PROTECTION BRIEF
POLAND

Operational Context

This Protection Brief presents an overview of the demographic profiles and forced displacement patterns as well as the main findings on the protection risks and priority needs of refugees from Ukraine in Poland. This Protection Brief covers findings from **1,721 interviews with refugees from Ukraine (representing 4,148 household members**) within the period of **1 January 2025 to 30 June 2025**[1]. Interviews were conducted in seven regions (voivodships) in Poland namely, Dolnośląskie, Lubelskie, Małopolskie, Mazowieckie, Podkarpackie, Pomorskie, and Wielkopolskie.

Since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022, Poland has shown **exceptional hospitality to refugees from Ukraine**, notably with the activation of the EU's Temporary Protection Directive. Since February 2022, 1,965,711 refugees from Ukraine have registered for temporary protection (PESEL UKR registration) in Poland, with **992,562 people possessing an active PESEL UKR registration** as of 8 July 2025. Among active PESEL UKR holders, the overall majority (78%) are women (42%) and children (36%).[2] Similar to the previous reporting period, the top 5 destination regions in Poland are Mazowieckie, Dolnośląskie, Śląskie, Wielkopolskie and Małopolskie, hosting 62% of the refugee population.

Key Figures[3]

992,562
Holders of temporary protection from Ukraine in Poland as of 8 July 2025

78%
Of refugees under Temporary Protection are women and children

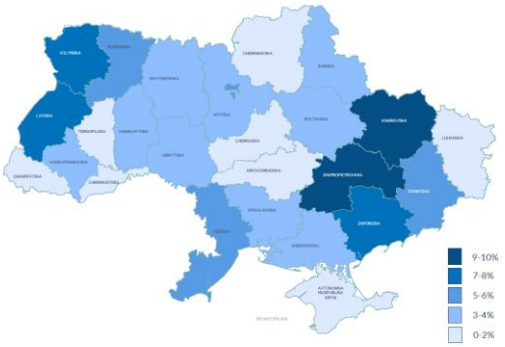
42%
Of refugees are either below 18 years old or 60 and older

99%
Of households interviewed report at least one urgent need

35%
Of households interviewed report having at least one member with a serious medical condition

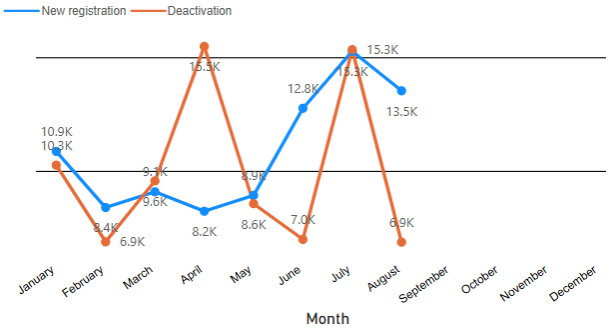
36%
Of households interviewed report having at least one member who faces some degree of difficulty[4]

Profiles of new arrivals[5]

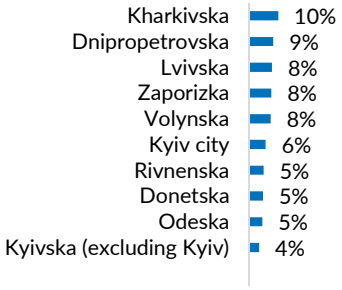


Protection monitoring data continues to show that refugees arriving from the frontline/eastern areas of Ukraine comprise a significant number of new arrivals and they continue to report the **security situation as the main reason for fleeing Ukraine**. For the reporting period, government data indicated a slight fluctuation in the monthly number of new PESEL UKR registrations, with an average of 9,738 new applications per month, with an increased number by the end of the period (12,754 in June 2025). However, it is important to note that not all new registrations correspond directly to new arrivals from Ukraine but may include refugees who moved to Poland from other EU Member States. From those interviewed, 38% of new arrivals originate from Kharkivska (10%), Dnipropetrovska (9%), Zaporizka (8%), Kyiv city (6%), Donetska (5%) oblasts.

