wrocław, Gdynia, Lublin, and Rzeszów, as well as at Polish-Ukrainian border crossings.

### Blue Dots

Blue Dot support hubs are set up wherever an emergency refugee crisis arises and operate under the aegis of UNHCR until local community organizations (if any) take over the running of the hubs. They are open to all people: women, men and children of all nationalities fleeing war in Ukraine and other conflicts around the world, as well as the host community. The main tasks of the Blue Dots are to provide information, legal advice, family reunification, protection for children and people with special needs, and advice on access to public services: the health system, social benefits, the labor market, and education. The points also provide basic on-site services: critical psychological support for children and adults, assistances at government offices, health centers, or police stations, and a safe space for children and young people.

Depending on the location, organizations implementing the project in Poland conduct additional individual and group activities in the field of psychosocial health: support groups, art therapy, art classes for children, workshops, senior citizen clubs. There are also Polish language classes for children and adults, information meetings or events aimed at the refugee community. Some Blue Dots also provide support for women and girls who have experienced various forms of violence. When special needs cannot be addressed, an important task of the hub is to refer refugees to other organizations or public institutions.

In addition, so-called mobile teams are being set up, regularly traveling outside the places where they operate, providing support at collective housing centers, food, and clothing distribution sites or to smaller towns in the region.

The operation of the Blue Dots is funded by UNHCR, with the Danish Refugee Council as the intermediary organization in Poland. In selected locations, a program of direct financial support for refugees and programs to monitor needs and risks also operates at Blue Dot.

The presence of international and humanitarian organizations was mainly noticeable in large cities. UNHCR and UNICEF were active in Warsaw, Kraków, Poznań, Lublin and Rzeszów. According to the interviewees, in some cities (such as Lublin and Poznań) the assistance of international organizations was late, and certain solutions were adopted too slowly. In other cases, the rules of financial support for local social organizations were reticent: *There is a major crisis of confidence and the following strategy of NGO's – we already know what to do, so give us the funds, we know how to act* (civil society, big city). It was raised that organizations like UNHCR and UNICEF have the means and resources but the requirements for using them locally are inflexible.

Local government representatives/administrators of large cities provided a good assessment of assistance and cooperation with UNICEF mainly aimed at support for refugee children. They donated large sums of money, e.g. Warsaw received about PLN 100 million in May-December 2022; Lublin got 19 million for the Spilno Lublin project; Poznań – 33 million, and Rzeszów – 6 million. The funds were earmarked for various locally applicable tasks, such as access to crèche and preschool care, education, health care, psychological support, nutrition, Polish language courses, the purchase of equipment, the employment of intercultural assistants at schools, or joint classes for Ukrainian and Polish children.

Humanitarian organizations like the International Rescue Committee, Danish Refugee Council, Norwegian Refugee Council or Care appeared in Poland just days after the aggression. Their first task was to view the situation and find local community partners. In large cities, short-term partnerships were quickly formed, and funds were made available to local organizations for their first activities. This was a huge support – organizations received not only resources, but also knowledge, standards of work and understanding of the dynamics of humanitarian crises (Core Humanitarian Standards). Challenges arose at the stage of building long-term partnerships and the requirement for humanitarian work in European realities. Local organizations did not always accept foreign requirements or processes (which were often ill-suited to European realities), and the dialogue sometimes lacked equal treatment and respect for divergent perspectives.

Among other international organizations, the activities of the Danish Refugee Council, Oxfam, and Sean Penn's CORE Foundation were highlighted. Noteworthy was the support of the American humanitarian organization World Central Kitchen, which was one of the suppliers of meals to the Poznań Central Station and to the Worth Together Association (more than 30,000 meals served for 5 months). Among Polish humanitarian organizations, Caritas, PCK and PAH were involved in helping refugees in Poland. In Rzeszów, PCK, together with Rzeszów Polytechnic University, established the Ukrainian Aid Center (Centrum Pomocy Ukrainie), which organized in-kind collections and transferred aid to Ukraine, as well as issued donated items to refugees. Caritas in Rzeszów, operating mainly based on parishes, delivered food and clothing to border crossings in the first days of the war and supported refugees reaching the railroad station. A Crisis Assistance Center was established at Caritas headquarters to provide assistance to refugees, but also to host families. Caritas also made its facilities available for overnight accommodation for refugees in the Podkarpacie region.

**In the medium-sized cities** surveyed, information about local support from international organizations or large humanitarian organizations was rare. The activities that were the most noticeable were the

ones of local Caritas branches, which organized financial collections, distributed food to those in need, and offered accommodation to refugees (such as in Łomża for 200 people). In Płock, a key organization was the Polish Red Cross (PCK), which was involved in various ways, such as helping Zhytomyr, Ukraine, or supporting the city's relief efforts. In Świnoujście, the PCPM ran an intervention employment program for refugees from Ukraine ("Cash for Work") in cooperation with the American organization CARE.

International or humanitarian organizations rarely or never appeared in the small towns surveyed. As one local activist pointed out, in Hrubieszów, representatives of the UNHCR field office held a workshop for male and female volunteers and others working with refugees. UNHCR was also associated with providing financial assistance to refugees. Such entities as the Polish Red Cross or PAH were pointedly cited in the context of in-kind and border assistance. In one locality, however, local volunteers and those involved in assistance did not feel treated as discussion partners by representatives of large organizations, and their experiences and thoughts were not considered.

Cooperation between various international organizations and local organizations locally has been difficult. In the fall of 2022, the Migration Consortium published a letter (signed by more than 150 Polish organizations) in which they pointed out that they were not treated as partners, but as executors of someone else's ideas (which, by the way, were not always relevant to Polish realities), while their knowledge and experience were often ignored. On top of that, to receive financial support, international organizations used elaborate and bureaucratic procedures that were uncoordinated with each other and required going through each of them separately, which took an enormous amount of time, so much needed in a crisis. In addition, the high turnover of international staff meant that every now and then a new person had to be introduced into the Polish context. International organizations allocated a large part of the funds to their own needs, with only a small amount transferred to local entities, which did most of the aid work. This experience was not only a Polish peculiarity – very similar accusations against international organizations were also made by Ukrainian organizations.

### Sunflowers: legal activism against war crimes in Ukraine

The actions of social organizations in response to the war in Ukraine are not only to help people fleeing. An example of an equally important form of support is the initiative of a group of lawyers from Poland and Ukraine, who established the Project Sunflowers Foundation. Its aim is to collect information about evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine by the Russian authorities and military: killings, torture, evidence of various types of violence (including sexual violence) against the civilian population, but also the deliberate destruction of property, key infrastructure supplying water or electricity, or cultural works.

Why information and not evidence? Because evidence is collected by the investigators appointed to do so. What is important is that information such as photos, videos, accounts of witnesses that an event took place is not lost. This is especially important in the turmoil of war. Hence, those who have will, would be able - through a special platform - to describe what they witnessed and attach the materials they have. These are then made available to countries investigating Russia, including the International Criminal Court, along with the relevant contacts, so that they can be witnesses in criminal proceedings to punish the perpetrators of these crimes.

# Chapter 9. The government and provincial authorities: activities at the level of local governments

## Large cities

As they have received the largest number of refugees and it is here that the reception, relocation, and collective accommodation facilities operated, large cities had the most frequent relations with the government side, represented by provincial governors.

In addition to launching the aforementioned sites and facilities, governors often carried out their basic tasks with volunteer work organized by social organizations. This was the case with Poland's largest trade fair and congress center near Warsaw, Ptak Warsaw Expo (which welcomed 75,000 people), the registration point for refugees at TAURON Arena Kraków, or at the Poznań International Fair (MTP) (with 900 beds). The sites run by the provincial offices officially cooperated with organizations and formations affiliated with the current central government or those at their disposal (Caritas, scouting organizations, the Polish Red Cross [PCK], the Food Bank, the Territorial Defence Forces, the Fire Department, and other uniformed services, which the central authorities considered the largest and most effective). Mostly, however, the governors did not present offers of cooperation to social organizations that specialized in working with migrants before February 24. The exceptions were the Podkarpackie governor who cooperated with the Association of Ukrainians in Poland (Związek Ukraińców w Polsce) (with the Ukrainian House in Przemyśl) and the Lublin governor, who cooperated with the Lublin Volunteer Center (Lubelskie Centrum Wolontariatu), which provides in-kind aid at railway stations and reception points. This does not mean that members of other organizations were not present at support hubs run under the provincial offices – they were, but as independent volunteers, dressed in Caritas or ZHR (the Scouting Association of the Republic of Poland) vests, which some perceived as a kind of appropriation of their work. It is worth noting that the functioning of these hubs would not have been possible without the active support of social organizations (the Poznań hub at the MTP had people from 12 organizations), unaffiliated volunteers and local businesses. Often, the hubs were organized on the premises owned by local authorities (e.g. MTP). In their statements, the representatives of the organizations voiced regret that their role had been underestimated and they had not been treated as partners. In Poznań, this concerned, among other things, the behavior of the Provincial Office towards social enterprises:

> *If social enterprises were providing meals at MTP that were of good quality, on time and for free, I don't understand why they weren't allowed, why they weren't a natural partner to constitute the provision of meals on a different basis when the money came in. [This gave] a sense of undervaluing and not treating the third sector as an equal partner, even though our role is unquestionable* (civil society, big city).

The mayors of large cities, especially Warsaw, stressed the overload of tasks, speaking critically about the lack of coordinated efforts to relocate refugees to smaller towns and cities, which could lead to an overload of the city's resources and infrastructure, and consequently reduce the effectiveness of relief efforts.

There have been claims that the government has also failed as a coordinator of hosting refugees by private individuals. Provincial offices have failed to coordinate or monitor the placement of refugees in private homes, engaging only in relocating them to centers owned by the state or local governments (usually in the provinces) and to contracted workers' hotels and hostels. As a result, apart from granting a relatively small remuneration of PLN 40 per person per day, the government left this sphere completely out of control. Such a situation generated a variety of risks for hosts and refugees (e.g. in terms

of violence that could occur, including sexual violence – as has happened in other countries). In Poznań, admittedly, those willing to host refugees and those coming for this purpose o the place of collective accommodation at the MTP were asked for their IDs by the police who ran a criminal record check (especially in terms of human trafficking), but after that there was no longer any way of recording which refugee families went to whom – the moment they left the accommodation site they disappeared from the sight of the provincial or governmental office and social organizations altogether.

Inadequate financial support from the central government to local governments and social organizations was also emphasized everywhere, particularly the lack of a clear system for financing activities aimed at refugees and funding public services. While the Special Act introduced a system of monetary benefits for people fleeing Ukraine and those hosting them in their homes, at the same time it defined insufficient and very limited rules of support for local governments incurring large costs on this account (in a situation of crisis, but also being generally underfunded): the support was limited to the reimbursement of tasks commissioned by the government (such as the registration of PESEL numbers or payment of benefits to hosts).

