

SLOVAKIA

1 March – 30 April 2023

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, over **1.3 million people have crossed the border into Slovakia**. Close to 83 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 (AS OF 28 FEBRUARY 2022)



UNHCR Slovakia supports a refugee with disability and his family to resume active lifestyle.

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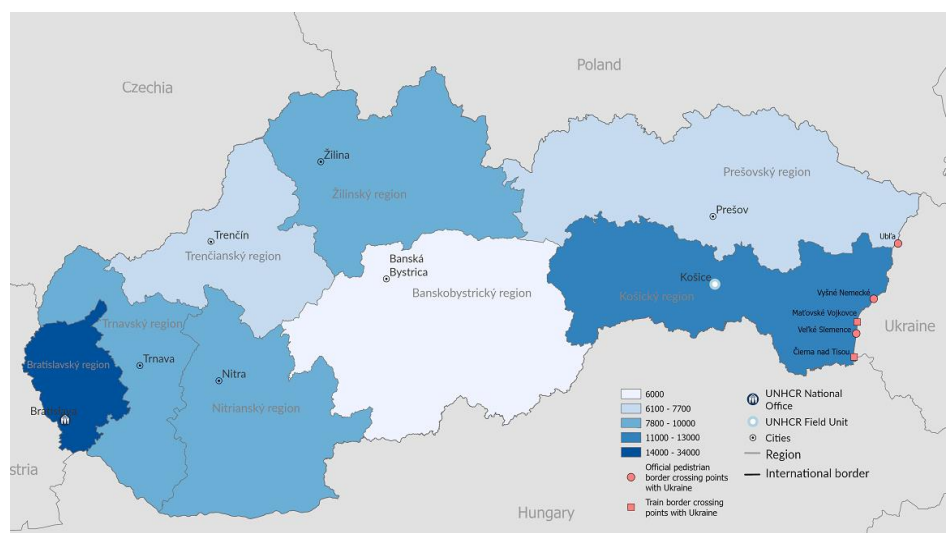
UNHCR PRESENCE IN SLOVAKIA

STAFF:

- **45 Total** staff
 - **17** International Staff
 - **28** 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. As of 30 April, there were over 1.3 million border crossings from Ukraine into Slovakia, and 115,196 individuals had applied for temporary protection. 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 four 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 counselling refugees, providing psycho-social and interpretation support, and alerting refugees to available services including accommodation, food, employment opportunities, and health care.

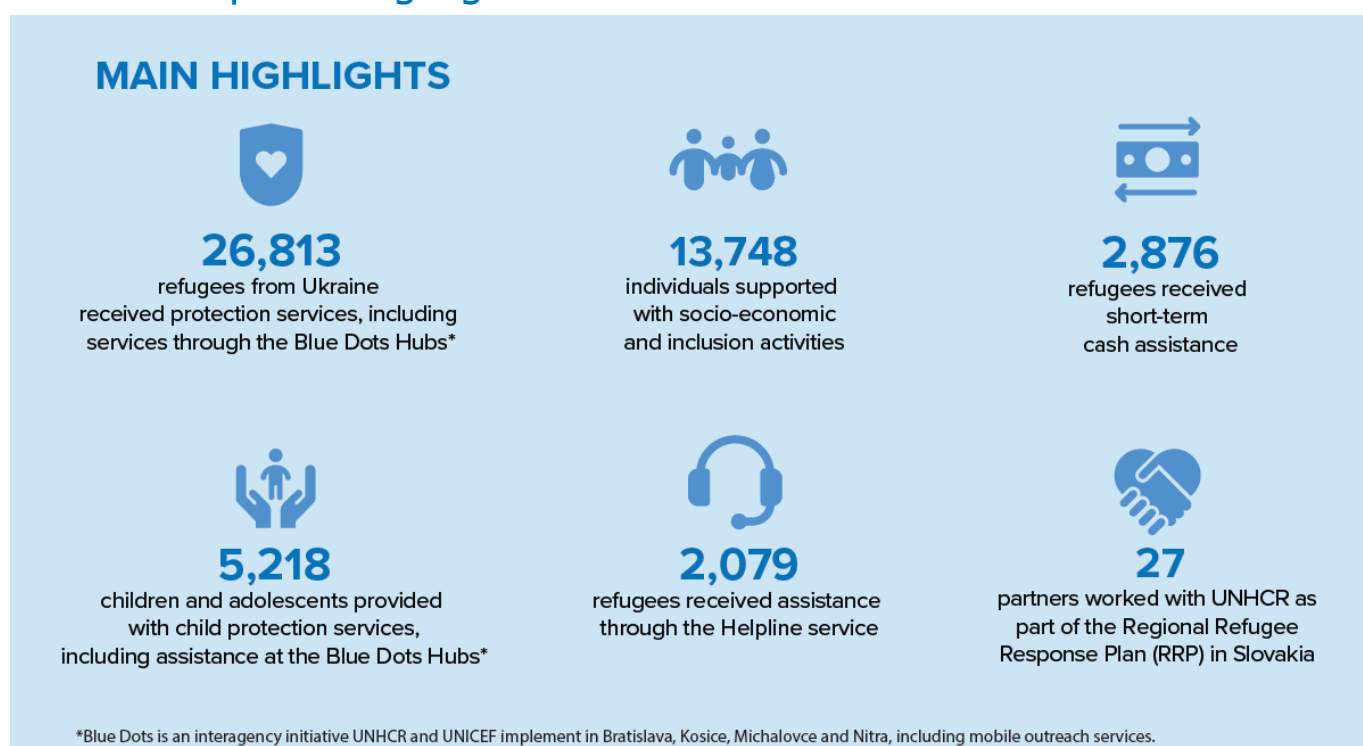
UNHCR has five formal partnership agreements with the following organizations:

