



Risks to Community Cohesion between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities in Central Europe

Regional Report

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In Central Europe, governments, non-governmental organisations, businesses, multilateral organisations, and ordinary citizens have provided substantial support to Ukrainians fleeing Russia's 2022 invasion. However, as the war continues, this support may begin to deteriorate due to the challenges host countries face, such as high inflation and stretched social services, as well as disinformation campaigns relating to refugees, including from Russia-aligned stakeholders. This report aims to help understand the factors that might undermine cohesion between

Ukrainian refugees and host communities in the region in the medium term. It provides programmatic recommendations to local, national, and international stakeholders on what they could do to mitigate those factors. In addition, the report details the characteristics that have increased (or can increase) different Ukrainian refugees' vulnerabilities to exploitation, discrimination, and ability to access necessary services, as well as incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees that have appeared and have the potential to be spread further.

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Executive Summary

Background

The world was shaken by Russia's brutal escalation of hostilities and full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022—and by the ensuing human suffering. By March 2023, European countries recorded more than 8 million people displaced by the violence in Ukraine, with more than 5 million registered for temporary protection (TP) or similar national protection schemes on the continent.¹

Ukrainian refugees have been warmly welcomed by host populations in Central Europe. Governments, non-governmental organisations, businesses, multilateral organisations, and ordinary citizens provided whatever support they could to Ukrainians fleeing the invasion. While a quick end to the war is hoped for, the conflict may become prolonged, and therefore, displaced Ukrainians will likely continue to reside in neighbouring and other European countries.

Social services and systems were already stretched before the war, and pressure on housing, health, and education systems is increasing. Other challenges are likely to arise as the conflict protracts and people's needs and concerns evolve, particularly in the context of inflation continuing to rise (for example, consumer price inflation was 13.2 percent² in 2022 in Poland and with highs of 30.2 percent³ in December 2022 in Moldova). In addition, incendiary and misleading narratives, including by Russia-aligned stakeholders and disinformation campaigns,⁴ can potentially exacerbate concerns and negatively impact community cohesion. In other crises, over time, tensions have led to increased polarisation of society and discrimination or hate crimes against minorities. Some early signs point to support for Ukrainian refugees beginning to erode in some countries. For instance, polling from December 2022 indicated that only 42 percent of Slovakia's population viewed Ukrainian refugees positively.⁵ In the Czech Republic, in September 2022, energy protestors demanded the government 'enter into direct gas supply contracts with Russia' and return Ukrainian refugees to their homes.⁶ Looking ahead, with the invasion ongoing, the priorities of organisations that currently support Ukrainian refugees might change, resulting in a drop in funding available to support refugees and communities hosting them.

Despite these challenges, disruption to the status quo leads to clear opportunities to improve the situation and general living standards for refugees and local communities.

¹ UNHCR (2023). [Operational Data Portal](#), accessed 12 April 2023.

² European Commission (2023). [Economic forecast for Poland](#), accessed 2 April 2023.

³ Statistica Moldovei (2023). [Evolution of consumer prices in the Republic of Moldova in December 2022 and in 2022](#), accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴ Council of the European Union (2022). [EU Imposes Sanctions on State-Owned Outlets RT/Russia Today and Sputnik's Broadcasting in the EU](#), accessed 31 March 2023.

⁵ GLOBSEC (2022). [New report shows that the V4 population supports Ukrainian refugees with some reservations](#), accessed 22 March 2023. Although there has been debate about methodological approaches to polling conducted by GLOBSEC and the [Slovak Academy of Science](#), such as noting the different scales given to participants to respond to questions (1–5 or 1–10) and how responses were collected (online—in-person); even when the question posed is the same. See GLOBSEC (2022). [New poll: Slovaks want Ukraine to win the war, Not Russia](#), accessed 22 March 2023.

⁶ Chastand, J-B. (2022). [In the Czech Republic, the social crisis has awakened pro-Russian forces](#), *Le Monde*, accessed 23 March 2023.

Objectives

Several months into the war's second year, this report aims to help understand the factors that might undermine cohesion between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in the region in the medium term and provide recommendations to relevant organisations for what they could do to mitigate those factors. We provide recommendations for specific programmes as well as programmatic and service delivery approaches that local, national, and international stakeholders could take to increase community cohesion and reduce the likelihood of these potential tensions occurring.