For many large cities that received the largest groups of refugees, these were burdens that could not be borne in the long term. This also applied to Rzeszów, which was given the function of a transit city, despite talks between the local government and the central authorities on the establishment of a reception point. Ultimately, such a point was not created, which had significant consequences for the local government, especially in financial terms. All the costs of supporting refugees, including electricity, portable toilets at the station, garbage collection, hours of work of municipal guards or transportation of refugee families were, in effect, borne by the city. Also, the Intervention Accommodation Site in Rzeszów for 500 people, set up by a private medical company and a foundation established by it, received no financial support from the government (except for a 40-zloty subsidy for maintenance costs). The provincial office itself stressed that it oversaw organizing assistance within the province, leaving the city to the municipal authorities. Also, the representative of the local government in Lublin indicated a general lack of understanding and leaving local governments and social organizations to their own devices: *there was obviously a sense of abandonment by the state authorities and a lack of understanding by the state authorities, and it is still there. It applies to both the sphere of NGOs and local governments.*

In the case of smaller towns and cities, the lack of clear information from the government side, and at times even the appropriation of municipal efforts by the government were also pointed out. This happened in Lublin, where the city, in cooperation with civil society organizations, launched an assistance hotline on February 24, which was described by the government as a "government hotline."

A lot of problems described above resulted from the difficult cooperation between local governments and provincial governors, which was discussed more openly at the level of large cities than in medium-sized towns. For example, in Lublin, as a border city, government support was assessed by the local government as insufficient, not supportive enough. Some refugee assistance leaders pointed to specific difficulties in cooperation with the government administration. Different management strategies (too general level of management), communication problems and incompetence of some staff (low staffing, high staff turnover at information and reception points, and unpreparedness of these people to handle foreigners) were cited as reasons:

> *Very high turnover, which is a plague so far, that every day or every couple of days someone changes, and someone comes in who is inexperienced at all*. (Civil society, big city).

> *When the Committee [Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine] had several thousand volunteers, 460 of whom spoke Ukrainian, the provincial office had two people in the provincial*

*office, two people at the station, two people at the bus station, and none of them spoke any foreign language* (public administration, large city).

However, there were positive voices, such as in Rzeszów, whose local government authorities, despite the lack of central government funding, gave good marks to operational cooperation. Participation in the crisis management team meetings at the provincial office were appreciated, as were the contacts with the provincial governor and other central institutions, i.e. the State Fire Service, which together with the city and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration organized the transport of refugees to designated points in Poland. This can be explained by the fact that in Rzeszów, as a transit city, there was no official reception point, which did not generate additional tensions. It is worth remembering that in both Lublin and Rzeszów the provincial authorities paid less attention to the regional capitals themselves, as a great deal of attention was required to organize numerous reception points closer to the border and to provide assistance at the border itself. In Lublin alone, at least several dozen employees of the provincial office were involved in this work, sometimes delegated from very distant departments in terms of subject matter, trying to effectively carry out the duties entrusted to them in the field.

In the cities where reception points were operating, interviewees pointed to the problem of lack of efficient coordination and too many hosts. In Lublin, for example, collisions around coordination took place at the railroad station, which was managed by representatives of the Lublin Provincial Office, the station manager, and some social organizations. As a result, the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine decided to limit its activities there to those that did not involve management. Eventually, the functioning of the station was properly coordinated and did not generate problems at a later stage.

### Polish train stations in the first weeks of the war

In the first weeks after the invasion of Ukraine, Polish train stations were filled with thousands of refugees. The main impact was taken by the large border stations – such as the Central Station in Przemyśl – and the main metropolitan stations – the Central and Western stations in Warsaw or the Central (Main) Station in Kraków. For most refugees, they were not only a transportation hub, but also a place where they sought information or housing support and were often the first quiet place since the beginning of their escape from the war.

In the first two weeks, out of the approximately 300,000 refugees who arrived in Warsaw, they found their way to the Central or Western Railway Station. At the overcrowded Central and Western stations, the Mazovian Provincial Office and the State Fire Service (since March) were responsible for coordinating activities, while the information points were run by the city hall. However, most of the work rested on volunteers, including those who were part of Grupa Centrum (Center Group) formed on February 28, with support from the Territorial Defence Forces, among others: *Western Railway Station was hell, it was impossible to breathe. We helped thousands of people – and animals – here. No one had any control over it* (civil society).

City buses drove up to the stations, transporting 10,000 people to reception points in the first week. Translation duties and support in contacting relatives, in-kind assistance and information about housing options, the legal situation, and special needs, were taken on overwhelmingly

by ordinary people and community organizations. This happened spontaneously, often without clear guidelines or support. Relief groups and station transports were organized on online community groups and social media.

Refugees of non-Ukrainian origin and those with special needs (mothers with children, chronically ill people) had more difficulty finding support. As the coordinator of the medical point for humans and animals, with experience working at both stations explained: *There was a shortage of everything, we ran our point mainly and we used our own resources. At Western Station, we helped 1500 people and 200 animals in two weeks (...) At the request of the Fire Department, we later took over the medical point at Central, where we helped two thousand people and 800 animals (...) We worked 24/7. There was a huge lack of cooperation and communication in this chaos.*

At Kraków's Central Station in late March, the city council took over from the governor's office the coordination of a 24-hour information desk, with the support of the State Fire Service. Here, relief efforts and information were also supported by social organizations, including the Polish Association of Scouts. The main railway station in Przemyśl faced and still faces a challenges, often being a first stop on a migration route for thousands of refugees on their way to the West or to other Polish cities; their main relocation point. *Things are better now. We know how to work (...) We are the Crisis Response Team* - explained in November 2022 the representative of Voivode. *We still lack the medical point and a place for mothers (...) Above that, we don't know what to do with Roma.* Dormitory rooms at the station are available only to people with a valid ticket, which excludes Roma people, among others. In December 2022, the Ombudsman called for the provision of heated tents and free sanitation to Przemyśl train station. An increased presence of specialized international organizations (UNICEF, UNHCR) and social welfare services is necessary as well.

In Warsaw, local government officials reported problems resulting from inefficient coordination or inaction on the part of the government administration, and the Mazovian Provincial Office in particular: the issue of the inadequate organization of the reception desk at the Central Station, the low capacity of the information desk organized by the provincial governor for refugees at the Western Station, and the lack of staffing at the PESEL registration desk at the PGE National Stadium, organized by the government administration. Instead of engaging its own staff (as was the case in Kraków), the provincial authorities delegated local government employees and workers from Warsaw's districts to assist in issuing PESEL numbers at the National Stadium.

It is worth noting that a frequent reason for unsuccessful cooperation was political tensions between local authorities and the central authority represented by the governors. Relations along this line had already been strained before February 24 (e.g. Warsaw), so it was difficult to expect that the cooperation would work out properly in a crisis. Also in Lublin, political and ideological divergences were cited as one of the reasons for the difficult cooperation.

The general legal solutions introduced by the government within the framework of the special act were positively assessed by the authorities of large cities. This is because they gave local governments the opportunity to act, and sometimes created legal and institutional conditions for acting within the framework of certain competencies. This was true, for example, of the rules for refugees' access to health care and other public services. The introduction of tools to activate and facilitate refugees' access to the labor market was also appreciated, including for important professional groups such as

doctors, nurses, and educators. There were, however, criticisms of some specific solutions – controversy was particularly aroused over the exclusion of refugees with other than Ukrainian citizenship from the scope of the Special Act.

Since the first days of the crisis, local authorities have highlighted the lack of systemic solutions and plans on the part of the central administration as a key barrier to how cities should implement relief efforts. They criticized the lack of a long-term migration and integration policy of the Polish state, which largely made it difficult, and sometimes impossible, to undertake activities that were not *ad hoc*, but were strategic or systemic solutions. As a result, local governments often felt left on their own in addressing the challenges of integrating migrants and refugees. Civil society again responded to the shortcomings in this area – the Migration Consortium prepared a guide on how integration policies should be built at the local level, aimed at supporting local governments.

## Medium-sized cities

In medium-sized cities – as in small towns – interviewees paid little attention to government support, and the issue of the provincial governor's support was not an important part of what they said about the aid effort.

In Świnoujście, the local and provincial governments cooperated with each other from the first days of the war and made coordinated efforts to organize support for places to stay, as well as to transport donations to Ukraine. However, many local government officials and representatives gave the impression of reticence when speaking about the cooperation between the central and local government. The relations were diplomatically described as hierarchical and formalized, albeit positive (Płock). An order issued to local authorities by governors obliging them to prepare a certain number of places for potential refugees was cited. The local government authorities were indeed ready to accommodate those referred to them by the governors and were collecting information on facilities that could provide emergency accommodation, but they stressed that their capacity was limited, and the central government should keep this in mind. As the mayor of Świnoujście, for example, reported on his Facebook page (March 11, 2022), although 10 hotels accepted refugees, and tremendous support was also shown by the residents themselves, the municipality had limited capacity, and the government's actions could lead to many difficulties:

> *There is a considerable problem ahead. Until next Sunday, the daily rate per person, which is guaranteed by the West Pomeranian governor, is 110 zlotys. As of Monday – according to the provisions of the law that has just come into force – it will be about 40 zlotys. The proposed amount is not exorbitant and certainly does not cover actual costs. Which hotel will decide to be generous and still want to accommodate refugees? If they have to move out, the municipality cannot guarantee as many places to accommodate everyone. (...) We are already telling the governor not to send more people to Świnoujście. Because we simply don't have enough places* (local government, medium-sized city)

In interviews with civil society organizations, the question of government support was raised in the context of subsidizing the cost of hosting refugees at the rate of PLN 40 per day, or the one-off 300+ and monthly 500+ benefits per child. However, it was emphasized that this is taxpayers' money, part of systemic solutions. There were also criticisms of the payment of these benefits by social welfare centers (e.g. that the money ran out in May), the lack of support for social workers (e.g. training in working with refugees ), the inadequate funding of support provided by Caritas (in one locality Caritas did not receive money from the government in November, there were delays in payments due to the

fact that the government was counting on the support of the European Union), or plans to suspend funding for refugees from 2023, which caused concern among interviewees. It was pointed out that government assistance was provided on an ad hoc basis, without a long-term program to support and integrate refugees:

> *I understand that, for example, the government has, probably had this idea that it will only be a few months and that after that people will go back (...). I understand that the government and Poland doesn't have that kind of budget either, so as to [accommodate] so many people, millions [of people] (...) but on the other hand, if they started to let them in, if they opened the borders, they should have somehow done some kind of program. And now we can all see that there was no program, there was just temporarily something there* (civil society, medium city).

In addition, local government channels (websites and social media) served to convey information about the scope of assistance offered by the government side, such as the launch of www.poma- gamukrain-ie.gov.pl, the possible forms of support offered to refugees by state institutions (e.g. social security) or the websites of provincial offices containing information for refugees and those willing to help them.

