

# Poland

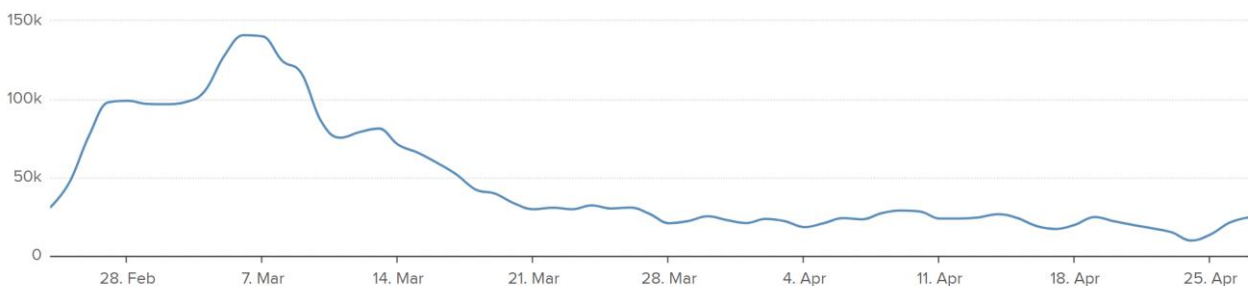
25 April 2022

Since **24 February**, over **3 million refugees** have entered Poland from Ukraine. This is more than half of the 5.3 million refugees who left Ukraine overall since the onset of the war. The vast majority at rate of 90% plus, of refugees arriving to Poland are women, children and older people. Refugees from Ukraine continue to arrive, though at smaller numbers than in early March, when over 100,000 people were arriving per day. While some have moved on, the majority remain in Poland.

UNHCR continues to **scale up its presence and operations** across Poland to support the Government-led response to what is now one of the world's biggest refugee populations. UNHCR focuses on **protection** services and **cash assistance** to give refugees the dignity of choice and cover their most urgent needs, as well as **emergency supplies** to support reception capacity, and longer-term **solutions**.

**UNHCR coordinates the refugee response** in close collaboration with national authorities, UN and NGO partners, and advocates for **comprehensive international support** for all people forced to flee from Ukraine.

Refugees fleeing Ukraine - by date



## HIGHLIGHTS

**2,867,000**

Refugee arrivals in Poland from Ukraine since 24 February 2022, out of the total 5.3 million refugees who fled Ukraine.

**31,500**

individuals enrolled in UNHCR's cash assistance programme

**5** Blue Dots established in Warsaw, Krakow, Medyka border point, Przemysl reception centre, and Korczowa transit centre



Poland. Refugees from Ukraine wait to register for cash assistance in Warsaw. © UNHCR/Maciej Moskwa

Please see the [Poland page](#) of the [Operational Data Portal](#) for the Ukraine Refugee Situation for additional details. Sign up for the [UNHCR mailing list](#) to receive regular updates on the Ukraine Situation.

## Operational Context

- All border crossing points remain open between Ukraine and Poland. Less restrictive measures have been announced for people with disability and for the entry of unaccompanied and separated children to facilitate their crossing. Second line border controls, which were there at the beginning of the influx, have been closed, smoothing entry to Poland; and conditions of entry for third country nationals improved.
- Of the refugees arriving in Poland, **90 percent are women, children and older people** as men aged 18-60 are required by Ukraine authorities to remain in Ukraine, with some exceptions. About **50 percent are children**, including unaccompanied children, children accompanied by an adult of unknown kinship, and vulnerable young women. This has elevated protection risks, notably related to child protection, trafficking, and gender-based violence, alongside mental health and access to information needs.
- There is a continuous influx of arrivals from Ukraine into Poland. Since the beginning of April, figures have fluctuated between **20-25 thousand people** crossing into Poland on a daily basis. In addition, a pendular movement of people crossing back from Poland into Ukraine and back has been observed. Before the crisis, a steady outflow of around 10-11 thousand people would cross from Poland into Ukraine every day, a figure which was largely maintained in March. However, from mid-April, there has been a noted increase in the people going into Ukraine, especially for Easter. From 24 February to 25 April, **870,000 people** have crossed from Poland to Ukraine<sup>1</sup>.
- On 12 March Poland's Parliament promulgated the *Act on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in the context of the armed conflict*, a national legal framework for the protection of refugees from Ukraine, granting Ukrainian citizens and their spouses the right to apply for the Polish social security number (PESEL) which allows them access to basic services in the country. By 25 April, over **one million Ukrainians had registered for a PESEL number**.

