

Poland

12 April 2022

Over **2.6 million** refugees from Ukraine have entered Poland since 24 February, of whom **>90 percent** are women and children with elevated vulnerability to trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse, and mental health needs.

Over **700,000** visits to UNHCR's dedicated website for refugees, help.unhcr.org/poland, have been recorded, while **3 UNHCR-UNICEF Blue Dot Hubs** provide protection counselling and child-friendly services, with planned expansion.

UNHCR leads the **refugee coordination structure** in Poland, to include the Protection Sector, Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Sub-Sectors, and Accountability to Affected Persons working group.

Operational Context

Since 24 February, over **2.6 million** refugees have arrived from Ukraine to Poland, of whom over **90 percent** are women and children. The Polish Government has lifted most legal and procedural entry restrictions for refugees from Ukraine, facilitating access to territory at eight land border crossing points (BCP). After peaks in early March, arrivals continue at lower levels in recent weeks. The Polish government has committed to reception services for refugees from Ukraine, including at the border, at nearby reception facilities, and in host cities. As of 16 March, a new legal regime for Ukrainian citizens and their spouses has facilitated access to the Polish social security system—with over **800,000** registered as of 10 April—alongside access to Temporary Protection or international protection for more limited categories of Third Country Nationals. Nevertheless, the speed and scale of arrivals have strained existing systems to respond.

Protection Challenges

- A high rate of family separation and increasing concerns of conflict-related abuses elevate vulnerabilities of trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and immediate mental health needs, including for unaccompanied and separated children, single women, single-parent households, older persons, and persons with disabilities.
- Rapid border processing has resulted in limited data for profiling, monitoring, identification of persons with specific needs, and needs assessments as the population rapidly disperses into urban areas and onward countries. This includes a need for official data on refugee population density and concentration in cities and towns in Poland.
- Limited pre-existing infrastructure for coordination, referral pathways and services (notably for gender-based violence and SEA), and feedback mechanisms requires expanded staffing, capacity building, engagement with relevant Ministries and local authorities, and coordination.
- As compared to initial arrivals, newer arrivals to Poland are less resourced, disoriented, distressed, and without an onward plan. On arrival, refugees cite a need for information, and there is critical need for effective case management for urgent cases.



Children doodle Ukrainian and Polish flags on the wall of the Warsaw 1 Cash Enrolment Point. @UNHCR/J. Caplin, 8 April 2022

Protection Priorities

1 Physical safety through access to information

Raise awareness of trusted resources and life-saving information before arrival, upon arrival, and inside Poland

2 Protection through presence

Provide protection counselling and services at Blue Dot Hubs and at other pre-existing sites for refugees

3 Identification and referral of vulnerable persons

Identify and refer via monitoring, community-based engagement, and pathways, particularly for urgent cases on arrival

UNHCR and Partners: Protection Activities

Coordination

- UNHCR leads the overarching refugee coordination structure in Poland, to include the Protection Sector, the Child Protection and GBV sub-sectors, and Accountability to Affected Persons working group. UNHCR protection presence is mainstreamed across other sectors and working groups, including those related to cash, trafficking, third country nationals, education, and health.
- Protection-related sectors, sub-sectors, and working groups are engaging in 4/5W mapping, development of shared repositories, standardized questions for monitoring, and referral pathways.
- At the border, UNHCR leads twice-weekly coordination meetings in Rzeszow and Przemyśl.
- UNHCR continues engagement with officials, including the Ministry of Interior, Border Guards, Office for Foreigners, Voivodship Governors, Mayors' offices, Union of Polish Metropolises, and others.

Communication with Communities (CwC) and Outreach

- Since the start of the emergency, UNHCR has developed and circulated print and digital CwC materials about UNHCR's HELP website, anti-fraud and exploitation messages, onward movement, access to international protection in Poland, PSEA, and information on legal stay and resources in Poland.
- Posters, banners, and **>50,000** leaflets have been distributed at BCPs and reception centres. These include banners, with IOM, in Ukrainian and English at entry points into Poland with key anti-trafficking messages to raise awareness of immediate risks for self-protection. Materials have also been circulated via Telegram and UNHCR social media accounts.
- Since 24 February, UNHCR's website for refugees—help.unhcr.org/poland—has reached **over 700,000** visits (>60,000 from within Ukraine), **nearly 1.7 million** page views, and is the most visited HELP site globally. It is available in 8 languages, with dedicated content for refugees from Ukraine available in English, Ukrainian, and Polish.
- In support of cash as an entry point for protection, UNHCR has developed materials and messages to facilitate UNHCR's Cash Assistance Programme in Poland, including daily updates to the HELP page. UNHCR has also responded to **>1,000** emails and phone calls on cash and has developed a repository of counselling lines and referral pathways.
- UNHCR is in dialogue with Ukrainian Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) on formation of partnerships for outreach, monitoring and other engagement.



Anti-Trafficking poster at Medyka BCP. @UNHCR/N. Abu Amr, 28 March 2022

● Provision of Protection Services: Blue Dot Hubs

- **Three UNHCR-UNICEF Blue Dot Hubs** are currently operating in Warsaw, Krakow, and the Medyka Border Crossing Point, with additional locations identified for near-term expansion.
- In Warsaw, from its 21 March opening through 11 April, **647 individuals (281 families)** were counselled, with key concerns including: healthcare, mental healthcare, education, cash-related questions, child protection and social services, and employment services and opportunities. In Krakow, from its 7 April opening day, **92 individuals (191 families)** were counselled.
- Top profiles of visitors to the Blue Dot have included single parents/caregivers, unaccompanied and separated children, older persons at risk, persons with disability, and single women at risk.
- Additional partner capacity is planned at existing and forthcoming Blue Dots, including Ukrainian speaking psychologists and social workers and child protection partner presence to support children and caregivers with access to the national child protection system and legal guardianship procedures, to conduct best interest assessments, and to provide capacity development activities.

Way Forward

- **Increased partnerships and community-based engagements:** including opportunities for Blue Dot hub services, protection monitoring, border monitoring, and collaboration with CBOs.
- **Expansion of Blue Dots:** In collaboration with UNICEF, introduce Blue Dot hubs in prioritized cities, and co-located with UNHCR cash enrolment points.
- **Strengthened referral pathways:** Development of identification and effective referral mechanisms, particularly for serious cases of conflict-related abuse, SEA, GBV, CP, MHPSS, and other concerns.
- **Bolstered AAP and community engagement:** Including implementation of effective, confidential complaint and feedback mechanisms, direct engagement with the refugee community through Ukrainian-speaking staff, and tailored CwC materials.
- **Effective monitoring:** Implementation of quantitative and qualitative monitoring, including standardized tools for data collection, focus group discussions, and other participatory dialogue.



Children and families keep warm on a rainy day at the Blue Dot Hub in Warsaw 1 Cash Enrolment Point. @UNHCR/S. Etzold, 2 April 2022