

# SLOVAKIA

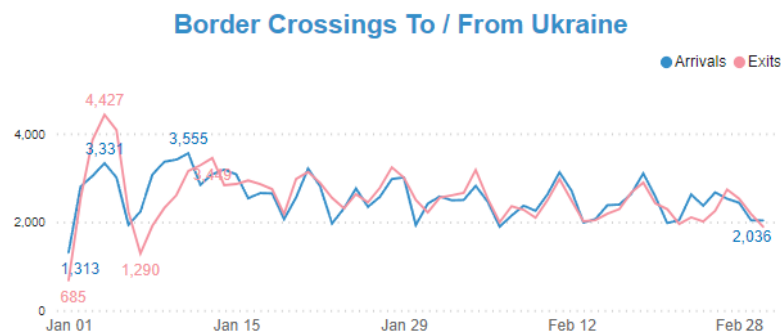
1 January – 28 February 2023

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, over **1.2 million people have crossed the border into Slovakia**. Around 80 per cent are women and children, but there are also older people and those who need **urgent medical care or who have disabilities**.

UNHCR's response to the refugee crisis is multisectoral and focuses on **protection, reception conditions, accommodation, socio-economic inclusion, and financial assistance** for the most vulnerable groups.

UNHCR and partners are present at border crossing points and other locations where refugees are assisted to **access protection and assistance, through receiving vital access to information on rights and available services, and to identify and refer vulnerable refugees to relevant services**.

## BORDER CROSSINGS FROM UKRAINE & TEMPORARY PROTECTION



**Temporary Protection** (As of 28 February 2022)

**110,555** applications for temporary protection status &  
**98,095** with valid temporary protection status



Young girl enjoying an arts and crafts session at partner SME SPOLU's Ukrainian-Slovak community centre. © UNHCR / Zsolt Balla

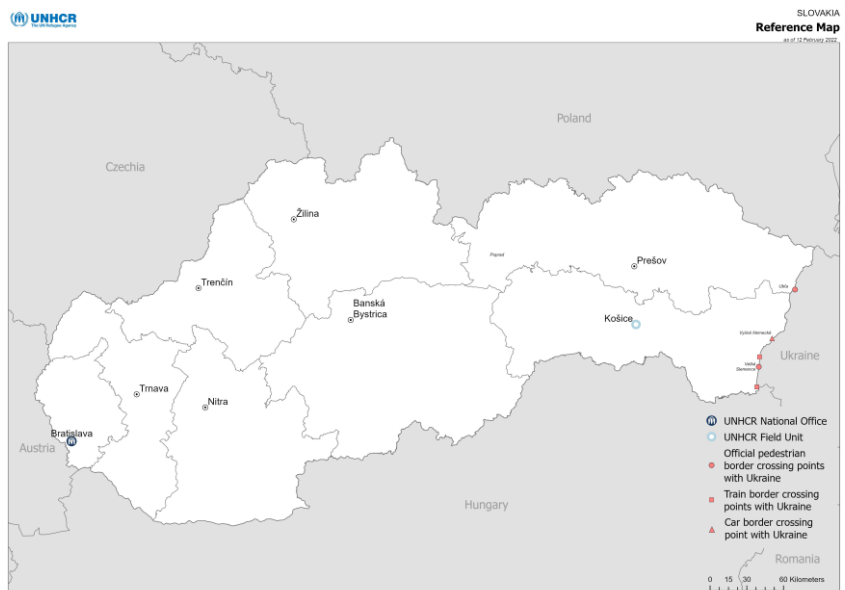
## UNHCR PRESENCE IN SLOVAKIA

### STAFF:

- **45 Total** staff
  - **19** International Staff
  - **26** National/Local Staff

### OFFICES:

- **1** National Office in Bratislava
- **1** Field Office in Košice
- **1** UNHCR Representation for Central Europe in Budapest



For more information, see the [Operational Data Portal](#) for the Ukraine Refugee Situation.