- **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.
- **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' local inclusion. 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-based MHPSS 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 protection services, as well as interpretation services for

Ukrainian refugees to facilitate their registration for Temporary Protection and access to rights, social protection and cash assistance, specialised services, and information.

- **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 Highlights



Protection

UNHCR and partners are present at border crossing points, transit and reception centers, 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, including for third-country nationals and the stateless.

UNHCR monitors refugees’ needs and intentions through protection profiling and monitoring interviews throughout Slovakia. Protection assessments 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 labor 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 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.

Highlights:

- UNHCR and the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (SNCHR) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to formalize the cooperation between the two sides for the advancement of human rights for all the population, including refugees, as well as the Centre's legal role in the GBV referral pathways and as the co-chair of the PSEA Task Force.
- The Nitra Blue Dot Protection Hub and the mobile Blue Dot for Nitra region were officially launched by UNHCR, UNICEF and the Mayor of Nitra.
- UNHCR delivered 10 printers to district-level Offices of Labour and Social Affairs (OLSAF) in different regions within Slovakia as part of the collaboration to strengthen the national child protection system.

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.

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.

Highlights:

- In Kosice, UNHCR organized the second Training of Trainers (TOT) on PSEA in Slovakia targeting 20 PSEA Focal Points and coordinators from 12 organizations operating in the East of Slovakia. UNICEF co-facilitated sections on child victims of SEA. The training raised awareness on PSEA, provide technical information and skills to front-line responders to conduct internal trainings and mainstream PSEA in their programmes and day-to-day activities, increasing the PSEA capacity in their respective organizations. UNHCR also conducted a GBV training for 24 participants at Bottova Blue Dot Protection Hub. Participants were among staff members of HRL, the city of Bratislava, Scouting Slovakia, IOM, and UNHCR. The training covered basic theoretical information on GBV and its specifics in a humanitarian context.

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 four Blue Dots in Slovakia.

Highlights:

- UNHCR partner NGO Human Rights League presented an analysis of the non-application of compulsory education for children under temporary protection to the Office of the President of the Slovak Republic with a view of improving refugee children's access to education, relying on the international obligations of the Slovak Republic, EU law and Slovak Constitution.

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 can 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 March to 30 April 2023, UNHCR-UNICEF Helpline operators attended and registered 2,399 calls, and the UNHCR Slovakia Help Page for refugees received 127,004 visits.
- At the end of April 2023, UNHCR Telegram channel had 5,881 subscribers with over 51,872 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.

Training and Capacity-Building

Highlights:

- UNHCR organized a face-to-face protection workshop on asylum and temporary protection counselling in Bratislava for 30 lawyers and other partner staff from central and western Slovakia, including partner NGOs HRL, SHC, PIN, Mareena, Sme Spolu and the Legal Aid Centre of the Ministry of Justice. The event aimed to ensure in practice the provision of standardized quality counselling and consistent access to services to people under UNHCR mandate in Slovakia.

Cash-Based Interventions

In 2023, UNHCR continues to further complement the government-led efforts and address needs in social protection systems in Slovakia through targeted cash assistance for vulnerable individuals that, due to their protection profile, require additional support to meet their basic needs.

Highlights:

- UNHCR in cooperation with UNICEF launched a new Cash Programme in Slovakia on 24 April as a protection intervention to respond to specific protection situations or profiles, help reduce refugees' reliance on negative coping mechanisms and achieve further protection outcomes. A total of 2,876 individuals received short-term cash assistance by the end of April.

Special Thanks to Donors

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

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UNHCR is also grateful to donors of unrestricted and regional funds that Slovakia has benefitted from: Sweden | Norway | Denmark | Netherlands | Germany | Switzerland | Private donors Canada | Belgium | Ireland | Private donors Sweden | Private donors USA | Private donors Germany | Private donors Switzerland | Private donors Luxembourg | Canada | Private donors Netherlands | Private donors United Kingdom | Private donors Spain | Private donors Australia | Lithuania | Algeria | Australia | Bulgaria | Canada | Costa Rica | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Montenegro | New Zealand | Peru | Philippines | Republic of Korea | Saudi Arabia | Serbia | Singapore | Thailand | Türkiye | Uruguay | Private donors



In April, Ms. Uzra Zeya, the Under-Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights of the United States Department of State, visited Bottova Assistance Centre for refugees in Bratislava. The Deputy Mayor of Bratislava, Ms. Lenka Antalová Plavuchová and UNHCR Slovakia hosted the visit. @UNHCR/Corina Iovescu

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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