Approach and methodology

The research was conducted between November 2022 and March 2023. The team carried out desk-based research, followed by research workshops in the five countries of focus (the Czech Republic, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia) with 229 experts from government, multilateral organisations, local and international non-governmental organisations, and academia. These research activities focused on (1) characteristics that can make refugees more vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation, and difficulty accessing services; (2) incendiary and misleading discourse about Ukrainian refugees in the country; and (3) tensions that might arise between refugees and host communities in the medium term (by September 2023). The research team followed up with a survey that asked key experts to rate the effectiveness of various programmatic responses for mitigating the five tensions that are most likely to affect community cohesion by September 2023 and to share programmatic lessons learnt that could be useful for others working in this space. The team then supplemented the findings from the workshops and surveys with additional desk-based research.

Structure of the report

The report considers the characteristics that have increased (or can increase) different Ukrainian refugees' vulnerabilities to exploitation, discrimination, and ability to access necessary services (Chapter 2); the incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees that have been noted and have the potential to be spread further (Chapter 3); tensions that might occur between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in the medium term (Chapter 4); and various programmatic responses that could be applicable in the region to mitigate the risks at each stage of the refugees' journey (Chapter 5).

Each chapter covers six stages of Ukrainian refugees' journeys in the country: (1) entry, legal status, and registration for services; (2) healthcare; (3) housing; (4) education; (5) employment and income; and (6) community, social, and political life. This enables the report to more clearly bring out the links between misleading and incendiary discourses, the underlying challenges that such discourses exploit, the increased vulnerabilities of certain groups of Ukrainian refugees, and where tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities might emerge or become more significant, as well as to offer more targeted recommendations.

Key findings

This report draws out a range of vulnerabilities, discourses, and potential tensions that might materialise in the region; the country-specific reports provide greater detail on these. Three overarching observations can be made

regarding the nature of the risks to community cohesion that might materialise in the Czech Republic, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia in the medium term.

1. Economic concerns are a key driver of potential tensions.

Polling in Europe consistently shows that, since mid-2022, the population is primarily worried about economic factors such as the rising cost of living. For example, an October 2022 European Union (EU) poll showed that 93 percent of survey respondents in the EU (rising to 95 percent for Slovak respondents) were worried about rising living costs, including increasing food and energy prices.⁷ Moldova's inflation rate was the highest at 30.2 percent in December 2022⁸ after a year of stability between 2.5 percent and 3 percent.⁹ With the increase in fuel and energy prices in all the research countries, discourses such as 'What about our citizens?' or 'Ukrainian refugees are draining our social system as domestic citizens are being crushed by inflation' appear.¹⁰ The narrative that rich Ukrainians siphon aid they don't need from the 'needy' has existed since the beginning of the Russian invasion.¹¹ One news report quoted a resident volunteering at the border in March 2022, saying, 'You feel uneasy about it, seeing someone in a Lexus get a free lunch'.¹²

Some grievances may be based on partial truth. For example, in Romania, there was a misconception that Ukrainians had been granted unlimited free travel within the country,¹³ but, in fact, the free-fare period ran only from March until May 2022.¹⁴ In the Czech Republic, Ukrainian refugees received some higher social benefits than locals. However, this was a temporary measure, and Czechs had access to a broader range of benefits that could add up to more than what Ukrainians received.¹⁵ Workshop participants also noted that some respondents believed that local taxpayers paid for much of the support to refugees that was actually funded by the EU or voluntary charitable donations. The general public might also underestimate the benefits that Ukrainians contribute to their country's economy.¹⁶

This report makes the recommendations below to mitigate potential tensions around economic concerns. These and other recommendations are detailed in Chapter 5 of this report.

- Ensure and communicate equity in the distribution of resources among the Ukrainian and local populations in need, and publicise the additional resources (international funding and voluntary domestic donations) the country received to support the refugees.

⁷ European Commission (2023). *EP Autumn 2022 Survey: Parlemeter*, accessed 10 April 2023.

⁸ Statistica Moldovei (2023). *Evolution of consumer prices in the Republic of Moldova in December 2022 and in 2022*, accessed 31 March 2023.

⁹ Trading Economics (2023). *Moldova Unemployment Rate*, accessed 28 March 2023.

¹⁰ See for example, Czech Elves (2022) *Monthly report – May*, accessed 20 March 2023; Vasilache, M. (2022). *Război în Ucraina: Campanie online împotriva refugiaților ucraineni din Republica Moldova*, accessed 29 March 2023.