## Small towns and villages

At the level of small towns, the presence of the government – including the provincial governors – was insufficiently visible, according to those directly involved in providing support to refugee families. In those towns where there were no reception points or places of collective accommodation, the government was almost absent. As a result, people who hosted refugee families in their homes were left to fend for themselves. The only form of support from the government was a program to subsidize the living expenses of refugees at a rate of PLN 40 per person per night, provided, however, not directly to the refugees, but to those who hosted them. The program was criticized for inadequate subsidy, inadequate to meet the needs of the hosts (unable to provide collective feeding at a cheaper cost, as was the case with large centers), as well as for objectifying refugees, making them dependent on specific helpers and preventing them from relocating, also in situations of danger or exploitation. In terms of integration challenges and institutional support, refugee hosts could only rely on themselves and their own community, which was particularly difficult in small towns without migrant organizations or organizations supporting people with a migrant background.

In small towns, where there were reception points or places of collective accommodation, the government's presence was perceived mainly in terms of financial support provided by the provincial governor: *As far as government assistance was concerned, it was mainly money – first promised and then actually given* (local government, small town).

However, they emphasized the great role of financial and in-kind assistance from other entities from Poland and abroad (international organizations and business):

> *At the beginning I had a meeting with the Provincial Office and said: "Give us money, we'll manage." It was difficult to calculate exactly how much, because, for example, we were supposed to state how much we would spend on food, and somehow it came out that 12 or 15 zlotys per person per day, and together it was about half a million. And here suddenly five truckloads of food arrive, so this money was not needed for this purpose* (local government, small city).

It was pointed out that financial support came late and there was no clarity on how much, when and to whom it would go. As a result, most of the relief efforts relied on "people of goodwill."

At a large reception point near the Ukrainian border, the government's organizational support was judged to be poor and unsuited to the needs of a point receiving several thousand people daily. According to the interviewees, it was run by people untrained in security procedures and unfamiliar with the language. The presence of firefighters, police and military was noted. After several first weeks when locals took care of transporting refugees to larger cities on their own, the local provincial office took over this task – although non-governmental driver registration systems were also established (e.g. in Lublin).

There were complaints about the lack of information flow between the government and the governor and the local governments of small towns: *People felt they were doing their best but they had no support from above, no institutional support. (...) No information, neither from Warsaw nor from Poznań. We were on our own – from the mayor, heads of units, to volunteers. (...) There was a lack of meaningful information from the government, from the governor, from the district governors. Along this line a total flop* (local government, small city).

Local authorities pointed to the lack of crisis management procedures – not only at the central level, but also at various levels of local government. This often paralyzed their operations: *There was no system for adapting institutions to the humanitarian crisis situation. No one [in the town] had any expectations of the government, but [they did expect some action] of the local government, which is right here, the closest to them. There should be some possibilities for ad hoc crisis management so that it works. In reality, we were looking for ways to bypass the procedure* (local government, some city).

It was also pointed out that there was a lack of appreciation for the work of those who had volunteered: *When the effort was over, there were no [official] thanks to those who had been volunteers, at any level: the government, the provincial governor and below* (volunteer, small town).

### "Students" from Ukraine: Third Country Nationals (TCN)

According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science, there were 77,000 foreigners, mostly men, from India, African countries and the Central Asian region studying in Ukraine at the time of the Russian invasion, who had decided to study there because of the low cost and high quality of education. Many of them lived in Kharkov or Kiev, the cities that Russia invaded in the first place. Like Ukrainian citizens and nationals, they too were forced to flee. However, their situation and reception in Poland proved to be more challenging on many levels. This was due to the lack of opportunities for their prolonged legal stay in Poland (or in other EU countries) and the lack of any support from central and local government authorities. There have also been documented cases of racist attacks and challenges from Polish society, and of unequal or impeded access to services.

*These individuals did not receive the same support. (...) Some of them returned [to their countries of origin], with a sense of failure and shame that they had not completed their education and changed all their plans. And that according to them, this assistance was not provided* (intercultural assistant).

By April 2022, there were some 40,000 foreigners of non-Ukrainian origin fleeing Ukraine (primarily, but not exclusively, international students). Because Ukrainian men were subject to military obligation and were not allowed to leave the country, it was usually non-white international

students who made up the vast majority of men crossing the Polish-Ukrainian border in the first, highly feminized round of refugees. During their travels, they encountered discrimination, name-calling, and even physical violence (on both sides of the border). After a sudden wave of racist comments on some online forums, on March 1, 2022, incoming nationalist militias appeared in Medyka, threatening with knives and physically attacking Indian citizens. Extended entry procedures were observed on the Ukrainian side and there were cases of discriminatory treatment: separate queues and segregated carriages for international students (Ombudsman 2022). In response to these reports, the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs sent a diplomatic note to the Ukrainian side in mid-March 2022.

On the initiative of social organizations, information desks were set up at railway stations and intervention hostels for these people. Particularly positive was the response of the Warsaw authorities regarding cooperation with the third sector and the number of reception points that took into account the needs and situation of people of non-Ukrainian origin. However, most of them were forced to return to their country of origin or go further West. Polish authorities "assisted" in this journey – in March 2022, some students, e.g. from Nigeria, were transported from the eastern to the western border by the authorities of the Podkarpackie region "for security reasons".

It was necessary for this group of people to leave Poland due to the fact that the period of their legal stay after crossing the border was only 15 days. Before the expiration of that period, they could at most try to apply for a temporary residence permit or international protection (obtaining both was highly unlikely), while facing difficulties in the housing market and being treated as "second-class refugees."

As an NGO employee explained: *They could not get either a guarantee of stay or even housing (...). Fortunately, there were countries that cared about their return, like Nigeria and Zambia (...), but here they were invisible. The authorities considered it a marginal issue and, especially at the beginning, did not know that certain regulations had to be adhered to.*

Assistance in legalizing their stay, housing, or learning about the prospect of continuing their studies was obtained through the support of informal groups on social media, community organizations and grassroots initiatives. One of these was the *Future of TCN Students* – an independent initiative of representatives of social organizations and universities that sought to support these students and, in cooperation with Ukrainian universities, facilitate their transfer, as well as monitor their legal and social situation.

## Chapter 10. Relocations to smaller towns

Faced with the sudden arrival of a large number of refugees in the largest cities (refugees most often preferred large cities as their final destination), there were calls in the public debate for some of the arriving Ukrainians to be relocated to smaller towns in Poland and to partner cities abroad. This was justified on the grounds of difficulties in finding housing and ensuring access to public services for numerous groups of new residents. At the same time, the negative consequences of living too long in places of collective accommodation were pointed out. To avoid the problem of "overcrowding" and "congestion," some cities, especially those close to the border, such as Rzeszów and Lublin, received directives from the governors as early as the beginning of the war to preserve their transit character and not to organize places of collective accommodation for refugees. They were to be transported to other cities and provinces and accommodated there. At this point it should be emphasized that while the Rzeszów authorities followed these recommendations (by not organizing municipal collective lodging facilities), the Lublin local government took many actions that were not necessarily conducive to preserving the "transit" character of the city.

The relocations that took place in the first months of the full-scale war in Ukraine were in the form of voluntary internal movements and journeys abroad (e.g. to Germany, France, Sweden, other European countries and outside Europe). Neither central nor local authorities created special incentives or mechanisms to force people to move to selected parts of the country. The exceptions were when places of collective accommodation were shut down, and refugees living in them had to choose a place of new accommodation from a list, usually in a smaller town. Such a situation occurred, for example, in Poznań, when the largest such spot at the Poznań International Fair (MTP) was to be closed for a period of two weeks due to necessary reorganization and renovation. Theoretically, the relocations from MTP to smaller towns were supposed to be temporary, which was communicated to the volunteers, but MTP never reopened. Many refugees feared being relocated to the provinces, and as a result, some of them decided to seek accommodation in the city on their own or return to Ukraine.

In implementing the relocation process, medium and small cities cooperated with governors and large cities. A good example was Świnoujście, which was supposed to receive people registered by the governor of Lublin, redirected further through a local reception point in Szczecin. In practice, however, this did not happen:

> *However, most of them [refugees] ended up here through family connections. (...) Some may have been in that first relocation period arranged by the governors, so they ended up in Szczecin. They didn't have any family, they didn't have anyone to go to, so they were referred here because there were a few hotels available. This number is also related to the number of places that were available...* (*civil society, big city*).

It should be noted that partner cities from Western Europe came up with proposals to host refugees, but few Ukrainians were interested in relocating there. This was because they didn't speak the languages of those countries and were aware of cultural differences. There was a lack of verified information about what they could expect there. What was also important was the desire to stay in geographic proximity to Ukraine, which offered the possibility of a quick return when the war ended. In the case of going further West, it was also unclear who would finance a possible return to Ukraine, should the need arise, and how. It was also crucial to develop a system that would counter the practice of human trafficking and prevent refugees from being exposed to economic or sexual violence – here good practices were implemented, for example, by Lublin organizations networked with partner cities (e.g. Nancy in France).

The idea of relocation, while providing some solution to the overabundance of refugees in major cities, also raised many questions among local governments, community organizations, as well as refugees themselves. One interviewee pointed out the wide disparity in access to services, resources and oppor-

tunities between the metropolis and the provinces:

> *As we started to think about relocations, it turned out that there is a complete lack of infrastructure... Not the building, it's just that these people are going from a reality where they have contact with a lawyer, a university, a doctor, someone there, to a reality where it's easier to get to school, but all these other things are less available...* (Public administration, big city).

Another interviewee from a social organization pointed out the long-term difficulties refugees in smaller towns have in arranging their lives:

> *Well, I know of such cases, when a bus from Y [name of a small town near the Polish-Russian border] came to pick up people for the border, they got on and during the trip there is a brawl, because these people do not want to go to [Y]. Well, and now those organizing are indignant, saying there's this beautiful, new, renovated center, and Ukrainian women don't want to go to [Y]? I say, „And have you realized that these people don't want to go somewhere close to the Russian border?", that's the first thing. Second, „What can you offer them in this [Y]?" Because it's not a question of just a sandwich and a place, a pillow, but then what next? Because I say, okay, all the associations in [Y] will organize themselves and help them, but what next?* (civil society, a city).

Another interviewee emphasized the fact that refugees often came from large Ukrainian cities themselves, so the lifestyle of mid-sized city residents and the professional opportunities offered may have been a barrier to their integration (or may have been perceived that way by them). Many refugees wanted to live in the largest cities:

> *In case of X [name of medium-sized city], for people who came from big cities in Ukraine, yes, it's the question of the difference between the size of the city X and the size of the cities where they lived in Ukraine. Well, even in Poland if we compare X and Warsaw, there is a difference, no? So, some people feel lost or unhappy here and look for somewhere else.* (Civil society, city).