## Operational Context

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Slovakia has seen a rapid influx of refugees fleeing hostilities at its four border crossing points with Ukraine. The majority have been women and children and have included older people, people with disabilities, and those with urgent medical care needs. While the initial influx has stabilized, the volatile security situation in Ukraine leaves open the possibility of another wave of people crossing the border to Slovakia in the future. The national authorities continue to process new arrivals, providing information on temporary protection and asylum, with onward transport available for those seeking to reach urban centres. Information is provided by UNHCR and partner staff at border crossing points, Blue Dot Protection Hubs at transit and multi-service centers, counselling refugees, providing psycho-social and interpretation support, and alerting refugees to available services including accommodation, food, employment opportunities, and health care. As of 28 February, there were over 1.2 million border crossings from Ukraine into Slovakia, and 110,555 individuals had applied for temporary protection. 53,000 Ukrainian nationals, including more than 8,000 university students, have temporary residence in Slovakia, in addition to those refugees who are granted tolerated stay in the country. People who are transiting Slovakia or those travelling between Ukraine and the EU for other reasons such as family visits are also provided with protection services.

As the war in Ukraine becomes more drawn out, it is increasingly important to shift to a more sustainable response model over the medium- to longer-term. UNHCR is actively engaged with the Government on coordinating humanitarian actors via the [Refugee Coordination Forum \(RCF\)](#). UNHCR has expanded its presence to 45 staff after establishing a National Office in Bratislava and a Field Office in Košice – this from only one staff member covering the country from Budapest at the beginning of 2022.

## Partnerships

UNHCR works closely with the Slovak Government counterparts to ensure refugees can enjoy their human rights and have access to essential services. UNHCR maintains productive collaboration with state entities including local and municipal authorities, UN agencies, NGOs, humanitarian partners, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders to provide support and assistance to those seeking protection.

With UNICEF, UNHCR has established five Blue Dot Protection Hubs, one in each of Bratislava, Nitra, Michalovce, and Košice, and with a mobile Blue Dot also covering the Nitra region. 'Blue Dots' are safe spaces in countries neighbouring Ukraine that provide refugees, including women, children, and families, with critical information and services.

UNHCR has five formal partnership agreements with the following organizations:

- **Slovak Humanitarian Council (SHC):** SHC is present at the Border Crossing Points (BCPs) in Veľké Slemence and Ubl'a, providing information on access to services and acts as UNHCR partner for the Blue Dots in Michalovce, Kosice, and Nitra. SHC is also present in service centres and Help Desks in Zilina, Dunajská Streda, and Humenne, and reaches out to accommodation centres throughout these regions and supports participatory assessments. SHC is providing legal counselling and aid to asylum-seekers in detention centres in Secovce and Medvedov.



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Migration Office, with UNHCR and other UN agencies, marked one year of war in Ukraine by highlighting the resilience, skills, and potential of refugees. Building on solidarity of Slovak Government and civil society, socio-economic inclusion of refugees will support sustainable development in Slovakia. © UNHCR / Lucia Majerciakova

- **Mareena:** Mareena organizes community and inclusion activities for Ukrainian refugees and host communities. The partner runs a network of community outreach volunteers in Bratislava, Kosice, Nitra, Banska Bystrica and Trencin, and fosters cooperation with municipalities to strengthen refugees' inclusion and local response. Mareena facilitates self-reliance of refugee women, supporting their access to the Slovak labour market and better utilisation of their potential. Mareena promotes social cohesion and acceptance of refugees in the host society through active outreach to the public. It also implements UNHCR-UNICEF Helpline and is present at the BCP in Vysne Nemecke, providing information on access to assistance and services.
- **People in Need Slovakia (PIN):** Through its mobile outreach teams and strong field presence, PIN focuses on the provision of social assistance, community and case work for vulnerable refugees away from the main assistance hubs and collective accommodation facilities in some of the more remote locations in the regions of Banska Bystrica, Kosice, Presov, and Zilina. This includes focus on marginalized groups, such as the Roma and persons with disabilities.
- **Human Rights League (HRL):** Present at the Bottova Blue Dot in Bratislava and at the Integration Center in Kosice, HRL is providing legal counselling and aid, as well as interpretation services for Ukrainian refugees, related to their registration for Temporary Protection and access to rights, services, and information. HRL
- **Sme Spolu:** Sme Spolu ["We Are Together"] runs a community centre for Ukrainian and host communities in Bratislava, and supports Ukrainian refugees with socio-economic inclusion and provision of key information, and contributes to the building of communities and their self-reliance.
- Partners at Blue Dots and Help Desks facilitate refugee inclusion in social protection, health care and education, identify and refer the most vulnerable refugees, including unaccompanied and separated children, in collaboration with the Offices of Labour and Social Affairs, and review rental and employment contracts with a view of preventing exploitation. All partners conduct protection interviews as a key data source for UNHCR and inter-agency assessments, and support focus group discussions with the refugee and host communities.