¹¹ Czech Elves (2022). *Monthly report – November 2022*, accessed 20 March 2023.

¹² Brown, E. C. (2022). *The National News*. *Influx of wealthier Ukrainians raises eyebrows in impoverished Moldova*, accessed 29 March 2023.

¹³ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023

¹⁴ Romanian Insider (2022). *Romania to provide free rail transportation to all Ukrainians for another month*

¹⁵ For the first 150 days, Ukrainian refugees are generally provided with humanitarian aid of CZK 5,000, and Czech citizens do not have access to benefits in this amount. The social benefit, which corresponds to the humanitarian aid, is the amount of the 'living minimum,' e.g., CZK 4,860 for an individual in a single-person household (there are different categories). (For more details on social benefits, see the [Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs](#) website and the [Životní a existenční minimum section](#).) However, Czechs can apply for other types of social benefits, such as unemployment benefits, housing allowance, and maternity allowance. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2023). *Pomoc pro občany Ukrajiny a jejich zaměstnavatele*, accessed 12 February 2023; Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2023). *Pomoc občanům Ukrajiny*, accessed 13 January, 2023; Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2023), accessed 20 March 2023; Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2023). *Průvodce*, accessed 20 March 2023.

¹⁶ EURACTIV (2023). *Slovaks believe Ukrainian refugees are making the country worse*, accessed 29 March 2023.

- Implement phasing programmes—that is, change approaches to target support to those most vulnerable as a conflict continues.
- Share positive stories on social media, for example, about Ukrainian and host community relationships, support and solidarity, and Ukrainian refugees' contributions to the country.
- Extend programs supporting refugees to more vulnerable local communities.
- Engage with businesses and organisations to help them make the most of a more diverse workforce.

2. Political discourses, fuelled by disinformation and historic grievances, have the potential to stir tensions.

Russian-aligned stakeholders have been active in spreading disinformation in all five countries. This includes anti-Ukraine narratives such as 'blaming Ukraine and NATO [the North Atlantic Treaty Organization] for the war and pinning high energy prices on their own government rather than Russia cutting gas supplies' and disinformation targeted directly at Ukrainian refugees. Slovakia and Moldova are particularly vulnerable due to larger pro-Russian populations and greater sympathy for Russia than comparable EU countries.¹⁷ Alongside this, particularly in Slovakia, a prominent 'peace narrative' suggests that Ukraine should seek to end the war and 'unnecessary suffering', which might include compromises on the part of Ukraine. One study called this narrative 'a euphemism for stopping the military support for Ukraine'; the narrative has also been extended beyond the war to refer to support for Ukrainian refugees.¹⁸ Moldova's sizeable Russian-speaking population typically consumes news produced in Russian, often from within the Russian Federation, and many have adopted more pro-Russian perspectives as a result.¹⁹

Historic tensions are being stirred up as well. Responses to the Volhynia massacre, during which it is estimated that up to 60,000 Polish people were killed between 1943 and 1945,²⁰ characterised Ukrainians as anti-Polish nationalists. Similarly, workshop participants in Moldova noted that discourses were emerging about Ukrainian nationals' role in supporting Transnistria in its conflict against the Moldovan state in the 1990s. Questions are asked about why Moldovans should support Ukrainians when the Ukrainian state was perceived to have historically fought against Moldovans' interests.²¹

Such narratives can particularly gain traction on anniversary dates, such as the 80th anniversary of the Volhynia massacre in the summer of 2023, as well as elections. Negative narratives about Ukrainian refugees were observed in the 2022 Czech election, suggesting that the Czech Republic was providing too much support to Ukrainian refugees.²²

¹⁷ GLOBSEC (2022). [GLOBSEC Trends 2022: CEE amid the war in Ukraine](#), accessed 11 April 2023.

¹⁸ Učeň, P. (2023). [The Russia-Ukraine War and the radicalization of political discourse in Slovakia](#), In: *The Impacts of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine on Right-wing Populism in Europe*. Ivaldi, G. and Zankina, E. (eds.). European Center for Populism Studies, accessed 26 March 2023.