It should be noted that in most small towns the community was in no way prepared to receive refugees, there was a lack of resources and specialized community organizations were not in operation. An additional problem was the lack of officials prepared to handle refugee clients. Both unsuccessful and successful relocations took place in the towns and cities studied. In the first case [small town Z], there was a top-down, institutionally carried out relocation after a collective accommodation point in one of the large cities [A] closed. One interviewee reported on the situation as follows:

> *At the end of April, buses from A came to Z. There was an announcement that [name of collective accommodation] was being closed, and within a few days people showed up. Conditionally, two places were offered to the governor, but just for the families of our employees. These people, [refugees] sent here by the governor of A, did not want to be here, they wanted to be in the big city and were going back to A. It was pointless to take this action. The municipality has no transportation, and they ended up in the villages. It was not well thought out.*

In contrast, interviewees from another small town recognized the many advantages of locating refugees in small towns but stressed that this must be a process carried out carefully, tailored to the individual needs and expectations of the relocated persons. It should be noted that refugees came to the town in question by their own choice and were accommodated in the homes of residents. Thus, refugees relocated through top-down, officially organized processes did not come to this town.

In lobbying for the relocations, some people pointed to their integration aspect – the dispersal of refugees in the community, among Polish families, was supposed to make Ukrainian families quickly come

together with the local community, which was supposed to be evidenced by the absence of major tensions and conflicts between residents and refugees. This was contrasted with the collective placement of refugees' families, where they were supposed to have no opportunity to integrate into Polish society.

At the same time, however, the interviewees pointed out the challenges of relocating to small towns:

1. The lack of rental housing in small towns meant that housing the refugee families remained the biggest challenge. In one small town, the village head searched for apartments himself. Often these were vacant properties but the costs that would have to be incurred to bring them back into use were too high. A separate problem was the security deposits that apartment owners demanded when renting – refugees often could not afford them. The aid group tried to support them in such situations from the funds collected in the account.

2. Limited labor market – not so much a lack of work itself but limited opportunities to find work at least partially in line with the refugees' skills, which could lead to frustration and, from the perspective of the host society, a waste of the potential of these people. It was pointed out that it is one thing to have a small town close to a large city or metropolitan area, and another to have a small town located in the deep provinces.

3. Relocation may have been a good option for families with young children, but provided that a kindergarten and school for relocated children was available in such a village.

4. It was necessary for local leaders to support the relocation process – it seemed to be the cause of success of the reception of refugee families in one of the towns. The opposite was true in the neighboring, much larger town, where, due to its history of being a state-own collective farm in communist times (so called PGR) and the resulting social disintegration, there was a lack of local leaders. There was no one to support the relocation processes – both on the part of the host community and the refugees.

5. Relocations should be highly individualized, as not every person is "suitable for life in the provinces;" e.g. young, ambitious people, female students were pointed out, especially those who lived in large cities before the war, such as Kiev.

In response to the problems associated with the large number of refugees in large cities and the difficulty of finding jobs and housing for them in smaller towns, the government has developed a pilot program „Mutually Needed." It was to start in January 2023. The program, as Minister Agnieszka Ścigaj reported in an interview, "is supposed to be an offer for refugee families, migrants, repatriates and other people who would like to find their space outside large agglomerations. [...] It is supposed to combine three basic needs: housing, work and care for dependents, including children. A local government that decides to take in such a family, with the support of the state, will be able to provide housing for rent, as well as, during the first months of the family's adaptation, the care of an assistant who will support it in the area of professional development and organization of life. The assumption is that solutions will be sought individually, tailored to the needs of a specific family. The assistant will help define the framework of support and cooperate with the employer." The assumptions of the pilot program responded to the problems identified by interviewees in this study. As of early February 2023, however, there was no information on whether the program had started and on what scale.

The program was part of a broader scheme announced by Minister Ścigaj. Since July 2022, there has been a Social Inclusion Department within the structures of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, one of whose tasks is to develop and implement a social inclusion strategy. An Expert Team for Strategies of Social Inclusion has been established for this purpose, consisting of representatives of various ministries and external experts representing various sectors.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

*The challenge for us is how to help wisely and when we no longer act on the first impulse. To make people feel a part of Poland, not part of statistics* (business, big city).

Before we move on to discuss the recommendations resulting from this report in specific areas and addressed at various entities, it is important to note three key points, which are necessary conditions for the activities carried out to be effective.

The first key element is the **long-term nature** of the activities planned and carried out. Each of them should be planned at least in the perspective of the coming months (when it comes to reception activities) and years (for integration activities). Reception projects must be available until the end of hostilities in Ukraine – until then they should be planned as continuous activities. This applies even more so to integration activities – these should be planned in the context of at least the next two years, because even when the war is over, some people will not return quickly (because they will have nowhere to return to until their homes and workplaces are rebuilt) or not at all (especially if they have spent several years in Poland). Such a long-term perspective should be adopted both by public institutions (governmental or local governmental level), as well as international organizations and social organizations.

The long-term nature of aid efforts implies a second important element – **constant change**, adapting to the needs and expectations of refugees. These evolve over time as conditions change. This assumption implies continuous and systematic data collection (to know the context and adjust programs and services appropriately), constant evaluation of ongoing activities, and inclusion of refugee people in decision-making processes.

The final element is the **exchange of knowledge and good practices**. This is part of good cooperation and a great value in itself. With limited resources, it is useful to benefit from the experience of those who have already gone through certain processes. This includes social organizations that have been working on behalf of migrants and their integration in Poland for years, the world of academia, which has accumulated a great deal of knowledge about migration processes, as well as all other entities where certain actions have worked (or not worked), including public institutions, employers etc. Let us benefit from good practices and learn from the mistakes of others, so that we do not make them and do not reinvent the wheel.

## RECEPTION ACTIVITIES

### Points of collective accommodation

The government should withdraw from the obligation, introduced as of March 1, 2023 by an amendment to the Special Act, for refugees to contribute to the cost of living in places of collective accommodation. They should be places where humanitarian assistance is available to all those in need regardless of the length of their stay in Poland. At the same time, such places should guarantee an appropriate standard of sanitary conditions, privacy, as well as access to services and information (legal, medical, psychological), including for minority groups and/or those with special needs. Programs should also be established to enable and facilitate people to leave these places and find stable housing. Authorities at the central and local levels should constantly monitor points of collective accommodation, as well as transit sites (bus and train stations) in terms of the conditions there, the number of people staying and their needs, and what happens to them after they leave these places.

### Internal relocations

The government's plans and efforts to carry out internal relocations should be intensified. These programs should involve close cooperation with local governments, intended to receive refugees, as well as with refugees themselves. They must not assume forced resettlement. They should also be based on creating a system of incentives for the resettled and guaranteeing them the possibility of finding cheaper housing or better access to education for their children, but at the same time with the prospect of refugees finding their way in the local labor market.

Relocation should include support for refugees from the moment they cross the Polish border. Right there, at the border crossing, people who have nowhere else to go should be offered to come to one of the town or cities. Such people should receive the necessary and free support for their journey in Poland from the very first moment.

### Legislative changes

It is necessary to bring the Polish provisions of the Special Act in line with EU requirements, including by ensuring that all eligible persons have access to assistance – not only citizens of Ukraine, and guaranteeing freedom of entry to Poland for all persons fleeing Ukraine, which is not guaranteed in practice.

Work should also have already begun on permanent legal solutions that will be available after the end of the Temporary Directive. We are only a year away from that point. Refugees should be guaranteed greater legal stability so as not to add more stress to what they are already experiencing.

## INTEGRATION

It is necessary to prepare and introduce **local integration policies** at various levels of local governments. It is worth using the models already developed in some Polish cities and the proposal developed by the Migration Consortium.

### Improving access to services

To **improve access to services,** we recommend providing adequate training in working with refugees (including representatives of various minority groups) to those working in administrative institutions (employment offices, municipal offices, social welfare centers, etc.). Such training activities will, among others, be conducted by the Migration Consortium from March 2023 as part of the Migration Academy being launched.

It is also necessary to provide translators and comprehensible information for refugees on the websites of ministries and local authorities, which will undoubtedly improve communication between refugees and public institutions.

To **improve** the medium- and long-term **housing situation of refugees,** we recommend establishing an efficient, cross-sectoral coordination mechanism for housing; expanding the base of social and public housing, and facilitating access to it for refugees, including by mapping the use of housing resources not yet taken into account, locally and regionally. It is also necessary to introduce new forms of ten-

ancy for humanitarian purposes, and to improve security and information about rental conditions for refugees.

To **improve access to the health care system**, we recommend that the needs of migrants be included in health policy programs, including those concerning mental health. It is necessary to provide multilingual access to information on the rules for the use of public health care, the availability of medicines and organizations supporting patients. There should also be specialized programs, including those providing seamless continuation of treatment started in Ukraine and psychological support for refugees.

## Employment

Although about 60% of adult refugees have found work, it is often not in jobs that **match their qualifications**. Those staying in Poland are very well educated – half of the refugees have completed higher education. This is a potential that should not be wasted. Hence, it is necessary to develop programs that provide job opportunities that match qualifications, and to support programs that allow refugees to develop their own businesses. This process is already happening and several thousand new companies with Ukrainian capital have been established in Poland in the last year. However, it should be intensified.

It is also necessary to **increase employment security** for refugees. To this end, it is necessary to cooperate with employers' organizations, but also to support the activities of the Chief Labour Inspectorate (PIP) to punish those who violate labor rights. It is also worth developing information programs for refugees, giving them knowledge of Polish employment laws, as well as supporting organizations that will offer free legal support for those harmed by the actions of employers.

## Education

There is a need to **ensure equal access to education for refugee children** through top-down, large-scale standards for admitting and supporting students with migration experience, hiring and training intercultural assistants and teacher aides, increasing the number of preparatory classes and Ukrainian schools, and developing a standard for the operation. There is also a need to **monitor the implementation of compulsory schooling** (whether done in Polish or remotely in Ukrainian schools) for all Ukrainian children who live in Poland, to be sure that each child is studying in school – either in Poland or remotely in Ukraine.

In addition, it is necessary to redefine educational adjustments (including the method of assessment, implementation of the core curriculum, the eighth-grade exam) for refugee children, so that they have equal opportunities to develop and continue their education. Also, educational offerings for adults should be expanded to include specializations and language courses.

## Inclusion of refugees

These activities need to be reinforced **with a cross-sectional integration offer** at the local level, enabling the exchange of experiences and cultural heritage between Polish society and newcomers, in

cooperation with local migrant and national communities, and active inclusion in the life of the local community. These activities should be supported by organizing competitions and grants at various levels for local social organizations working with migrants.

It is necessary to **support the process of self-organization of** people with migrant and refugee experience and to realize their potential. It is necessary to support various types of incubators that help develop people's leadership – both in terms of social and business activities.

Refugees should also be **included in the planning of programs** that are (or are to be) offered to them.

### Tackling exclusion and discriminatory violence

When planning any program, whether for integration or reception, it is necessary to **consider refugee groups with special needs, including** unaccompanied minors, the elderly or people with disabilities, non-Ukrainian minorities and LGBTQIA. Since many of these groups face multi-level discrimination and exclusion, it is necessary to actively monitor their needs and cooperate with specialized social organizations in this regard.