New registrations and deactivation 2025



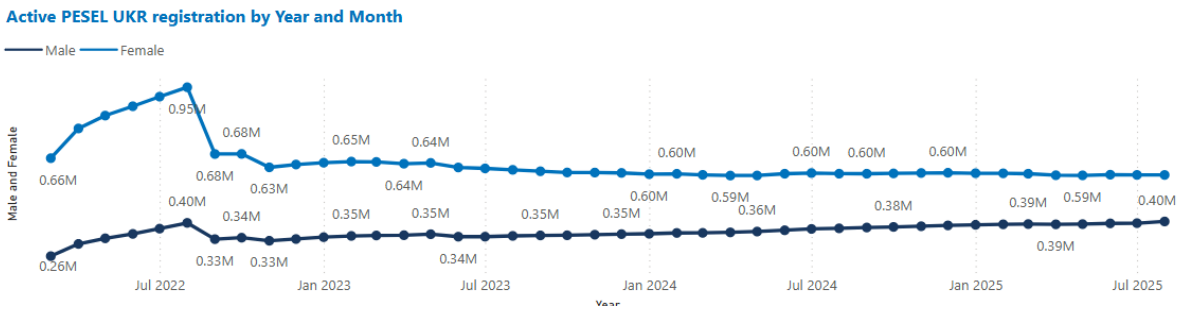
Oblast of origin of new arrivals, top 10



Some 61% of new arrivals report intending to **remain in Poland** while 22% report intending to **move onwards** (of those 53% indicate Germany as their final destination). When comparing this data with the previous Protection Brief covering interviews conducted between July and December 2024, there is an **increase of newly arrived refugees who intend to remain in Poland**, from 57% to 61%. While the number of those intending to move onwards decreased, from 35% to 22%.[6]

The reporting period again saw an **increase of men aged 18-60 newly arriving in Poland**, accounting for over 20% of PESEL UKR holders by August 2025[7], an increase in comparison to 17% at the end of 2024, 16% in 2023 and 11% in 2022[8]. This gradual increase is a trend noted and highlighted in previous Protection Briefs released in October 2023[9] and April 2024[10] and April 2025.

New registrations by gender by month[11]:



Protection risks

During the reporting period, on 13 June 2025, the Council of the European Union announced that EU Member States agreed to extend temporary protection for refugees from Ukraine until 4 March 2027[12].

On 25 June 2025, a draft law amending *the Act on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in the Context of the Armed Conflict in Ukraine* (hereafter referred to as "the Special Act") was shared by the Ministry of Interior (MIA) with civil society organizations for consultations. The bill extended temporary protection (TP) until 4 March 2026 and introduced amendments including changes to access to legal status and accommodation support. It should be noted that the proposed bill was vetoed by the President on 25 August 2025. The revised bill was then presented by the MIA and eventually signed by the President on 26 September 2025 extending temporary protection in Poland until 4 March 2026. The adopted bill tightens access to healthcare and eligibility criteria for social protection benefits. As in the original draft of the bill, accommodation support is reduced to those falling within prescribed eligibility criteria based on vulnerability and access to TP for refugees from border areas in Ukraine is limited. This Protection Brief aims to provide further analysis on the impact of the earlier amendments to the Special Act which came into force in 2024 as well as the possible impact of the changes in recently adopted bill thus, remaining relevant to the current situation of refugees from Ukraine in Poland.[13]

This section aims to present data and findings in relation to key protection risks identified by UNHCR and partner organisations during the reporting period. These risks relate to access to *documentation and legal status* and *access to accommodation*.

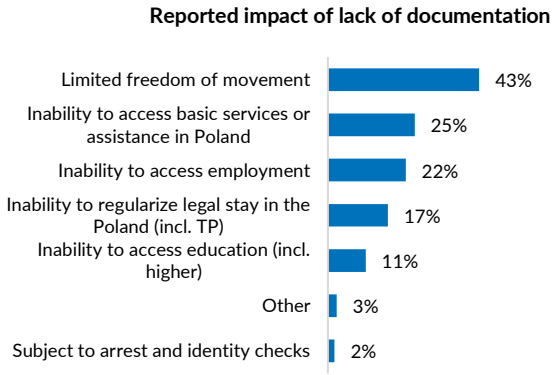
Reduced access to temporary protection

Findings garnered through UNHCR's protection monitoring activities indicate that despite the continuous overall generosity of the Polish society and authorities, various challenges and difficulties related to documentation and legal status continue to be observed.