## UNHCR Response

### Protection

UNHCR and partners are present at border crossing points, transit and reception centres, collective sites, Help Desks, Blue Dot Protection Hubs, community centers and other areas, and continue to reinforce information provision and legal counselling to ensure that those forced to flee are fully informed about procedures for applying for Temporary Protection, as well as the associated rights and services. In addition, UNHCR and partners are working to reinforce reception conditions by strengthening local capacities and monitoring arrivals to ensure their equal access to protection and documentation and associated rights, including for third-country nationals and the stateless.

UNHCR monitors refugees' needs and intentions through protection profiling and monitoring interviews throughout Slovakia. Protection Monitoring promotes evidence-based protection interventions and actively identifies persons with specific needs to facilitate timely information provision and referrals to assistance and services. UNHCR and partners are identifying people with specific needs, including those with disabilities, unaccompanied and separated children, and women and children at risk of labour exploitation, trafficking in persons, and gender-based violence (GBV)—and refer them to specialized services and are supporting refugees to access accommodation, health care, and employment.



In March, UNHCR and UNICEF jointly launched the Bratislava's 4th Blue Dot at Comin Centre in Nitra. The Blue Dot will provide support, services, and safe spaces for refugee women and children. @UNICEF\_ECA

In coordination with local authorities, referral pathways have been developed to ensure refugees can access necessary services, in accordance with their needs and preferences. By building partnerships with the Justice Ministry's Legal Aid Centre and the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, UNHCR ensures that refugees have access to free legal counselling and representation in Slovakia. UNHCR and partners are also organizing a wide range of community activities for Ukrainian refugees in diverse locations across Slovakia to let them connect, share information, and experience, and enhance their resilience and socioeconomic inclusion.

### **Achievements:**

- Protection and Inclusion Working Group, and its Inclusion sub-Working Group, has brought together more than 45 experts and organisations, with contributions of the Migration Office and Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, and public institutions and municipalities, in sessions discussing and developing concrete proposals regarding accommodation assistance and housing strategy, communication with communities, gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health, and inclusion of refugees in education, social protection (joint session with the Cash Working Group), and employment and self-employment.
- The Working Group has established a Disability Workforce to guide its work, comprising the Commissioner on persons with disabilities, the National Disability Council, Platform of the Parents with Children with Disabilities, Legal Aid Centre, and Human Rights League agreed on collaboration to support the capacity of local NGOs working with persons with disabilities in responding to refugee needs.
- With UNICEF, and working closely with the Mayoral Office of Nitra, the Nitra Blue Dot Protection Hub and Mobile Blue Dot for Nitra region and surrounding areas of western Slovakia were established in February.
- From 1 January – 28 February, 8,890 refugees in Slovakia received protection services at Blue Dots, Help Desks, and mobile outreach through UNHCR partners. In addition, 1,566 calls were received by the Help Desk.
- UNHCR handed over eight laptops to university students from Ukraine receiving DAFI scholarships in Bratislava, Kosice, and Nitra, and donated three laptops to Ukrainian researchers on refugee issues with Comenius University in February, under an MoU with the university.
- The distribution of winter clothing donated by Palace and Canada Goose began in January. Overall, 3,800 much-needed winter items (clothes, jackets, and accessories) were distributed to 1,900 vulnerable refugees through 12 Caritas locations, including Bratislava, Košice, Michalovce, Presov, Poprad, Zilina, Banska Bystrica, Nitra, and Trnava.
- UNHCR continues to conduct Protection Profiling and Monitoring assessment in collaboration with its partners, publishing key data on refugees' profile, displacement patterns, and access to rights in Slovakia, having conducted 807 interviews between January and February 2023.