It is already crucial to **monitor** the **anti-Ukrainian attitudes that are emerging with** increasing frequency, including those that blame refugees for many of the problems arising in Poland. They are often instigated by pro-Russian and extreme nationalist circles, including some far-right politics. They should be countered by refuting inconsistent beliefs blaming Ukrainians for the occurrence of various social problems. Political leaders, including the government, should get involved. The positive message about refugees coming from those in power cannot be overestimated. In addition, public authorities should **eliminate instances of incitement to hatred and violence** targeting refugees, along with providing adequate training for law enforcement agencies.

When planning integration activities, it is important to remember that they should not be exclusionary. Although refugees from Ukraine are currently the largest nationality group residing in Poland, there are also people of various other nationalities living among us. They should not be forgotten, and **integration programs and policies should include all migrants,** or at least be open to them.

## INTERSECTORAL COOPERATION

Good practices of various forms of intersectoral cooperation should not only be preserved, but also developed further. This is of particular importance at the level of local governments. Noticeably, current forms of cooperation between local governments and social organizations are not effective, hence the need to develop other forms of cooperation, more in partnership and incorporating the expertise of activists, rather than returning to the poorly functioning pre-war experience.

### Consistent and constant communication between sectors

It should be a priority for municipal and regional authorities to continuously **map and establish a consistent channel of communication with those involved in outreach and integration activities within** the city, municipality, or province. A regular audit of needs and resources is recommended.

It is necessary to have good and transparent **coordination of the activities** of various entities, a clear division of their tasks and responsibilities at the level of all structures (government and local government). There should also be a contact person appointed for intersectoral cooperation, with decision-making capacity.

**Local governments** should support and recognize the work of existing organizations working with and for migrants in various ways. The past year has shown what a key resource they are in a crisis. Such exchanges should take place at various levels: the expertise, experience, and ability to work with refugees are a valuable resource for many organizations. In return, they should expect financial support, access to premises/spaces for activities, and co-organization of various projects. Limiting local government funding for the activities of key organizations is a short-sighted strategy. Local governments should also actively seek to include social organizations in their joint activities with international organizations. It is also necessary to create a channel of communication and a platform for the exchange of experiences and good practices between different local governments and to develop those already in place.

**International organizations** should change the rules of their cooperation with the Polish third sector. It should be based on the principle of partnership (not *executive partnership*), with a transparent management structure, due diligence, and respect for the conditions (time) and possibilities of local partner organizations, e.g. by simplifying the necessary procedures for receiving and accounting for grants. To reflect the important role of local social organizations in responding to the crisis, a greater percentage of the funds collected by them should be spent precisely on activities carried out by local partners and on supporting the implementation of their activities, which should be prioritized over alternative (short-lived) aid programs. Practices aimed at weakening social organizations by "poaching" their highly qualified personnel (including by offering much higher-than-average salaries in the sector) are unacceptable.

When conducting joint activities with local governments, international organizations should also include local social organizations and the academic community. They should also make sure that the funds they provide for local activities do not result in a reduction of other resources previously available to social organizations.

## Business

**Business** involvement in cooperation with other entities should involve medium- and long-term joint activities and their complementarity. It is a well-proven practice for local and international business to support relief and integration activities within their specialized areas (cyber-security, communications, equipment for centers, etc.), while providing resources within transparent and simplified procedures to local (social sector) actors. **Acting based on trust and dialogue is crucial**, within a proven **24/7/365 system**: up to 24 hours to respond to a challenge; up to 7 days to find expertise; as part of a long-term strategy, not just for ad hoc actions.

## Helping those who help

There is a need to **create a coherent, transparent, and coordinated system of work** and **training** for volunteers in cross-sectoral cooperation, built on good practices of the social sector, with security procedures, including verification and regular mutual evaluation of cooperation. It is also necessary to support the development of newly established organizations and groups that were created to support

refugees. It is worth building further long-term activities on their experience. The knowledge they have already gained, and their commitment must not be lost.

It is imperative that those working with refugees be provided with support in terms of know-how and, above all, with psychological support. This is especially important for those with migration experience, including those who fled the war in Ukraine. The practice of employee volunteering in business and public administration structures should be maintained and supported.

**Support in the form of psychological** and burnout prevention **assistance** should also be offered to any other person working directly with refugees, including those working in public institutions, such as social workers, teachers, etc.

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# Appendix 1. Overview of the cities surveyed

## WARSAW

Before the full-scale escalation of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, up to 130,000 foreigners, or 7% of the city's population, may have lived in the capital city of 1.85 million. After February 24, the city's population increased by about 100,000, which could mean an increase in the percentage of migrants in the city to more than 12% (based on PESEL data as of December 15, 2022).

Most of Warsaw's migrant residents who arrived in the city before February 24 came here for work, family, or education. According to registration data from mid-2021, there were more than 44,000 foreigners registered in Warsaw, mostly temporarily, which accounted for less than 2.5% of the city's population (although the data certainly does not reflect the full scale of migration). Among those registered, less than 16,000 were citizens and nationals of Ukraine, almost 7,000 of Belarus, about 2,700 of Vietnam, almost 2,000 of the Russian Federation (including refugees from Chechnya) and less than 5,000 of India. In total, there were people of more than a hundred different nationalities. Among the Ukrainians registered, the number of men and women was similar, most were registered temporarily, but there were significantly more permanent registrations among women than men.

According to data from the Labor Market Department of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, in 2021 more than 63,000 employment declarations for Ukrainians were entered in the records in the city of Warsaw (the next largest groups were more than 8,000 people from Belarus and more than 6,300 from Georgia). In Poland as a whole, the number of declarations issued to Ukrainian citizens amounted to more than 1.6 million (although one person could be the recipient of several declarations). In addition, in 2021 there were more than 24,000 foreign students in Warsaw. It should be added that almost half of all foreign students in Poland were from Ukraine (a total of almost 38,500 people) (Study in Poland 2022).

Before the outbreak of the full-scale war in Ukraine, the Warsaw City Hall undertook a number of actions addressed at the city's migrant residents. These actions were coordinated by the International Cooperation Department, while among the most important city units involved in such activities were the Welfare and Social Projects Department, the Culture Department, and the Education Department. The key sub-entities involved in the direct implementation of mainly project-based activities for migrants, including services for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, were social organizations, such as the Pro Humanum Association, the Other Space Foundation, the Foundation for Social Diversity (Fundacja na rzecz Różnorodności Społecznej), the Ocalenie Foundation, the Legal Intervention Association (Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej), and immigrant organizations, such as the Foundation for Somalia, Fundacja Transkultura i Dialog Międzynarodowy (the Transculture and Intercultural Dialogue Foundation), Fundacja "Centrum Białoruskiej Solidarności (the "Center for Belarusian Solidarity" Foundation), Fundacja Nasz Wybór (Our Choice Foundation). Their role, as well as the channels of cooperation between the local administration and social organizations that have been in place for years, such as the Commissions for Social Dialogue (Komisje Dialogu Społeczngo, KDS), proved to be crucial after February 24, 2022.

There were almost 267,000 Ukrainian residents in Warsaw in March 2022, and by May the number had risen to 350,000, (Union of Polish Metropolises 2022). Registration data from the PESEL system showed that by mid-December 2022 there were nearly 150,000 refugees living in the Warsaw metropolitan area, and nearly 100,000 in Warsaw alone. In response to the arrival of refugees from Ukraine, the city administration began to make existing public services available. As a result, by the end of November 2022, more than 4,600 children from Ukraine had found places in Warsaw kindergartens, more

than 10,000 in elementary schools, 1,600 in secondary schools and more than 1,200 in post-secondary schools (a total of almost 18,000 children and adolescents). More than 7,500 people from Ukraine were admitted to city-run hospitals, 1,800 of them were hospitalized and more than 300 deliveries were received. More than 100 thousand refugees applied for a one-off benefit of PLN 300, and more than 43 thousand people applied for a subsidy of PLN 40 per day for accommodation and meals for refugees under their own roof (Warsaw City Hall 2022). In addition, more than 25.5 thousand refugees found work (counting based on statements entered in the official records).

## KRAKÓW

As in other Polish cities, the exact number of foreigners residing in Kraków before and after the massive Russian invasion of Ukraine was difficult to estimate. Systematic surveys of the city's foreigner population, conducted since 2019, showed that the community was growing year by year. At the same time, the registration data revealed the presence of only some foreigners in the city. Thus, for example, in 2019, when the register of the Małopolska Provincial Office showed less than 16,000 Ukrainian citizens and nationals with valid residence cards living in Kraków, mobile phones data suggested the presence of almost 50,000 Ukrainians, a number more than three times higher (Pędziwiatr et al. 2021: 63-67).

It is estimated that before February 24, 2022, there were about 43,500 migrants living in Kraków, or about 6% of the city's population of 725,300 residents (Pędziwiatr et al. 2022a). After February 24, nearly 30,000 refugees arrived in the city, raising the percentage of migrants in Kraków to 10% (based on PESEL UKR data as of December 26, 2022).

In addition, thanks to convenient road and rail links to the Ukrainian border, Kraków has become a stopping place for hundreds of thousands of people fleeing Ukraine for temporary homes in other parts of Poland and the world. Some of them decided to stay in Kraków because of the relative proximity to the Ukrainian border, the presence of a large Ukrainian diaspora in the city, reception and integration efforts carried out by the local authorities and civil society, opportunities to find shelter, work and childcare, and for other reasons.

According to ZUS data, as of November 1, 2022, there were 57,000 foreigners registered for pension and disability insurance. Women accounted for as much as 42% of the group, compared to 37% a year earlier. The number of people from Ukraine (which is the largest nationality group) increased from 26,700 to 33,600. An increase was also noted, for example, among citizens of other countries: Belarus (more than doubled), Russia, India, and Italy. There was a significant increase in the number of citizens of Georgia, Moldova, and Turkey.

A small proportion of Ukrainian refugees who arrived in Poland after February 24, 2022, found work, and are recorded in Social Security (ZUS) records. One of the most important sources of information (albeit incomplete) on the size of the group in Kraków is therefore the PESEL data, which showed there were more than 50,000 refugees living in the city or its immediate vicinity (Dane.gov.pl 2022). A study by the Union of Polish Metropolises indicated that in May 2022, 180,000 Ukrainians lived in Kraków, accounting for 19% of the population, and that the total number of residents of the city had increased from 780,000 to 960,000 (Union of Polish Metropolises 2022). However, it seems that the current number of refugees in Kraków is much lower than the above figures indicate. Integration of the PESEL database with that of the Border Guard allowed us to conclude that a little over 29,000 refugees lived within the city limits. Almost half of them are adult women (47%), one in five is male, while 34% are minor girls and boys (17% each). In addition, nearly 10,000 refugees live in the immediate vicinity of the city (in the Kraków County). Among them, women are the largest group. 44% are children and only 11% are men.