Amendments to the Special Act in 2024 which introduced the requirement to possess a valid travel document in order to register for PESEL UKR, coupled with changes to legislation in Ukraine on access to consular services linking the possibility of issuing or renewing identity documents with a military registration obligation[14] continue to be an obstacle to legal status in Poland. Moreover, according to the recently adopted amendments to the Special Act, Ukrainian nationals who entered Poland under a local border traffic permit[15] would be ineligible to register for temporary protection and obtain a PESEL UKR, thereby excluding them from the scope and protections of the Special Act.

Protection monitoring data shows that while an overwhelming majority (97%) of refugees interviewed during the reporting period possessed an identity document (i.e. ID card, internal passport, international biometric passport), 13% reported missing documents among household (HH) members. The majority of those reporting missing documents indicated the lack of international biometric passport (92%). This impacted refugees directly in the following areas: limited freedom of movement (43%), inability to access basic services or assistance (25%), inability to access employment (22%) and inability to regularize legal stay or access temporary protection (17%). Moreover, 30% reported being unable to obtain or replace/renew these identity documents in Poland due to unaffordable administrative or other associated costs (63%), lack of knowledge on the procedure (21%), unwillingness/unable to update military registration data (19%) and lack of supporting documents (10%).

30%
Of those lacking an identity document are unable to replace/renew it in Poland



From 1 January to 30 June 2025, 5,046 Ukrainian citizens applied for international protection in Poland, an almost 89% increase compared to the same period in 2024 where 2,676 Ukrainian citizens lodged applications. Among that group, men aged 18-64 made up 62% (3,114) of the total number of applicants in the first half of 2025 highlighting a 144% increase of male applicants compared to the same period in 2024 in which 1,276 of the total applicants were men.

Despite the increase from 2024 to 2025, a gradual decrease of applications for international protection has been noted month-by-month since January 2025. This is perhaps partly the result of a communication issued by the Office for Foreigners on 10 March 2025, stating that the processing time of applications for international protection had increased (to an average of 15 months). The communication also indicated that internal flight alternative considerations were being actively applied in decisions and that the fear of mobilization does not *per se* constitute grounds for granting refugee status.[16] Additionally, despite continuous military attacks by the Russian Federation within the whole territory of Ukraine, with the highest number of civilian casualties in three years having been reported in June 2025 (232 killed and 1,343 injured)[17] – a stable increase in the number of negative asylum decisions at the first instance issued by the Polish authorities has been noted.

However, considering the government's plans to extend TP until 4 March 2026 only as part of the amendments to the Special Act, a delay in the announced introduction of the post-TP temporary residence permit (the so-called PESEL CUKR) compounded by the fact that peace remains elusive, refugees from Ukraine may continue to explore long-term and stable legal statuses outside the TP regime, including via international protection. UNHCR protection monitors report that during interviews, refugees increasingly mentioned the fear that TP would cease and force them to return to Ukraine prematurely. Protection monitors note increased enquiries related to alternative options of legalizing stay in Poland, a trend also corroborated previously by UNHCR's legal partners.

Refugees from Ukraine arriving in Przemysl. © USA for UNHCR/Nicholas Feeney

Some 14% of refugees interviewed as part of protection monitoring reported facing difficulties during the TP registration/renewal process, citing lack of interpretation services, lack of information on the application process, long waiting time to receive confirmation on PESEL UKR registration[18]. Regarding urgent needs and needs for information, respectively legal advice (14%) and legal status (38%) were mentioned by refugees among others. In this context it is important to note that the extension of temporary protection as foreseen in the Special Act amendments is only until March 2026 while the EU has extended the Temporary Protection Directive until March 2027, adding to the uncertainty felt by refugees from Ukraine.

Reduced accommodation support

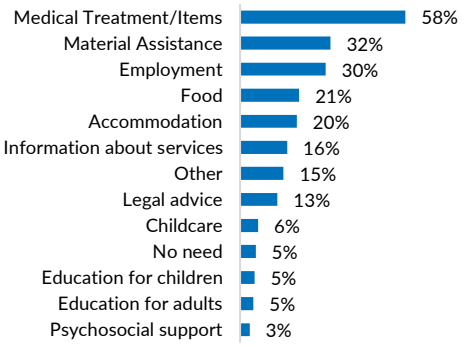
Persons residing in collective accommodation in Poland remain among refugees with the highest specific needs and most at risk. According to the data, in June 2025, 830 collective accommodation facilities were open across Poland where 25,014 Ukrainian refugees were hosted. Almost half of its residents (48%) were exempted from contributing to the cost of living in these facilities. Among this group, 15% were persons with disabilities, 46% were of retirement age (60+ for women and 65+ for men), 1% were pregnant women, 8% were single parents with three or more children, 11% were children in foster care and for whom childcare benefit were not received. Moreover, among this group 10% were exempted due to humanitarian reasons upon discretionary decision of a relevant voivode. Also, 3,4% of the total number were refugees from Ukraine who arrived in Poland within 120 days. Although the number of collective sites provided by the government continue to decrease as well as the number of people residing there, as observed from data available in the previous Protection Briefs as well as a report[19] published by IOM and *Mapuj Pomoc*, it is evident that the most vulnerable refugees continue to account for around half of all residents.