## Reception

- In having to respond to an unprecedented influx of refugees on a daily basis, rapid processing with minimal basic identity checks, though critical for alleviating humanitarian suffering linked to long queues, has raised protection concerns due to missing biometric registration. This is notably the case for children, many of whom arrive without documentation.
- Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for new arrivals fleeing conflict and separation from family members is a critical need which must also be addressed.

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<sup>1</sup> The figure reflects cross-border movements, which can be pendular, and does not necessarily indicate sustainable returns as the situation across Ukraine remains highly volatile and unpredictable. Due to the constantly changing situation, it is too premature to draw conclusions on definitive trends. The figure has not been deducted from the overall refugee numbers until more data on cross-border movements will be available.

- Continuous access to information on safety, prevention of trafficking, available services, asylum and onward movements is one of the main needs of the refugee population addressed by UNHCR and partners.
- Municipalities have borne the largest brunt of refugee reception, opening reception points for short respite and larger centres for longer temporary stay including at train stations, schools, hospitals, and community centres. Many cities have received the equivalent of 20-30 percent of their population causing strain on housing and schools and notably public services especially healthcare.
- Nevertheless, as the situation stabilizes and people have moved on whether within Poland or elsewhere, reception centres are seeing less arrivals and many have partly emptied.



Refugees stay at reception centres for an average duration of 2-4 days until they are able to decide where they will move on. Krakow Reception Point. © UNHCR/TaylanDagci

## Protection

- UNHCR has maintained presence at the border since 24 February to monitor trends and identify resource needs in support of the Polish government. Since the beginning of the influx, UNHCR field teams have conducted **46 missions** to border crossing points, reception points and centres as of 25 April to oversee the reception and accommodation facilities and to identify needs of the refugee population.
- In pursuit to establishing safe protection hubs, UNHCR established **five Blue Dot hubs** in Warsaw, Krakow, at the Medyka border crossing, the Tesco reception centre in Przemysl, and the Karczowa transit centre, jointly with UNICEF. The hubs function with UNHCR protection staff and a selection of partners – including UNHCR’s implementing partner Première Urgence Internationale (PUI) – and offer initial information and counselling as well as psychosocial support and referral services. They also have child- and family-friendly spaces for children, adolescents and mothers, and provide identification, rapid assessment and referrals of children and mothers at risk. Refugees who approach the Blue Dots have enquired about access to medical services, mental health and psychosocial support, employment and education. Many

identified vulnerabilities have included single parents, medical conditions, various forms of disability and lack of legal documentation.

- Two of the current Blue Dots are linked to the cash centres in Warsaw and Krakow, which allows UNHCR protection staff to advise refugees from Ukraine who come to the cash enrolment centre of the services available in Poland and means of accessing them, as well as identifying persons with specific needs who may need further support.



The child/family friendly spaces at the Blue Dots grant mothers and children a short respite as they await registration, counselling, referrals or information © UNHCR/Sophie Etzold

- Since its opening of the first Blue Dot in Warsaw on 21 March and up to 25 April, more than **2,600 refugees (over 1,130 families)** have received in-person support and protection counselling at the five Blue Dots in Poland on a variety of issues, including: healthcare, MHPSS, education, child protection concerns and cash-related questions, as well as employment services and opportunities. The top profiles of visitors to the Blue Dot include single parents/caregivers, unaccompanied and separated children, older people at risk, people with disability, and single women at risk.
- Through its legal partner, the Halina Nieć Legal Aid Centre, UNHCR continues to support access to information and legal services.

### Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance

- UNHCR opened its first cash centre in **Warsaw's Praga** neighbourhood on 21 March – after two pilots in Warsaw and Lublin. It then opened a centre in **Krakow** on 7 April and another in **Warsaw's Mirow** area on 13 April. Warsaw and Krakow are Poland's two largest cities with the largest estimated numbers of refugees residing though refugees come from all areas of the country to enroll. UNHCR is currently collaborating with the Mayor of **Poznan** to open its fourth centre, one which will also include a Blue Dot.
- 150 new staff were recruited as registration clerks and trained on UNHCR's cash programme, UNHCR's code of conduct, Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

(PSEA), an introduction to UNHCR's registration system (ProGres), the Poland dataset, and Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS).