## POZNAŃ

According to the 2021 Census, Poznań had a population of 543,347 before the outbreak of full-scale war in Ukraine. It is difficult to accurately determine the number of foreigners residing in the city. In 2020, there were 6,948 registered migrants, which is a major underestimation of the scale of their presence. According to the Social Insurance Institution, the number of migrants working in Poznań in 2020 was nearly 25,000, of which about 15,000 were men. In 2021, Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) was inhabited by 50,168 foreigners with residence permits (Czerniejewska, Main, Sydow 2022). According to a 2018 study, the number of Ukrainian nationals and citizens in Poznań and Poznań County was 100,000. This was by far the largest group of male and female migrants residing in the capital of Greater Poland, followed by those from Belarus, Germany, Russia, Georgia, the United Kingdom, Italy, India, etc., who came to Poznań for work, study, and family reunification, according to registration data. (Poznaj Sąsiada 2018).

The Poznań City Hall has actively supported migrants for several years through grants to social organizations providing various types of support to this group. Since 2013, the Migrant Info Point, established by the Center for Migration Research at Adam Mickiewicz University, has been active (since 2015, MIP's activities were co-financed with local government funds). The city established a Policy Team for the Integration of Immigrants, which developed the document "Policy for the Integration of Migrants in Poznań for 2023-2024." The Team included representatives of social organizations, public offices, and institutions, as well as experts in the field of migration.

There were relatively few organizations for migrant people in Poznań – these included Stowarzyszenie Społeczno-Kulturalne "Polska-Ukraina" (the Socio-Cultural Association "Poland-Ukraine"), the OPEN International Foundation, and Stowarzyszenie Warto Razem (the Association Worth Together). Many organizations were active in the fields of intercultural education, integration, anti-discrimination, and promotion of volunteering, often involving migrants in their activities. The short-term arrival of a NATO-evacuated group of 113 Afghan men and women in Poznań in September 2021 provided an impetus for the mobilization and networking of numerous organizations and independent activists and enabled closer relations between them and representatives of public institutions, including the Wielkopolska Provincial Office.

After February 24, 2022, up to 100,000 people fleeing Ukraine may have arrived in Poznań, although some of them left the city after a shorter or longer stay – deciding to return to Ukraine or travel further to Western European countries or elsewhere in Poland. By October 1, 2022, the City Hall had assigned 35,020 PESEL numbers with UKR status, of which as many as 25,546 by June 7. The largest number of people arrived in the first weeks after Russia's attack on Ukraine. By March 14, more than 15,000 PEKA cards were issued to refugees, which entitled them to free public transportation in Poznań. As of December 6, 2022, there were 979 refugees accommodated in facilities such as hotels, workers' hotels, and hostels in Poznań.

It can be assumed that some of the refugees chose Poznań because they had friends or family here or had previously stayed in Poznań; others found themselves in the city by accident, for example, taking the train from Przemyśl they decided to reach the final station. Many indicated that they wanted to stay in a large city, which was particularly evident when the attempts to relocate them to smaller towns were met with a lot of resistance. An additional value is the very good economic situation of Poznań (the unemployment rate in the city and Poznań County reached the lowest level in the whole country at the end of 2021 – 1.6%) (PUP in Poznań 2022), rental prices for apartments are much lower than in Warsaw or Kraków, and the city has a reputation for being liberal and open to migrants. Earlier migrants to Poznań appreciated the large number of green areas, good public transportation, educational and cultural offer, and sports facilities.

## RZESZÓW

The population of Rzeszów as of October 31, 2022, was 197,201. The closest border crossing to Rzeszów was Korczowa, less than 100 kilometers away, connected by a direct section of the highway. The highway also connected Rzeszów with Kraków, Wrocław, and the western border of Poland. There were four border crossings with Ukraine in the entire Podkarpackie province – in addition to Korczowa, there were also Medyka, Budomierz and Krościenko. The city had its own international airport, Rzeszów-Jasionka. Thanks to its proximity to the Ukrainian border and good transportation links, the city served as an important logistical, diplomatic, and medical hub for aid to Ukraine. Thanks to this, among other things, Rzeszów was the first city in Poland to boast the title of "City Rescuer," which was awarded to it by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Data on the presence of migrants in Rzeszów was difficult to access. The Podkarpackie province is a region where the net migration rate was negative, and Rzeszów stood out with a small positive rate. Before the war, there were about 4,000 Ukrainians registered with the Department of Civil Affairs in Rzeszow. The migrant community was not very active in the city (it consisted mainly of students, as well as economic migrants), nor was the Ukrainian community that had lived here for generations (unlike in nearby Przemyśl). However, many Ukrainians have invested in Rzeszów for years (e.g. in buying apartments). An interesting direction from which migrants came to Rzeszów in recent years was India. The high standard of education, at both higher and lower level, was considered the city's strongest asset.

As for the data on Ukrainian refugees who entered the city after February 24, 2022, based on PESEL numbers, 5865 people, including 3867 women**,** were registered in the city on December 13, 2022. Information about the benefits offered by aid organizations may also have been helpful. At the peak of its efforts, the PCK (Polish Red Cross) helped 6,000 people. On top of that, nearly 200 Ukrainian children were attending school in September 2022. The Union of Polish Metropolises (2022) estimated that in April 2022 there were more than 100,000 people fleeing Ukraine in Rzeszów. This was the highest in Poland in terms of the ratio of refugees to the population, accounting for about 35-39% of the city's total population. In December 2022, local authorities said there were about 30-50,000 Ukrainian citizens and nationals (which accounted for about a quarter of the population). The number of refugees present in the city fluctuated, with particularly high fluctuation seen during the holiday season.

## LUBLIN

Lublin is the 9th largest city in Poland in terms of population. About 340,000 people lived here. A large part of the city's population was the immigrant academic community – there were as many as 9 higher education institutions in Lublin (5 public, 4 non-public). Many of them were characterized by a high rate of internationalization (related to the presence of foreign students, mainly from Ukraine). About 6,500 foreigners from almost 100 countries studied in Lublin.

As a city in the east of Poland, Lublin is increasingly well connected with the rest of the country. An expressway (171 km) led to Warsaw. A route connecting border crossings in Belarus (Kuźnica) and Slovakia (Barwinek) ran from north to south. Near Lublin, there was also an airport Lublin-Świdnik, offering domestic and international flight connections. There were as many as four border crossings with Ukraine in the Lublin province: Dorohusk - Jagodzin, Zosin - Uściług, Dołhobyczów - Uhrynów, Hrebenne - Rawa Ruska. The border crossing nearest to the city was in Dorohusk (95.8 km).

The key to understanding Lublin's peculiarities was its border location and history of relations with its eastern neighbor. According to registration data, before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there were

5004 foreigners registered in Lublin. Realistically, however, the population of all migrants in Lublin was estimated at about 20,000, which accounted for about 6% of the city's population.

As the largest city in eastern Poland, Lublin has long been a natural destination for economic and educational immigrants from Ukraine. Especially after 2014, their presence was recognized by the city authorities. A decade ago, Lublin was one of the first local governments in Poland to start employing people with a migrant background, especially from Ukraine, in its structures, resulting in their well-established presence in decision-making bodies and at higher levels of management. A practical manifestation of the city's recognition of the presence of the Ukrainian community and other immigrants was the Social Integration Support Group at the Mayor's Office, operating since 2012 (and later at the Office of Social Participation), and then, functioning to this day, of the Civic Dialogue Commission for the municipal system of support for the integration of immigrants and immigrant women (an advisory body to the Mayor of Lublin of an opinion-forming and initiative character), as well as a number of city initiatives in cooperation with social organizations aimed at the integration of immigrants. Lublin is also a member of the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities.

Among the most important social organizations in Lublin dealing with migration issues, one could point out: Homo Faber Association, Fundacja Instytut na Rzecz Państwa Prawa ( the Institute for the Rule of Law Foundation), Centrum Wolontariatu (Volunteer Center), Center for Assistance to Migrants and Refugees of Caritas of the Lublin Archdiocese, the "Sempre a Frente" Foundation, Stowarzyszenie "Dla Ziemi" ("For the Earth" Association). In Lublin, important actors representing the Ukrainian community for many years were also Fundacja Kultury Duchowej Pogranicza (the Foundation for Spiritual Culture of the Borderland) and Towarzystwo Ukraińskie (the Ukrainian Society), which directed their offer first to the Ukrainian national minority, and over time also began to function in the field of interaction with the increasingly large community of Ukrainian immigrants.

According to the Lublin City Hall (2022), for the first three months after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, some 1.2 million people passed through Lublin, making use of the support offered locally (they received logistical assistance, meals, information). At least 138,000 spent at least one night in Lublin. A report by the Union of Polish Metropolises (2022) indicated that as of April 1, 2022, 17% of the city's residents were citizens and nationals of Ukraine, or 68,396 people (including 16,866 children). According to data from the PESEL number database, as of December 13, 2022, 8306 numbers had been assigned in Lublin, including 5278 for women. As of the last week of the 2021/2022 school year, 1,720 Ukrainian pupils and students were enrolled in the city's kindergartens and schools, and this year the number has risen to about 2,000, which is lower than estimated before the start of the school year.

## ŁOMŻA

Łomża is a medium-sized city in the Podlaskie province. The city had a population of just under 63,000 in 2019, but it should be noted that this number has been steadily declining – from 2011 to 2019 there was a decline of 3.5%, which was, among other things, the result of residents leaving. From the point of view of the city's development, it was the emigration of young, educated people, with high qualifications that was of particular impact. Łomża's residents constituted an aging community with little national and religious diversity. Among other things, Łomża faced a high unemployment rate, a structural mismatch in the labor market and incomes that were lower than average in Poland.

Until Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Łomża was inhabited by a small group of migrants. The authorities did not have complete data on their numbers, and the County Employment Office (Haberla 2019) estimated it at about 2,500 people (about 1% of residents). The first group of foreigners to arrive in recent

decades were Chechens. Their presence was due to the location of a center for foreigners in the city, which operated from 2005 to 2010. After the center was closed in 2010, of the approximately 200 people living there at the time (Local Government Portal 2010), some left for other cities or abroad (mainly to Germany or Austria). By 2021, there were between 200 and 300 Chechens in Łomża, according to various interviewees. The second important group of the city's foreigners were migrants from Ukraine. They began arriving after Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014, first as people seeking international protection, then as economic migrants. They were mainly men, without families, treating their stay in Łomża as temporary. They usually received housing and food at their place of work and sent the money they earned to their families still living in Ukraine. As a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a group of refugees, mostly women with children, came to Łomża. The Ukrainian women chose Łomża as a place to stay for three reasons: they had family or friends there; they knew the city from previous experiences; they had no idea where to go, and there was a bus waiting at the border, provided by the local government (and thus inspiring trust).

According to the PESEL database, there were about 550 refugees from Ukraine living in the city after February 24, 2022. For years, the main organization supporting migrants in Łomża was the Ocalenie Foundation. It was a branch of the Warsaw organization and had been operating in the city since 2006, and until Russia's invasion of Ukraine its main clients were Chechens. The foundation conducted complex activities addressed to children (day care center), adults (education, psychological assistance), provided emergency assistance (food, clothing, material support), and organized integration events in the city space (such as Refugee Day). After February 24, the local Caritas also joined in helping refugees. Another entity was the Centrum Integracji Społecznej (Center for Social Integration, CIS), which addressed its services to excluded groups, regardless of nationality. The CIS organized annual social and vocational integration courses and created community programs called "Handyman for a Senior" (Popławska, Gać 2021; Szałańska et al. 2022). The CIS was an organization subordinate to the city hall, run by a social organization, and financed by EU and government funds.