Looking further into the profile of respondents in collective sites, 68% of HHs have a member with a serious medical condition which required medical treatment for 3 months or more (the percentage is significantly higher comparing to the profile of all HHs interviewed for protection monitoring – 35%). When analyzing data related to disability, 73% of all HH residing in collective accommodation indicate the presence of a family member having some level of difficulties with walking, seeing, hearing, remembering, communication or with self-care (such as washing or dressing) – with a level of difficulties indicated as follows: 36% indicating a lot of difficulties, 36% some difficulties and almost 1% cannot do it at all. When comparing it to the profile of all HHs interviewed for protection monitoring that indicated presence of a family member within the HH with some level of difficulty (36%), it is evident that persons with disabilities[20] more often resort to accommodation support provided by the government.

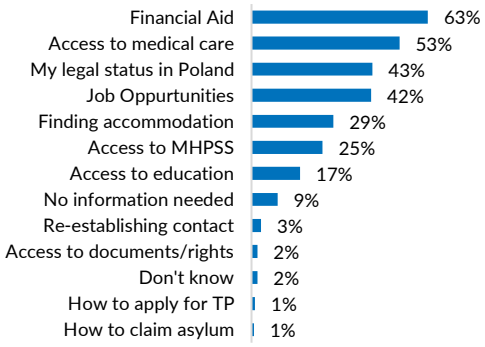
In June 2025, UNHCR and Deloitte published a new study[21] where it is reported that refugees from Ukraine had a net impact of 2,7% on Poland's GDP in 2024. While 69% of working-age Ukrainian refugees were employed in 2024, as per Protection Monitoring the employment rate among this group in collective accommodation is significantly lower and equals to 30%, with further 19% involved in family responsibilities and 47% unemployed for various reasons. Improved access to care services for persons with disabilities, mental health conditions, care for older people and children could increase and stimulate participation in the workforce and enhance integration and self-reliance.

The higher degree of vulnerability among those residing in collective accommodation is reflected in the urgent needs reported. Medical treatment/items were indicated by 58% of persons interviewed in collective accommodation as the most urgent need, followed by material assistance (32%) and employment (30%). Whereas among all HHs interviewed as part of protection monitoring, the top three needs are in the following order: employment (41%), medical treatment/items (28%) and accommodation (26%). Differences regarding information needs are also clearly noticeable between persons residing in collective accommodation and those not relying on accommodation support – with information on financial aid (63%), how to access medical care (53%) and person's legal status in Poland (43%) being mentioned by refugees residing in collective accommodation and job opportunities (44%), financial aid (42%) and person's legal status (39%) in Poland indicated as top three information needs among all HHs interviewed.

Urgent needs of Collective accommodation residents



Information needs of Collective accommodation residents



Adding to the difficulties that refugees residing in collective accommodation face, the feeling of insecurity related to accommodation remains high, as half of those staying in collective accommodation are unaware of how long they can remain in the facility. Adding to this uncertainty are the recently proposed amendments to the Special Act according to which from 1 November 2025 onwards, only designated groups of refugees with specific needs will remain eligible for accommodation support in collective accommodation. Whereas newly arrived refugees entering Poland directly from Ukraine, refugees with disabilities who do not possess Polish disability certificate as well as groups that would otherwise fall under payment exemptions for 'humanitarian reasons' will not be able to rely on such assistance, leaving them at risk of homelessness and without adequate time to access necessary social protection assistance and establish themselves in Poland.

