

Health Coordination Call: Meeting Minutes

14 March 2022

Dear Partners,

In order to get a clear overview who is doing what on the ground, we are kindly ask you to take time and fill in the attached questionnaire (excel sheet) as much as possible.

Please return it by Thursday (see attachment please) to EUPOLHealthCoordination@who.int

Note: Currently there are 350+ participants registered for the health coordination call, we kindly request that only essential persons of each partnership join the call due to volume. Many thanks in advance!

2.8 million refugees overall from Ukraine ([UNHCR](#))

1.72 million refugees have come into Poland ([UNHCR](#))

WHO

- Contacted 16 hospitals in Poland with a questionnaire (bed capacity, doctors/nursing staff, how many Ukrainians they are serving disaggregated by age, and medical history)
- We will provide an overview at the next health coordination meeting.
- Team undertook rapid assessment missions to 8 border crossings and related reception centers along the Polish-Ukrainian border.

Main Findings

- Major cities like Warsaw, Krakow and others are reaching maximum capacity for hosting refugees and require urgent aid for the Polish government and abroad (especially from the EU).
- Main health problems of arrivals from Ukraine in reception centers include: fever, diarrhea, hypothermia, upper respiratory-tract infections, cardiac arrest, mental and emotional distress.
- In larger cities, a lack of shelter facilities is reported and there are no current plans for establishing additional capacities, as it is hoped that refugees can stay inside the community. New shelters need to be equipped with medical points and services.
- High turnover and quick burnout for volunteers in reception centers. They are in need of MHPSS training, support and self-care support.
- There is no data collection on health needs upon arrival, very limited health information on available health care services, lack of medical records for patients on the move.
- In the reception centers, inappropriate storage and administration of medicines and other health products.
- Insufficient availability of toilet cleaning and waste removal in border areas and reception centers. Reception centers either need showers overall or are in need of more showers due to large influx of Ukrainian refugees.
- Government and UNHCR has raised concern about possible exploitation of refugees — including trafficking of children and women, and cases of sexual abuse.

- Insufficient measures to deter human traffickers in reception centers. Some centers have registration systems for volunteers offering rides/ride shares to Ukrainian refugees but there is no follow-up system in place. Some safety measures have been taken by communal organizations, but this is not structured.
- MEDAIR and CARITAS have started a program to employ volunteers in order to pay them.

Challenges

- Non EU NGO medical workers are not licensed to work in Poland. However, most are able to work under Polish Red Cross.
- Healthcare workers from EU, UK, US are able to get quick permission to practice in Poland. They need to apply to the MOH of Poland depending on available certificates and knowledge of Polish language.
- No medical records available for refugees.
- More shelter capacities for refugees are needed all over Poland and those reception centers need to be equipped with medical points. There are no plans yet available to coordinate that in the country.
- Existing reception centers are run decentralized by the lower administrative levels (municipalities) with volunteers on the verge of burn-out.
- Reception centers have sanitary challenges (i.e. cleaning of toilets, sufficient showers, waste management).
- Medication in reception centers medical points are not well managed, wasted and often given out inadequately to patients. Pharmacists are needed.
- Different referral mechanisms from UKR to POL exists already or are in the process of being set up by local medical associations, NGOs and EMTs. WHO has started to coordinate and join forces to increase effectivity.
- Long-term, chronic and rare diseases, which cannot be treated in Poland, need a coordinated approach to be referred to trusted hospitals in the EU or elsewhere. Children need to be accompanied by family members.
- Vaccination coverage of refugees is low and need to be increased asap. WHO and UNICEF are working with the MOH to purchase and deliver vaccines to POL. Vaccination campaigns are envisaged.
- Treatment protocols of chronic and communicable diseases differ in POL and UKR and also other medication is used.

Government response

- As of 14 March 2022, further information for those who can practice in EU countries, United Kingdom and the United States are eligible for quick permission to practice in Poland.
- MoH has [published requirements for medical staff](#) from Ukraine to work in Poland officially. Certificates confirming qualification, experience, education, Polish language skills, etc. for those applying. Those who cross from Ukraine to Poland after 24 February 2022 may present a copy of their medical documentation.