## PŁOCK

Płock is a medium-sized city in the Mazovian province with a population of about 115,000 people (Wisniewski 2022). In recent years, the city has faced the problem of an aging population and depopulation (in 10 years, the population has decreased by 10,000 people). The city's demographic situation was affected by its proximity to larger cities, which are strong academic centers, and an unattractive and closed labor market.

Another feature of Płock was the problem of transportation exclusion. The city had a limited network of bus and rail connections to major urban centers, including Warsaw, 100 km away. An additional problem was the city's remoteness from major automobile transportation routes. The nearest highway entrance (A1 highway) was 50 km from Płock.

Local authorities had little experience with migration issues and the integration of migrants. They did not have policies to encourage labor migrants to come to the city (White 2019). The relatively high percentage of foreigners in the Płock labor market did not translate into interest on the part of the city authorities – as there was a lack not only of a strategy for the inclusion of foreigners, but also a lack of basic knowledge about them that would be collected or analyzed by city officials. Research on the presence of foreign students in Płock schools indicated that even at this level there was no reflection on the issue of integration or inclusion strategies (Nowosielski et al. 2021). Migrant individuals were treated as single, isolated cases that did not require the development of a systemic approach. In part,

this may have been related to the issue of migrants' "lack of visibility" in Plock – prior to 2022, they did not constitute a noticeable, homogeneous group and functioned in a dispersed manner. The presence of migrants was the result of coincidence or the activity of recruitment agencies. At the same time, their number was not small (although there is no systematized data on this). In December 2018, there were 4658 registered Ukrainians (this number also included those working in agriculture outside the city). In 2019, there were slightly more than 7,000 people from Ukraine working in Płock, and in 2021 there were already more than 13,000 registered (Portal Plock, May 9, 2022).

According to the PESEL database, there were 2207 refugees living in the city (data as of December 26, 2022).

## ŚWINOUJŚCIE

Świnoujście is a city of almost 37,000 people located in the Zachodniopmorskie (West Pomeranian) province right on the border with Germany and on the cost of the Baltic Sea. On the one hand, it combines the functions of a resort town and a seaside health resort with natural advantages, and on the other, an important center for the maritime economy and strategic industrial and service investments for Poland's energy security. Maritime ferry connections (passenger-car and freight-rail) connect Świnoujście with the Swedish cities of Ystad and Trelleborg. Świnoujście is connected by rail with German towns. Two airports are located a short distance away – Szczecin-Goleniów (about 70 km) and Heringsdorf/Usedom (about 12 km).

The city's population has been declining in recent years, with 39,834 residents in 2021 (GUS 2021). In the same year, the non-working-age population per 100 people of working age amounted to 73.4 people, in line with the upward trend. The number of live births per 1,000 population decreased, while the number of deaths per 1,000 population increased. In 2021, the natural increase per 1,000 population was -9.21 people, and the unemployment rate was relatively low (about 4.2%).

According to data from the city of Świnoujście, before February 24, there were about 700 migrants registered for permanent or temporary residence in Świnoujście, which accounted for about 2% of the city's population. By the end of 2022, there were 2105 refugees living in the city, meaning that people with a migrant background accounted for more than 7% of the city's residents (based on UKR PESEL data as of December 26, 2022).

There were about 126 social organizations in the city, but one of the representatives of this sector pointed out that *we have a great number of organizations according to indicators, but many of these organizations do not function (...) they are so-called businesses*. Prior to February 24, 2022, there were no organizations in Świnoujście focusing on activities for foreigners, although those related to the German minority, or the Roma community were present (State of the City Report 2021). After the outbreak of the full-scale war, informal groups (including those operating in social media) began to operate in the city and became actively involved in helping refugees. It is worth mentioning that volunteering is also being developed in Świnoujście. Since 2013, the Local Volunteer Center, run by Fundacja Motywacje i Działanie (the Motivation and Action Foundation), has been operating. Starting in June 2021, the Volunteer Center in Świnoujście, run by the Speak Up Foundation, began its activities.

The population of registered foreigners in Świnoujście before February 24, 2022, was mainly dominated by Germans (due to their proximity to the border), Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Swedes. Of course, these proportions changed in 2022, when between the end of February and the end of November the percentage of Ukrainians in relation to the population of people with a migrant background increased

from 9% to 68%. According to the data provided by the City Hall in Świnoujście, between March and the end of November 2022, 3472 refugees arrived in Świnoujście, of which 3151 people were assigned a UKR PESEL number. As the city hall explained about the data provided: *Citizens of Ukraine are constantly on the move. Some of those who came to us went further West or to Scandinavia. Some returned to Ukraine or chose other places in Poland. Some leave, lose their UKR status after a month and come back to us to have that status restored*. Interestingly, there were 620 Ukrainian children in schools and kindergartens in the municipality of Świnoujście as of November 28, 2022, including 428 who arrived after February 24 because of the military action.

The County Employment Office (PUP) in Świnoujście indicated that as of November 28, 2022, 112 people from Ukraine had registered under the Special Act of March 12, 2022, 35 people had de-registered because they had taken up employment, 978 notifications had been received about Ukrainian citizens taking up employment, and 525 declarations on the assignment of work to foreigners had been issued. The PUP also activated the employment of Ukrainians by financing training and internships, although few people took advantage of them.

## WRONKI

Wronki is a small town in the Wielkopolska province, Szamotuły county, about 60 kilometers from Poznań in a northwesterly direction. The city of Wronki had a population of about 10,000, and the entire municipality of about 18,000 (GUS 2021). The number of migrants in Wronki before February 24 was unknown. There was a train station in Wronki on frequently served routes between Poznań, Warsaw, Kraków and Świnoujście, Szczecin, Kostrzyn.

Wronki was home to two large household appliance industrial plants – Amica S.A. and Samsung, employing a total of about 7,000 people. There were many smaller subcontractors in the surrounding towns, and thus unemployment in Wronki had been very low for years (about 2.6%). Wronki attracted many workers from surrounding counties, who came to work by transportation organized by the workplaces or by public transportation. There were numerous hotels and accommodations for unskilled workers in Wronki and surrounding towns.

Due to shortages in the local labor market, companies began hiring migrants from around 2005. They came mainly from Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, as well as Indonesia, Korea, and Vietnam. Recruitment was handled by employment agencies. The most numerous groups of workers were Ukrainians, who worked on the production line, estimated at between 1 and 2 thousand people. This number often fluctuated, as they were short-term, rotational workers, hired for contracts of varying lengths, depending on production needs. Some of these people worked in Wronki but lived in other localities. The number of all foreigners employed was about 2000–3000. City officials say that the local community has become accustomed to the presence of people with migrant experience.

After February 24, 2022, the Wronki Town and Municipality Office tried to translate most official and living information into Ukrainian and Russian, but by the end of 2022, most of the content on the office's website was only available in Polish. As part of its outreach to migrants, the office funded small projects in local schools, as children often learned Polish more quickly than their parents; in turn, the local Wronki Cultural Centre – whichh even before the invasion had been working for the integration – in cooperation with Migrant Info Point from Poznań and the Ukrainian theater, organized a cultural evening and a photo exhibition.

After February 24, 2022, refugees from Ukraine came to Wronki, as some of them had families here, and others got information that there were job opportunities. By December 31, 2022, 1,695 UKR PESEL

numbers had been assigned in Wronki, but this did not mean that these people had taken up residence there. Shortly after the outbreak of the war, Amica and Samsung stopped recruiting workers from Ukraine, as much of the production was exported to Russia and it was unclear what the company's future situation would be. The mayor publicly declared that Wronki could take in even more than 1,000 people, despite the shortage of accommodation.

In the early days, an information desk manned by volunteers and a crisis management team of about 15 people was established to organize and coordinate aid, but long-term operations and housing needs proved to be a challenge.

## BOLECHÓWKO-POTASZE

Bolechówko-Potasze is an intensively expanding satellite town located 15 km north of Poznań in the munipality of Czerwonak. On the village territory, around the old villages of Bolechówko and Potasze, intensive processes of suburbanization took place. Convenient access and direct proximity to the Zielonka Forest made the location attractive to people working in Poznań but wishing to live outside the city. As a result, the village had a population of over 1,400, including many families with young children.

The institutional landscape of Bolechówko and Potasze was typical of a village: the Rural Women's Club and the local branch of Caritas operating at the parish in neighboring Owińska, both very active in animating the local community, organizing through social media. An important point on the map of the village was the branch of the communal cultural center "Kogucik" in Potasze, where numerous events were held.

Although Bolechówko and Potasze had no experience or organizations working on behalf of migrants before February 24, 2022, thanks to a thriving Rural Women's Club, an integrated community and proven communication tools (Facebook group), the reception of a relatively large number of refugees from Ukraine (97 people) took place quickly and smoothly. Almost all refugees were hosted in private homes. What proved problematic was the stage of emancipation – there were no apartments for rent in Bolechówko-Potasze, also in the surrounding villages this market was small. Aside from the Solaris Bus & Coach bus factory in nearby Bolechów, there are no major workplaces in the area (moreover, Solaris offers jobs mostly to men), so finding employment for female refugees proved to be a challenge. Ukrainian workers at the Solaris factory also brought their families here after Feb. 24, 2022.

## HRUBIESZÓW

Hrubieszów is the easternmost town in Poland. There are two border crossings with Ukraine nearby – one in Zosin (18 kilometers) and one in Dołhobyczów (34 kilometers). Due to its location, the presence of people from Ukraine in Hrubieszów is a common thing, but before the outbreak of war *Ukrainians came mainly for shopping, without institutionalizing this* (representative of the local government). There were no administrative units in Hrubieszów dedicated to helping migrants. Still, the town's website provided most of the information in Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, French, German, English and Spanish.

After the political transformation of the early 1990s, many local factories collapsed. Private companies engaged in cross-border trade, but agriculture continued to lead the economy of the entire county. The largest employers in the region were public sector enterprises, including a hospital, an army unit, the Border Guard, the police, and a penitentiary. Unemployment was high (12.5%), and nearly a third

of job seekers were between the ages of 25 and 34. In terms of transportation, the city was on the periphery – there were only two trains a day.

Hrubieszów had a community center, a cinema, a museum, three libraries, three Catholic churches, an Orthodox church, and the Polish French Culture and Friendship Foundation, which organized French language lessons in several schools. Although there was no association dedicated to cross-border Polish-Ukrainian cooperation, the city hosted an event called Nadbużańskie Spotkania Artystyczne (Artistic Meetings on the Bug River) and friendly matches played by the town's Football Club Unia Hrubieszów against teams of partner cities from Ukraine (Sokal, Volodymyr Volynskyi, Kamianets Podolskyi).