Older refugees from Ukraine at the help centre in Warsaw. © USA for UNHCR/Nicholas Feeney

Reduced assistance, especially for persons with specific needs, may heighten vulnerability and lead to decisions to move onward to other EU Member States or return to Ukraine which may not be fully voluntary. The regional report on the situation of vulnerable refugees from Ukraine issued by UNHCR in January 2025 provides that 56% of refugee households from Ukraine surveyed in 11 countries in the region, include persons with a disability, a person with a serious medical condition or household comprised only of older persons (aged 60 years and above). Refugee respondents to UNHCR's intentions survey report that they could be compelled to return to Ukraine even if this would not be their first choice, if they face challenges in accessing rights and services in host countries.[22]

The challenges faced by refugees residing in collective accommodation are compounded also by the fact that facilities are scattered across Poland, often in remote locations. This further impacts the difficulties refugees with specific needs face in accessing assistance, unable to integrate and become more self-reliant, having also limited access to labour market. In light of the recent amendments to the Special Act regarding access to accommodation support, particularly vulnerable refugees may be at risk of further marginalisation. The continuous closure of sites and relocation of refugees, with reported scarce information provision and assistance provided to its residents, increases the risk of homelessness, abuse and exploitation and destitution. Moreover, the reduction of funds available for NGOs may create further challenges in identification and provision of assistance to refugees with specific needs especially in remote locations where the presence of services and NGO actors was already limited.

Calls to Action

Access to legal status

UNHCR recommends the Government of the Republic of Poland to:

- Expedite the activation of PESEL-CUKR as a viable and sustainable post-TP solution for refugees from Ukraine in Poland.
- **Explore flexible solutions for refugees unable to present a valid travel document** to enable them access to legal status and associated rights in Poland.
- Ensure that all individuals falling with the scope of the relevant Council of the European Union implementing decisions relating to the application of the Temporary Protection Directive in the EU are **able to access temporary protection in Poland regardless of their area of origin in Ukraine.**

Access to accommodation support

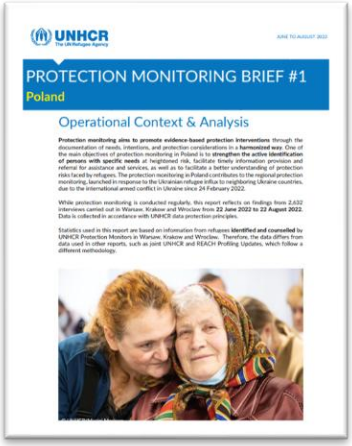
UNHCR recommends the Government of the Republic of Poland to:

- Tailor available support programmes on **social benefits and social housing schemes** for refugees with specific needs and those at heightened risk of exclusion and secure continued care either by introducing systemic and procedural changes or providing financial support to civil society organizations assisting vulnerable refugees to enhance their inclusion opportunities.
- Promote and expand innovative programs such as **social rental agency** schemes that proved to successfully support individuals facing housing insecurity.
- Expand supported living arrangements for Polish citizens and refugees with specific needs - including care home (e.g. *DPS – Domy Pomocy Społecznej*), rehabilitation and specialized care facilities, supported housing, including training apartments (e.g. *mieszkania chronione i treningowe*) and family-type care homes (e.g. *Rodzinne domy pomocy*).
- Strengthened **cooperation** between local social services institutions and NGOs to enhance information exchange on needs, activities and interventions with the aim of complementing the delivery of timely and tailored services promoting self-reliance.
- Promote **economic inclusion** initiatives with a focus on groups at risk of marginalisation that facilitate refugees' access to the labour market, including recognition of qualifications, vocational training, and support for entrepreneurship. Economic empowerment is crucial for self-reliance and can significantly enhance social cohesion by demonstrating the positive contributions of refugees to host communities.

UNHCR recommends humanitarian actors to:

- Increase focus on activities and services which promote **social cohesion and integration** that benefit both refugees from Ukraine, asylum-seekers and refugees of other nationalities and the host community.
- Continue to **prioritise remote locations and mobile services** complementing local social services responses for refugees unable to benefit from readily accessible services.