### **Coordination**

In support of Government-led efforts, UNHCR is leading the coordination of the inter-agency Refugee Response Plan (RRP) for Slovakia to ensure a multi-partner and multi-sector assistance for refugees, including third-country nationals, from Ukraine. is in line with the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) and in close collaboration and consultation with relevant Government counterparts, and with the support of inter-agency partners and other stakeholders. UNHCR co-leads, along with the Government, a response-wide [Refugee Coordination Forum \(RCF\)](#) at country-level to ensure a harmonized response within existing government structures and among inter-agency partners, NGOs, volunteers, and other stakeholders.

### **Achievements:**

- The [2023 Refugee Response Plan \(RRP\)](#) for Slovakia is a joint effort among 28 partners contributing to a multi-sectoral humanitarian plan with financial requirements of USD 80.1 million to help 200,000 Ukrainian refugees. The immediate needs of new arrivals will be addressed throughout the year, while long-term

solutions and improved opportunities will be promoted to empower refugees and ensure socio-economic inclusion, as well as to ensure social cohesion. The inter-agency response builds on leveraging national and sub-national protection systems and strengthening and complementing the national response, with a view to mitigating protection risks and facilitating refugee inclusion. In February, the Ministry of Interior hosted the launch event of the 2023 RRP for Slovakia, with UNHCR Slovakia presenting the RRP on behalf of all partners involved.

- Since the start of 2023, the Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) has been co-chaired by UNHCR and the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (SNCHR). The group continued its activities under the umbrella of the Refugee Coordination Forum, with updated Terms of Reference and a new Action Plan. Among its first achievements this year, the PSEA Task Force has drafted inter-agency SOPs for the processing and referral of allegations. During the reporting period, 181 people have been trained on PSEA.

## Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

UNHCR advocates for the inclusion of people in need of international protection in national systems of health, legal/justice, and protection, seeking to support in strengthening the capacity to prevent, mitigate and provide a comprehensive adequate and safe response to GBV, and reinforce existing national capacities to guarantee quality services in line with international standards and mainstreaming of GBV across multi-sectoral refugee response. An important part of the UNHCR GBVs team's work is to provide training to, and coordination with, the RRP partners.

### Achievements:

- In January and February, 59 people (47 women and 12 men) were trained on various topics related to GBV. This included a training on Clinical Management of Rape and Interpersonal Violence co-facilitated with UNFPA experts in Bratislava, and a 5-day training for health professionals from operational partner Equita and Bratislava hospitals, and social and victims support service providers. The latter training offered a deep insight into the survivor-centred and gender-sensitive approach to survivors of GBV.
- From January to February, UNHCR continued mapping of GBV response services and the development of referral pathways, in coordination with the relevant national authorities, other agencies and service providers. GBV Referral pathways for Kosice and Presov were finalized and validated with stakeholders.
- In February, as a result of the creation of referral pathways, the first GBV survivor – without UNHCR direct involvement to support the functioning of case management – was referred by Bottova Blue Dot Protection Hub to Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (SNCHR) for legal case management. This is an important milestone in the strengthening of national systems related to GBV and case management.
- In February, a presentation on GBV was provided at the Regional Refugee Coordination Forum in Kosice, with a following discussion about GBV cases and suspected trafficking in person for labour exploitation. Survivors were supported by the partner SHC.

## Child protection

Child protection preparedness and response is currently focused on immediate assistance, referral and identification for children at risk including unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) through Help Desks at border crossing points and registration/service centres in Bottova, Košice, Michalovce, Nitra, Žilina, as well as through the five Blue Dots in Slovakia.

### Achievements:

- The first Child Protection sub-working group (CP-SWG) for the year of 2023 was held. During the meeting, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MoLSAF) presented its agenda of social and legal protection and social services. In addition, the co-chairs shared updates on the progress of drafting the CP referral pathway and discussed the CP-SWG priorities for 2023.

- All unaccompanied children identified through UNHCR registration are being contacted to verify their care arrangement and access to services. The exercise will ensure accurate data on the number of unaccompanied children and their situation in Slovakia.

## Communication and Provision of Information

As the arrival of refugees from Ukraine into Slovakia continues and the need for their socioeconomic inclusion increases, provision of information remains crucial to ensuring refugees are able to access key services, make informed decisions, and actively participate in UNHCR's and partners' response. UNHCR and partners are working to ensure refugees have access to information through their preferred channels, feedback mechanisms, community networks, and are able to participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their lives. UNHCR has established multiple channels for communication with refugee communities, including a helpline, Telegram channel, email, and the Help website. UNHCR also routinely holds in-person individual and group consultations and counselling sessions with Ukrainian refugees.