¹⁹ In 2016, 69 percent of Moldovans claimed to use Russian language news; and 40 percent of Moldovans claimed to find Russian language news as trustworthy or more trustworthy than domestic Moldovan news. Broadcasting Board of Governors (2016); [Role of Russian Media in the Baltics and Moldova](#), accessed 28 March 2023. Some regions are particularly affected. For example, in Gagauzia, a recent poll showed support for the pro-Western Moldovan government was as low as 2 percent, with 85 percent to 90 percent of people reporting having trust in the Russian Federation. agauzyeri.com (2023) [Подробно об итогах соцопроса в Гагаузии](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

²⁰ Tymińska, A. (2022). [Granice nienawiści. Mowa nienawiści w kontekście kryzysów humanitarnych na granicy polskiej \(2021/2022\)](#), Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka.

²¹ Chisinau research workshop 2 March 2023.

²² H. Ridgwell, Voa News (2023). [Czechs Prepare to Choose New President, as Rivals Clash Over Support for Ukraine](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

To mitigate potential tensions that can arise due to political discourses, this report recommends:

- Conducting more activities to increase interactions that members of both communities enjoy (such as movie screenings or sports activities), providing opportunities for the groups to meet and get to know one another.
- Implementing strategic communications to reach target audiences and penetrate information bubbles.
- Creating additional free or affordable after-school activities for both communities' children, which also provide an avenue for parents to become acquainted.
- Improving the training of search engines and generative artificial intelligence to help reduce bias and potential abuse.
- Organising community dialogues around topics such as fear of insecurity and war, Ukrainian history and culture, and the realities of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- Producing radio and TV programming to address tensions, including 'edutainment' that uses fiction to help build inter-community understanding.
- Working with journalists to support quality journalism that does not contribute to the spread of incendiary discourses.
- Reviewing school curricula, including the teaching of history and digital literacy.

3. Many of the challenges are rooted in long-standing operational issues.

Our research has demonstrated that many of the concerns that host communities expressed, and the incendiary and misleading narratives shared by actors with malicious intent and some parts of the population, are rooted in longstanding issues such as a strained healthcare or housing system. Healthcare provision in each of the five focus countries had challenges before the arrival of refugees from Ukraine. These included staff shortages in the Czech Republic,²³ Poland,²⁴ Romania,²⁵ and Slovakia,²⁶ long waiting lists in Poland²⁷ and Slovakia,²⁸ and unequal regional provision of healthcare in Romania²⁹ and Slovakia.³⁰ The arrival of Ukrainian refugees has highlighted some of these longstanding challenges; it also can speed up their resolution, as these issues have become even more visible. In some cases, different sources of funding might become accessible to address the issues, which could improve the situation for both Ukrainians and host communities.

To mitigate potential tensions around longstanding operational challenges, this report recommends:

- Linking community-cohesion-focused work with broader efforts to improve operational concerns in each country.
- Conducting conflict and context analysis to inform programming and communication campaigns and implementing specific programs to improve access to services for the local and refugee populations where needed (e.g., by providing translation services for healthcare and mobile clinics or supporting

²³ ČT 24 (2023). [V Česku chybí praktičtí. Zájem o studium oborů je velký, stát je ale dlouho nepodporoval, shodli se Válek se Šonkou](#), accessed 26 March 2023.

²⁴ British Medical Journal (2022). [Poland's buckling healthcare system nevertheless welcomes Ukraine refugees with open arms](#), *BMJ* 2022; 377.

²⁵ *The Economist* (2019). [Romania's health-care system, the EU's worst, struggles to reform](#)

²⁶ European Commission (2019). [Internships for doctors from third countries to address shortage of health professionals in Slovakia](#)

²⁷ British Medical Journal (2022). [Poland's buckling healthcare system nevertheless welcomes Ukraine refugees with open arms](#), *BMJ* 2022; 377.

²⁸ UNHCR, [Protection Risks and Needs of Refugees from Ukraine](#), accessed 13 April 2023.

²⁹ *The Economist* (2019). [Romania's health-care system, the EU's worst, struggles to reform](#)

³⁰ European Commission (2019). [Internships for doctors from third countries to address shortage of health professionals in Slovakia](#)

social intermediaries in the rental process, guaranteeing rent payments and minimum tenancy standards.³¹

³¹ See, for example, Habitat for Humanity (n.d.) [Introducing Social Rental Agencies in Poland](#), accessed 27 March 2023.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The world was shaken by Russia’s brutal escalation of hostilities and full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022—and by the ensuing human suffering. By March 2023, European countries recorded more than 8 million people displaced by the violence in Ukraine, with more than 5 million having registered for TP or similar national protection schemes on the continent.³² Poland has welcomed the highest number of Ukrainian refugees, while the Czech Republic welcomed the highest number per capita, as demonstrated in the table below.