UNHCR staff enrol families into the cash assistance programme at the Warsaw cash centre. ©UNHCR/Maciej Moskwa

- Close to **35,986 individuals (16,900 families)** were enrolled in the cash programme by 25 April and UNHCR has recorded their biometrics. Ukrainian refugees receive information about the cash assistance program through UNHCR's Help page, social media and through partner referrals. Families are provided with a PIN number to withdraw cash from an ATM in Poland through the Blik payment system. Scale-up of the cash programme is accompanied by the Blue Dot approach in Warsaw and other cities in Poland.
- In addition, UNHCR provides **remote counseling to refugees** mostly related to the cash assistance. Since opening the cash centres, UNHCR staff answer around 60 calls a day including calls from Polish families hosting refugees and calls directly from refugees.

#### Communication with Communities

- The **UNHCR HELP page** is the number one most visited UNHCR Help country site globally. By 25 April, it had exceeded **one million visits and 2.4 million page views** with some 90,000 visitors from Ukraine. 87% of visitors have accessed the site via a mobile device. 43% have accessed the site directly and 21% have accessed it via social media. It is constantly being updated with new information as the situation evolves and with content on cash assistance, health, MHPSS, GBV, fraud, and access to international protection. Where possible, shareable graphic image files are incorporated for onward circulation via social media.

- To expand refugee base reached, UNHCR has acquired **bulk printed fliers and posters** providing messaging for Cash, Health, Anti-Fraud/Exploitation, PSEA, and to raise awareness on the UNHCR HELP page.
- UNHCR continues to actively engage in **community outreach** with Ukrainian diaspora community organizations, to share information and identify support, especially to minority groups.

### Supply and logistics

- UNHCR has sent **118 trucks to Ukraine** providing standard and non-standard core relief items and donations from private sector companies from the beginning of the crisis to 25 April from the logistics hub in Rzeszow. The items include winter clothing, blankets, mattresses and bedding. The items are delivered to **five warehouses** in Ukraine where they are then distributed to the population.



Core relief items at the warehouse in Rzeszow pending transportation to warehouses in Ukraine. © UNHCR/AmiraAK

- UNHCR is also procuring emergency supplies to improve reception conditions in coordination with municipalities.

### Working in partnership

- UNHCR has expanded on the Poland Chapter of the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP) through consultations with partners within the inter-agency Refugee Coordination Forum. UNHCR has presented the plan to the Government of Poland emphasizing the nature of the response as a Polish national response. The launch of the RRRP took place in Geneva on 27 April and is scheduled in Poland in the coming weeks.



Regional Refugee Response Plan  
For the Ukraine Situation

- UNHCR leads the Protection Sector, GBV Sub-Sector, Technical Cash Working Group, Basic Needs Sector and the Logistics Sector. Amidst ongoing operational sectoral coordination, transversal issues relating the PSEA, AAP and Information Management (focusing on needs assessments) are discussed and coordinated through working groups.
- Sector working groups and sub-working groups meet weekly on a regular basis. The inter-sector coordination group meetings meet fortnightly to coordinate the overarching response, implement activities and address gaps and needs of the refugee population and local and national authorities.

- UNHCR launched a [Poland sub-page](#) under the UNHCR Ukraine situation data portal containing information and documents related to the operational context, population trends, news stories and working group assessments and reports.
- UNHCR continues to engage with government officials, embassies, UN partners, and national and international NGOs to support the overall coordination of the response, and advocate for and mobilize funds and resources as needed.

#### Staffing and Presence

- As of 25 April, UNHCR has 73 staff members in Poland on temporary assignment, mission and deployment, including remote support. Since the beginning of the emergency, 86 staff have joined the Poland operation.
- UNHCR has an established Country Office in Warsaw, coupled with the field office Warsaw as well as Sub/ Field offices in Krakow, Rzeszow and Lublin.



Anastasia and her brothers wait at the Medyka border crossing point for a bus to take them to the nearby town of Przemysl. © UNHCR/Maciej Moskwa

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#### LINKS

[Regional portal](#) – [Poland sub-page of data portal](#) – [UNHCR Poland Help](#) – [Twitter](#) – [Facebook](#)