### Achievements:

- From 1 January to 28 February 2023, UNHCR-UNICEF Helpline operators attended and registered 1,725 calls, and the UNHCR Slovakia Help Page for refugees received 57,342 visits.
- At the end of February 2023, UNHCR Telegram channel had over 5,000 subscribers with over 15,000 views on some days, proving to be a useful source of latest official and reliable information. It is one of the most viewed Telegram channels for Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia.
- UNHCR's partner, refugee-led organization SME SPOLU, organized a series of in-person information sessions in the Ukrainian – Slovak community centre in Bratislava on practical aspects of socio-economic inclusion of refugees in Slovakia (employment, accommodation, social payments and benefits, etc.).

## Training and Capacity-Building

### Achievements:

- As of 28 February, 268 individuals have been reached through capacity development trainings and initiatives by UNHCR and partners on protection topics including GBV and PSEA.
- So far, in 2023, UNHCR has provided trainings on PSEA core principles and standards of conduct through different online and offline modalities to 181 staff members of UNHCR and partner organizations, as well district offices' volunteers, to enhance the capacities of all service-providers working with refugees.

## Cash-Based Interventions

In order to support Ukrainian families, stateless persons and third country nationals affected by the war in Ukraine, UNHCR in cooperation with the Slovak Government has been providing a one-time emergency cash transfer for winter expenses. UNHCR exceptionally extended the enrolment for the one-time emergency cash assistance for winter related expenses until 20 January. Almost 22,000 individuals were assisted by UNHCR with Winterization cash support.

### Achievements:

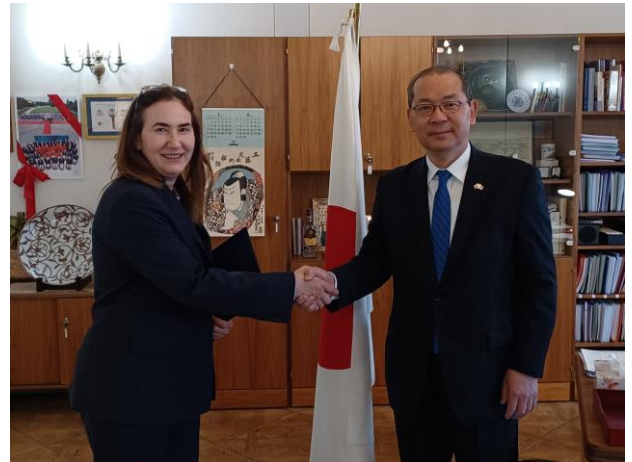
- In January and February, 1,819 individuals received the one-time emergency cash assistance for winter related expenses.

## Special Thanks to Donors

### UNHCR Slovakia is grateful to the donors for supporting its activities since 2022

United States of America | Japan | VGP Group | Australia for UNHCR | MSC Foundation |

UNHCR is also grateful to donors of unrestricted and regional funds that Slovakia has benefitted from: Sweden | Norway | Private donors USA | Private donors Japan | Germany | United Kingdom | Private donors Spain | Netherlands | Denmark | Private donors Sweden | Private donors Germany | Private donors Bahamas | Private donors Italy | United States of America | Switzerland | Private donors Republic of Korea | Private donors United Kingdom | France | Japan | Private donors Netherlands | Private donors France | Private donors Switzerland | Private donors Spain | Ireland | Belgium | Private donors Sweden | Private donors Canada | Italy | Private donors Australia | Private donors Denmark | Private donors Czech Republic | Canada | Australia | Spain | Austria | Private donors China | Private donors Luxembourg | Private donors Netherlands |



In February, UNHCR expressed gratitude to the People of Japan for the country's contribution for the 2023 programme during a visit of UNHCR's Head of National Office, Danijela Popovic-Efendic, when she presented a Letter of Thank You to H.E. Mr. Makoto Nakagawa, Ambassador of Japan to Slovakia, as the Japanese Embassy in Bratislava. @UNHCR/Russell Fraser

For more information, please visit UNHCR's [Global Focus page for the Ukraine Situation](#), [available here](#).

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## More Information

For further information, please visit the [UNHCR Ukraine Situation Operational Data Portal](#)

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