TABLE 1. Numbers of Ukrainian refugees hosted

Characteristic	Poland	Slovakia	Czech Republic	Romania	Moldova
Refugees from Ukraine recorded in country as of March 2023 (UNHCR) ³³	1,583,563	113,024	504,352	104,823	106,485
Ukrainian refugees hosted as a % of total population ³⁴	4.2%	2.1%	4.5%	0.5%	4.1%
Total population (million) ³⁵	37.8	5.5	10.7	19.02	2.6

Ukrainian refugees have been warmly welcomed by host populations in Central Europe. Governments, non-governmental organisations, businesses, multilateral organisations, and ordinary citizens provided whatever support they could to Ukrainians fleeing the invasion. For example, in Poland, in addition to the government’s swift political and financial response, civil society organisations and individuals united to organise and support the response. A study by the Polish Economic Institute estimated that up to 77 percent of Polish citizens took individual action to support fleeing Ukrainians in the early months of the war.³⁶ A study by GLOBSEC estimated that up to 46 percent of Slovak citizens took individual action to support Ukrainians during this time.³⁷ In the five countries, immediate civil society support—such as hosting Ukrainian refugees—enabled the national and local governments to develop more systemic legal and operational responses. Such thorough action was taken despite the countries and the region more broadly having limited recent experience of, and infrastructure for, large numbers of refugees before the war. Each country experienced a 100- to 500-fold increase in refugees between 2020 and 2023.³⁸ While a quick end to the war is hoped for, the conflict may become prolonged, and it is therefore likely that displaced Ukrainians will continue to reside in neighbouring and other European countries.

Some social services and systems were stretched before the war, and pressure is increasing on the housing, health, and education systems in the host countries. Other challenges will likely arise as the conflict protracts and people’s needs and concerns evolve, particularly with inflation continuing to rise (consumer price inflation reached

³² UNHCR (2023). [Operational Data Portal](#), accessed 12 April 2023.

³³ UNHCR (2023). [Refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe](#), accessed 30 March 2023. Figures accurate as of 27 March 2023.

³⁴ Authors’ calculation, taking total population and refugee population figures provided in the table.

³⁵ Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Romania: World Bank (2022). [Population – total, European Union](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Moldova: Statistica Moldovei, [Population](#) (2023), accessed 29 March 2023.

³⁶ Polish Economic Institute, [How Polish society has been helping refugees from Ukraine](#), accessed 24 March 2023.

³⁷ GLOBSEC (2023). [Despite challenges, V4 societies generally remain supportive of Ukrainian refugees, with more negative attitudes apparent in Slovakia](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

³⁸ UNHCR (2022). [Refugee Data Finder](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

30.2 percent³⁹ in December 2022 in Moldova). In addition, incendiary and misleading narratives, including by Russia-aligned stakeholders, and disinformation campaigns⁴⁰ can potentially exacerbate existing concerns and negatively impact community cohesion. In other crises, over time, tensions have led to increased polarisation of society and discrimination or hate crimes against minorities. This can decrease a society's resilience to disinformation and shocks more broadly and, in the worst cases, increase criminality and violence or conflict between communities and lead to human rights violations, including exploitation of vulnerable individuals and lack of access to basic services.

Some early signs point to support for Ukrainian refugees beginning to erode in some countries. In Slovakia, for instance, 'How are you Slovakia?' research project polling conducted by the Institute for Sociology and the Institute for Research in Social Communication, MNFORCE, and Seesame between March and December 2022 found that, during this period, the proportion of respondents who strongly disagreed that people from Ukraine should receive the same rights as others in Slovakia increased from 15 percent to 25 percent.⁴¹ Those who disagreed that refugees should have the right to apply for asylum in Slovakia without annual limits increased by almost half, from 35 percent in March 2022.⁴² In the Czech Republic in September 2022, energy protestors demanded the government "enter into direct gas supply contracts with Russia" and return Ukrainian refugees to their homes'.⁴³

Looking ahead, with the invasion ongoing, the priorities of organisations that currently support Ukrainian refugees might change, which may result in a drop in funding available to support refugees and the communities hosting them. Despite these challenges, the disruption to the status quo leads to clear opportunities to improve the situation for both refugees and local communities. With the right information at hand and building on strong support throughout the third sector by governments and the public, there is an opening to strengthen community cohesion and progress on addressing longstanding issues throughout the region.