Previous Briefs



Poland Protection Monitoring Brief #1 (June to August 2022)

Poland Protection Monitoring Brief #2 (August to November 2022)

Poland Protection Monitoring Brief #3 (23 November - 31 March 2023)

Poland joint protection analysis October 2023

Poland Protection Monitoring Brief #4 (January to March 2024)

UNHCR Protection Monitoring Brief #5 (July to December 2024)

With thanks to the critical support of donors to UNHCR in Poland:

For more information:

UNHCR Poland Protection Team– polwa@unhcr.org

End Notes

[1] It should be noted that Protection Monitoring data was collected by UNHCR Protection Monitors until 10 May 2025 inclusively. Until May 2025, UNHCR in Poland implemented continuous protection monitoring to regularly collect and analyse data on the profiles, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine and monitor changes over time. As part of protection monitoring, interviews were conducted in different locations by trained enumerators collecting data digitally using Kobo Toolbox, which was then safely stored in UNHCR's server. While respondents are randomly selected to reduce bias, non-probability sampling is used, results cannot necessarily be extrapolated to all refugees from Ukraine. As a result of the global funding crisis protection monitoring activities had to be temporarily suspended in May 2025. Other sources were used and referenced for this analysis to cover the 6-month reporting period. Data can be found via the Regional Protection Profiling and Monitoring dashboard.
[2] Government opensource data from the Ministry of Digitalisation (*Ministerstwo Cyfryzacji*), Registered applications for the UKR status due to the conflict in Ukraine, June 2025, available at: Open data
[3] It is to be noted that the following figures – number of TP holders, percentage of refugees under TP are women and children as well us those below 18 and above 60 years old - are based on the government data on PESEL UKR status, while the remining figures are based on protection monitoring data covering first half of 2025.
[4] *The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCRPD) defines persons with disabilities as those who have 'long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'. For the purpose of Protection Monitoring, data collection on disability follows the Washington Group tool where questions about carrying out a few basic, universal activities such as vision, hearing, mobility, cognition and communication are asked with answers defined as 'some difficulty', 'a lot of difficulty', or 'cannot do at all' being counted in this Brief as persons facing some degree of difficulty.
[5] New arrivals are considered people who arrived in Poland from Ukraine within 31 days.
[6] UNHCR, *Protection Brief Poland*, April 2025, available at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115992
[7] Due to data limitations, it was not possible to see data for males aged 18-59 by the end of 2024.
[8] The change is also visible in exact numbers, starting from 103,949 by the end of 2022, to 139,554 by the end of 2023 to 173,359 by the end of 2024.
[9] Protection Sector, *Poland: Joint Protection Analysis*, October 2023, available at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/104584
[10] UNHCR, *Protection Brief Poland*, June 2024, available at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/109
[11] Government opensource data from the Ministry of Digitalisation (*Ministerstwo Cyfryzacji*), Registered applications for the UKR status due to the conflict in Ukraine, June 2025, available at: Open data
[12] European Council, Council of the European Union Press Release on extension of temporary protection for refugees from Ukraine, 13 June 2025, available at: Council of the EU - extension of temporary protection
[13] See UNHCR's public comments on the amendments here: *UNHCR Comments and Observations on the Draft Law amending the Act on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in the Context of Armed Conflict in Ukraine ("the Special Act")*, April 2024, https://www.refworld.org/legal/natlegcomments/unhcr/2024/en/147928 and *UNHCR Comments and Observations on the Draft Law amending the Act on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in the Context of Armed Conflict in Ukraine ("the Special Act")*, June 2025, https://www.refworld.org/legal/natlegcomments/unhcr/2025/en/150230
[14] Explored further in the UNHCR Protection Brief from June 2024: UNHCR, *Protection Brief Poland*, June 2024, available at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/109
[15] The 28 March 2008 Agreement between Poland and Ukraine specify that border zone residents are considered persons with documented residence within 30 km of the Polish-Ukrainian border, extendable to 50 km in specified cases.
[16] Communication of the Office for Foreigner issued on 10 March 2025, available at: https://www.gov.pl/web/udsc/
[17] UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, *Protection of civilians in armed conflict – June 2025 – Summary*, available at: https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/Protection-of-Civilians-in-Armed-Conflict-June-2025
[18] On a positive note, as family composition and/or civil status have changed among 9% of those interviewed during protection monitoring activities, there were no significant challenges when registering events (related to birth, death, marriage or divorce) with the Polish authorities or Ukrainian consulate in Poland.
[19] IOM and Mapuj Pomoc Foundation, *In Search of Safe Harbor – Mapping Update*, April 2025, available at: https://mapujpomoc.pl/en/new-report-in-search-of-safe-harbor
[20] *Ibid.* endnote no 6.
[21] UNHCR and Deloitte, *Analysis of the impact of refugees from Ukraine on the economy of Poland*, June 2025, available at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/
[22] UNHCR, Regional Bureau for Europe, *Report on the situation of vulnerable refugees from Ukraine*, January 2025, available at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/113808