Due to its location, Hrubieszów became one of the main reception points for Ukrainian refugees after February 24, 2022. Two reception points began operating in the town – one managed by municipal entities and the other by the district authorities. Refugees arriving in Hrubieszów overwhelmingly left for the west after a few hours or days. Thanks to the cooperation of the local government and residents, *Hrubieszów became quite famous in the national space, because our mayor was in the European Parliament and spoke about the future of all this, and the future of refugees. I think that Hrubieszów at this point has been noticed, and this is a very good thing, because this is a break away from this pattern that people from smaller towns will not achieve anything. No, hello, we are here, we are alive and often even better than Warsaw, Kraków, and the big cities* (civil society).

In 2021, there were only 4 migrants registered in nearly 17,000-strong Hrubieszów (about 0.02% of the town's total population). The town's population could be considered aging, which resulted, among other things, from economic emigration. New people rarely settled in Hrubieszów. The most common cases were Ukrainian women who married Poles living there. However, they were not treated as strangers, and many people living in the city only learned of their existence when Hrubieszów's Ukrainian women became involved in helping refugees at the reception desk.

The population of Hrubieszów did not increase in 2022, more people checked out of the city than registered in it. At the end of 2022, there were 18 non-PESEL residents registered permanently or temporarily in Hrubieszów (about 0.1% of the town's population). After the outbreak of the war, the Population Register in Hrubieszów assigned 224 UKR PESEL numbers to refugees from Ukraine, but it is not known whether they stayed in the town. As of December 2022, 30 refugees received housing and food in Hrubieszów (including 26 who had their benefits extended), and 4 received family benefits.

## Appendix 2. Methodology and authorship of case studies

| BIG CITIES | AUTHORS AND CASE STUDY AUTHORS |
|---|---|
| Warszawa | Michał Nowosielski, Karolina Łukasiewicz, Marta Pachocka, Karolina Podgórska, Aleksandra Winiarska, Ksenia Homel, Aneta Krzyworzeka, OBM |
| Kraków | Karolina Czerska-Shaw, Konrad Pędziwiatr, Patrycja Trzeszczyńska, OWIM |
| Poznań | Natalia Bloch, Izabella Main, CeBaM, UAM |
| Rzeszów | Karolina Podgórska, Andrew Yekaterynchuk, UMCS |
| Lublin | Karolina Podgórska, Andrew Yekaterynchuk, UMCS |
| **MEDIUM CITIES** | |
| Łomża | Joanna Zuzanna Popławska, OBM, SGH |
| Płock | Michał Nowosielski OBM, Arkadiusz Lewandowski, UMK |
| Świnoujście | Marta Pachocka, OBM, SGH |
| **SMALL TOWNS** | |
| Wronki | Izabella Main, CeBaM, UAM |
| Bolechów-ko- Potasze | Natalia Bloch, CeBaM, UAM |
| Hrubieszów | Joanna Urbańska, CeBaM, UAM |

## METHODS IN DETAILS

### WARSAW

The analysis was based on data collected from the projects: using qualitative and quantitative methodologies:

- "Migrant integration governance in CEE cities post 2015 – MigIntegrEast," funded under the H2020 MSCA program, contract no. 896115.
- "Foreigners – Varsovians. Diagnosis and recommendations for integration measures) carried out in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Poland.
- "Equal access of foreigners to public services: Warsaw" implemented in partnership with the Warsaw City Hall, financed by the Active Citizens Program - National Fund (Norwegian and EEA Funds)

Data from the following projects were used in the analysis:

- Qualitative study of representatives of local public administration dealing with broad issues of immigrant integration at the local government level. Number of interviews N = 16.

- Qualitative study of employees and activists of community organizations working on broad issues of immigrant integration in Warsaw. Number of interviews N = 9.
- Qualitative study of activists of immigrant organizations and immigrant activists working in Warsaw. Number of interviews N = 10.
- Interviews with local government officials and representatives to assess changes after February 24, 2022. Number of interviews N = 4.
- Analysis of found data, including administrative data provided by the Warsaw City Hall.

The interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically based on the developed code tree. Dedoose software was used for the analysis.

## KRAKÓW

The analysis was based on diverse registry data as well as quantitative and qualitative data collected for a total of 8 months in 2022 as part of the Multiculturalism and Migration Observatory's work on four separate studies:

- "Refugees from Ukraine in Kraków"
- "Forced Migrants from Ukraine in Kraków in the Light of Qualitative Research"
- "Mobilizing Aid – A Case Study of the City of Kraków in 2022
- "Immigrants in Kraków in 2022."

The analysis used data collected as follows:

- In-depth interviews with activists or aid coordinators of Ukrainian organizations (July-November 2022). Number of interviews N=6.
- In-depth interviews with refugees (July-November 2022). Number of interviews N=10.
- In-depth interviews among leaders and activists of different nations working in the sphere of humanitarian mobilization after February 24, 2022 (October-December 2022). Number of interviews N=32.
- CAWI survey (in Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, and English) among Kraków's volunteers. Number of completed surveys N=84.
- Observation and analysis of 14 informal Facebook groups with between 1500 and 200,000 members. These groups were local, i.e., they were in Kraków and comprised refugees, pre-2022 migrants and non-Ukrainian users (July-November 2022).

All data were analyzed with the help of thematic analysis with elements of social network analysis.

## POZNAŃ

The following interviews were conducted as part of the November-December 2022 survey:

- Individual in-depth interviews with representatives of the public administration (local and central) who actively participated in organizing assistance to refugees. Number of interviews N = 2.
- Individual in-depth interviews with social organizations (Polish and Ukrainian) involved in helping refugees. Number of interviews N = 8.
- Participatory observation from February 24 to December 2022

Analysis of found data from websites and Facebook profiles of local institutions, press analysis.

## LUBLIN

The study was carried out as part of the work of the MigLab Migration and Mobility Research Team: Migration in Local Perspective, operating at the Institute of Sociology of Maria Curie-Sklodowska University in Lublin; the study was conducted from May to September 2022. The following material was used in the report:

- Individual in-depth interviews with representatives of the public administration (local and central) who actively participated in organizing assistance to refugees. Number of interviews N = 10.
- Individual in-depth interviews with community organizations involved in helping refugees. Number of interviews. N = 14.
- Interviews with entrepreneurs involved in helping refugees. Number of interviews. N = 2.
- In addition, materials were used from a focus study held on July 28, 2022, in Lublin while a seminar organized for representatives of local labor market entities "Workers from Ukraine on the Polish labor market before and after the outbreak of war – diagnosis, challenges, recommendations." The seminar was implemented within the framework of the project BARMIG: Bargaining for working conditions and social rights of migrant workers in CEE Countries, financed by the European Commission's DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion.

Analysis of foundational data from websites and Facebook profiles of local institutions, press analysis.

## RZESZÓW

The following interviews (online) were conducted as part of the survey carried out in November and December 2022:

- Individual in-depth interviews with representatives of the public administration (local and central) who actively participated in organizing assistance to refugees. Number of interviews N = 3.
- Individual in-depth interviews with community organizations involved in helping refugees. Number of interviews N = 4.

- Interview with an entrepreneur involved in helping refugees. Number of interviews N = 1.
- In addition, one interview was made available by the Observatory of Multiculturalism and Migration in Kraków and was part of the research „Mobilization of Aid. A case study of the city of Kraków" (interview with an international organization).

Analysis of found data from websites and Facebook profiles of local institutions, press analysis.

## ŁOMŻA

The analysis is based on data collected through projects using qualitative methods:

- "Welcoming Spaces – Investing in 'migrant-friendly places' in Europe: revitalizing shrinking areas by welcoming non-EU migrants," funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program, Contract No. 870952.
- "Migrant integration governance in CEE cities post 2015 – MigIntegrEast" funded under the H2020 MSCA program, contract no. 896115.

The analysis used data collected from the projects:

- Individual in-depth interviews with representatives of the local administration dealing with broad issues of urban development. Number of interviews N = 3.
- Individual in-depth interviews with representatives of social organizations dealing with wide-ranging issues of integration of im- grantees. Number of interviews N = 2.
- Interviews with representatives of local public administration to assess changes after 24.02.2022. Number of interviews N = 3 (June, November 2022).
- Interviews with representatives of community organizations to assess changes after February 24, 2022. Number of interviews N = 7 (June, November 2022).

Analysis of found data from the Łomża City Hall website, local press, statistical data (including those provided by the city hall).

## PŁOCK

As part of the survey conducted after February 24, 2022, the following interviews were conducted:

- Individual in-depth interviews with representatives of the local administration who were actively involved in organizing assistance to refugees. Number of interviews N = 8.
- Individual in-depth interviews with representatives of locally active social organizations, churches, and religious groups. Number of interviews N = 2.

## ŚWINOUJŚCIE

Research scouting in March 2022 through communication with the official Facebook account of the mayor of Świnoujście. The following interviews were conducted as part of the core survey conducted in November 2022:

- Individual in-depth interviews with representatives of the local administration who were actively involved in organizing assistance to refugees. Number of interviews N = 2.
- Individual in-depth interviews with representatives of locally active community organizations and churches and religious groups. Number of interviews N = 5.
- Interview with an entrepreneur involved in helping refugees. Number of interviews N = 1.

Analysis of foundational data provided by Świnoujście City Hall and related institutions. Analysis of found data including social media (Facebook) – publicly available accounts associated with the City Hall; official websites of the City Hall and related institutions (MOPS, PUP, ZUS, etc.), official websites of social organizations other than social media accounts and their social media, databases of legal acts, literature on the subject, databases of statistical data, including GUS (Central Statistical Office, CSO), local media.

## BOLECHÓWKO-POTASZE

The survey was conducted in November and December 2022:

- Individual in-depth interviews with representatives of the local public administration who were actively involved in organizing assistance to refugees. Number of interviews N = 1.
- Individual in-depth interviews with representatives of locally active social organizations, churches, and religious groups. Number of interviews N = 2.

Participatory observation from February 24 to December 2022. Analysis of found data from the municipality's website, the village's Facebook profile, the local press, literature on the subject and reports.

## HRUBIESZÓW

The following interviews were conducted as part of the November-December 2022 survey:

- Individual in-depth interviews with representatives of the local public administration who actively participated in organizing assistance to refugees. Number of interviews N = 1.
- Individual in-depth interviews with people involved in helping refugees. Number of interviews N = 2.

Analysis of foundational data from the city's website, the local association's profile on Facebook, from the local press, subject literature, and reports.

## WRONKI

The survey was conducted in November and December 2022:

- Individual in-depth interviews with representatives of the local public administration who actively participated in organizing assistance to refugees. Number of interviews N = 2.
- Individual in-depth interviews with people involved in helping refugees. Number of interviews N = 1.
- Interview with an entrepreneur involved in helping refugees. Number of interviews N = 1.

Analysis of foundational data from the city's website, the Facebook profile of local associations, local press, literature, and reports.

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