Objectives

As the war enters its second year, this report aims to help understand the factors that might undermine cohesion between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in the Central European countries in the medium term.

We provide recommendations for specific programmes as well as programmatic and service delivery approaches that local, national, and international stakeholders could take to increase community cohesion and reduce the likelihood of these potential tensions occurring.

We understand **community cohesion**⁴⁴ as occurring in a society in which:

³⁹ Statistica Moldovei (2023). [Evolution of consumer prices in the Republic of Moldova in December 2022 and in 2022](#), accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴⁰ Council of the European Union (2022). [EU Imposes Sanctions on State-Owned Outlets RT/Russia Today and Sputnik's Broadcasting in the EU](#), accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴¹ European Commission (2023). [Slovakia: Slight decrease in public support for those displaced from Ukraine](#), accessed 2 May 2023.

⁴² European Commission (2023). [Slovakia: Slight decrease in public support for those displaced from Ukraine](#), accessed 2 May 2023.

⁴³ Chastand (2022). [In the Czech Republic, the social crisis has awakened pro-Russian forces](#), *Le Monde*, accessed 23 March 2023.

⁴⁴ Slight variations of this definition are used by various schools and councils in the UK and are put forward by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, now called the Department for Education.

- All communities have a sense of belonging;
- The diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued;
- Similar life opportunities are available to all; and
- Strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, schools, and the wider community.

This report considers community cohesion at the local, regional, and national levels.

Approach, methodology, and structure of the report

The project team conducted research in five focus countries: the Czech Republic, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. In total, the team produced six research reports: this regional report and five country reports. This regional report summarises the findings of the country reports and draws out the key commonalities and differences in the potential tensions that might arise between the Ukrainian refugee and host communities. It also draws out regional trends and conclusions. For specific details on the topics discussed and country-specific information, please refer to the country-level reports.

To conduct the research, the project engaged a diverse team: a core team responsible for the overall research framework, methodology, and delivery across the five countries; country researchers in each focus country; and an advisory group of subject matter experts to provide specialist inputs. The team used the same approach and methodology for each country.

The research was undertaken in two phases. The inception phase took place in November and December 2022. The research team developed the approach and methodology and conducted initial desk-based research. This research examined the key relevant stakeholders in each country; existing programs in this space; and characteristics that can make different refugee groups vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, and challenges in accessing services. Finally, the team completed an initial mapping of the tensions that might arise between the host communities and refugees in the medium term.

The research phase took place between January and March 2023. The team organised interactive two-day workshops with key experts from local and national governments, multilateral organisations, local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academia, religious leaders, and the private sector. The morning sessions on the first workshop day were conducted with only Ukrainian refugees, discussing the characteristics that can make refugees more vulnerable. Representatives from academia and local NGOs joined for the afternoon sessions, which focused on refugee 'journeys'—the various aspects of setting up a life in the host countries. The second day included a broad range of participants and focused on incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees and tensions that might arise in the medium term. The workshops were conducted between February and March, on 1 and 2 February in Prague with 65 experts, 8 February in Warsaw with 22 experts, 15 and 16 February in Bucharest with 53 experts, 1 and 2 March in Chisinau with 52 experts, 7 and 8 March in Bratislava with 20 experts, and 14 March in Kosiče with 17 experts from a broad range of organisations. In total, the project engaged 229 workshop participants across the five countries. The workshops used September 2023 as a focal point to orient the discussions toward risks that might become significant in the medium term. The research team then followed up with key experts through a survey, asking respondents to rate the effectiveness of various programmatic responses to mitigate the five tensions that are most likely to affect

community cohesion by September 2023 and to share programmatic lessons learned that could be useful for others working in this space. Finally, the findings from the workshops and the surveys were supplemented by additional desk-based research.

The report is structured according to the different stages of Ukrainian refugees' journeys in each country: (1) entry, legal status, and registration for services; (2) healthcare; (3) housing; (4) education; (5) employment and income; and (6) community, social, and political life. This allows the report to more clearly bring out the links between misleading and incendiary discourses, the underlying challenges that such discourses exploit, the increased vulnerabilities of certain groups of Ukrainian refugees, and where tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities might emerge or become more significant, as well as to offer more targeted recommendations.