- Information on procedures and requirements are not yet published in English, they will soon follow. This includes doctors and dentists.
- The Polish parliament on Wednesday approved new measures to help Ukrainians: [permission to stay legally in the country for 18 months](#), speeding up the registration process, which will give them access to social security, education and health care systems, one-time handouts of 300 złoty (€62) and funds targeted at schools for new students.
- The new measures also allow Ukrainians to receive a personal identification number (PESEL) for 18 months and children [may receive comprehensive state medical care](#).
- Polish President Duda has spoken with United Nations' secretary general and has [asked for support from the United States](#) via Vice President Harris during her recent trip to Poland. He also requested support in expediting the entry of Ukrainian refugees who have family in the United States.
- Sending Ukrainian children into schools—children are struggling with Polish, but they are still enrolled. Ukrainian teachers also supporting. Students are also admitted to public universities.
- Ukrainians who have entered prior to 24 February 2022 are automatically enrolled in extension of their rights in Poland.
- Use medical workers from Ukraine to work in Poland—special conditions including Polish language skills, certificates confirming education and legal border-crossing documents.
- Polish government has launched platform for support in Ukrainian, Polish and English.
- Families hosting refugees will also [receive 40 złoty per day for two months](#) for each person they house.
- The interior ministry has mobilized border guards, the military, police and firefighters to [ensure security and provide refugees with swift passage](#) through the borders and transportation. Local authorities have also set up temporary reception and information centers in every Polish region.
- The Polish government has established a coordination committee for the Ukrainian crises at the level of government and at lower administration levels, all quite decentralized. UN and other partners are in an advisory capacity for the time being.
- Main Polish information agencies have [launched platforms](#) with news in Ukrainian.

Vaccine-Preventable Diseases and NCD's

- Consider the low level of vaccine uptake amongst Ukrainians (i.e. COVID-19 = approx. 30%). 15% of vaccinated Ukrainians were vaccinated with Russian or Chinese vaccines which are not all recognized in the EU or by WHO. MoH is aware of this, no decision made as of yet.
- Ministry of Health has requested UNICEF+ WHO to support in supplying required vaccines and other medications. Warehouse available in (Lodz) which has conditions to store medications and vaccines, as needed. WHO is already working with MoH and UNICEF to ensure the vaccine procurement based on the estimated needs using the existing national immunization program platform and expand it as needed.
- Law: every child up to 19 years of age, who comes to Poland and stays longer than 3 months, is obliged to be vaccinated according to Polish immunization calendar (polio, measles, mumps, Hepatitis B, rubella, diphtheria).
- MoH is working with WHO and UNICEF regarding a vaccination campaign to encourage Ukrainian refugees in Poland to get vaccinated. Special focus on polio, measles, and COVID-19.

- MoH prepared PSO for 2022 (protective vaccination scale). This includes vaccinations for tuberculosis and hepatitis (required for all babies born in Poland).
- Polish government is aiming to give vaccination booklets/cards to refugees so they may take a physical copy or e.-cards of immunizations with them.

EMT's (Emergency medical teams)/Trauma

- Trauma patients are not yet transported to Poland and are still treated in Ukraine.
- Coordination mechanism for trauma care and emergency medical teams has now been established.
- EMTs are WHO certified, work independently from host country resources, and include mainly primary health care and mental health services.
- 30 EMTs in Poland expressed interest in working either in Poland or Ukraine (6 are already in Poland or at border crossings)

Referrals

- MoH UKR, WHO and EU are working together on establishing a referral mechanism for patients needing treatment outside UKR.
- Regarding the transport and treatment of children from Ukraine to Poland, WHO is in contact with relevant Polish and Ukrainian organizations. For safety reasons, interested foreign hospitals who are interested in taking these patients, must fill out a form indicating their capacity, experience and treatment protocols.
- Ukrainian and Polish treatment protocols differ, including medication and treatment procedures, what causes additional challenges.
- Due to lack of medical records or accessibility to patient history (this is especially difficult with MHPSS) there are challenges to follow up on past medical health history, drugs administered, etc.,
- A triage hub close to Lublin-Kielce hospital -was set up for UKR children with cancer, which has space for 100 children. The children are distributed further based on condition upon arrival. 400+ children have been transferred to this hospital already. 61 more are expected in the coming days. 21 children with cancer have been sent for treatment to UNK today.

Transport/Delivery of drugs

- WHO has established a working group on logistics and operational support and delivered two large cargos of medication to Ukraine which have been successfully distributed (to eastern and southern parts of Ukraine).
- Ukrainian food transport companies are offering to transfer drugs and vaccines which is under consideration.

MHPSS—Ukrainians crossing border

- Care for people with severe mental disorders is challenging due to the lack of data, registration systems for referrals and protocols for dealing with psychiatric emergency referrals.
- Approximately 22% of Ukrainian refugees are expected to have mental disorders upon entry (anxiety, stress, depression, etc.).
- 5% are expected to have severe mental disorders which need to be treated professionally.

- A technical working group on MHPSS was established on 8 March 2022 including 16 partners prepared to offer support in this area.
- WHO carried out a rapid situation analysis at 4 border crossings and reception centers. Findings are that sporadic MHPSS services are provided by some volunteers and NGOs, however they need more training themselves. No mapping of services or hotlines established yet.
- Key requirements: 1) Dissemination and use of key IASC/WHO MHPSS resources in Polish and Ukrainian languages, 2) Provision of training, 3) Dissemination of accurate information for refugees regarding services, and 4) Establishment of confidential referral protocol for most vulnerable cases.