After this introduction, **Chapter 2** details the characteristics that have increased (and can increase) different Ukrainian refugees' vulnerabilities to exploitation and discrimination, including their ability to access necessary services. This chapter draws on the desk-based research and research workshop findings.

Chapter 3 focuses on the incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees. This section is based on the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) Chain of Harm framework,⁴⁵ which maps the path by which disinformation, misinformation, and dangerous speech (DMDS) move through an information ecosystem, depicting how directed disinformation commonly amplifies hate speech or other divisive narratives to achieve its aims. The discourses section used three sources of data: (1) findings from the in-country workshops, (2) research from third parties on misleading and incendiary discourses about Ukrainian refugees, and (3) Facebook content found via CrowdTangle.⁴⁶ The approach led to recommendations regarding discreet intervention points where the Chain of Harm could be 'disrupted'.

Chapter 4 summarises the tensions that might occur between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in the medium term. The chapter presents a long list of *possible* tensions to highlight the possibility of malign actors relentlessly promoting related discourses and of underlying challenges worsening sufficiently to increase tensions around a particular subject. This chapter draws on the desk-based research and research workshop findings.

Chapter 5 discusses various programmatic responses that could be applicable in the region to mitigate risks at each stage of the refugees' journey. The programmatic recommendations are intentionally broad, but they include illustrative examples to enable a range of organisations—from governments and multilateral organizations to NGOs of various sizes, as well as small community initiatives—to consider and adapt them in their programming.

Annex 1 is an acronyms and abbreviations list, and **Annex 2** presents data on the key political, economic, and demographic characteristics of the five countries, as well as statistics on the numbers of refugees hosted, their demographic characteristics, financial support received, access to services and employment, and host population attitude polling figures.

⁴⁵ Reppell, L., and Shein, E., (2019). [Disinformation Campaigns and Hate Speech: Exploring the Relationship and Programming Interventions](#) IFES.

⁴⁶ The team used the CrowdTangle research tool to triangulate the findings from the workshops and third-party research and to identify examples to incorporate in the report. See Crowdtangle (2023). [Welcome page](#), accessed 22 March 2023.

Given that the political, economic, and broader context may change very quickly after the publication of this report, **Annex 3** is a summary of key links to relevant statistics that can be consulted for an up-to-date picture of the situation. Annex 3 also provides a range of recommended readings for deeper dives into the topics discussed in this report: Ukrainian refugees' needs and challenges, reports on discrimination, pressures on social services, public attitude polling, disinformation discourses, program lessons learned, and other topics.

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Chapter 2: Vulnerabilities to Exploitation and Discrimination

2.1. Overview

This chapter details the official refugee journey through the six identified stages: (1) registration for legal status, welfare, and benefits; (2) healthcare; (3) housing; (4) education; (5) employment; and (6) community, social, and political life. It then delves into the practical challenges, varied experiences, discrimination, and difficulties experienced by specific groups of refugees. It identifies some intersectional characteristics that can make people particularly vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, and experiencing challenges in accessing services. These characteristics are summarised in the table below. They were selected as they have impacted refugees' experiences to date and are likely to affect refugees in the future, particularly if programmatic priorities change, financial support decreases, and/or disinformation efforts gain more traction.

TABLE 2. Characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable in the region

Journey stage	Characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable
Legal status, welfare, and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separated or unaccompanied children • Elderly people, especially those travelling alone • People with disabilities, particularly those with disabilities that limit mobility • People unable to attend in-person registration or cover the related costs • People with low digital literacy • People with incomplete or inaccurate documentation from Ukraine or who were not properly recorded upon entry • People with complex cases for temporary protection, including third-country nationals • People who do not speak the local language • Transgender people • Members of the Roma community • Single-parent families (Moldova)
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elderly people • People with mental health conditions and/or experiencing trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) • People with disabilities • People with chronic health needs • Women seeking support for sexual or reproductive health • People who do not speak the local language or English • Refugees living in more remote regions • People on lower incomes
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elderly people and people with disabilities or mobility issues • People on lower incomes or in more vulnerable and precarious positions in relation to all types of housing • Members of the Roma community • Women suffering abuse, including domestic abuse • Single parents • Residents of collective shelters • People renting privately without a formal lease
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-school children • Children who do not speak the local language

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children attending Ukrainian schools online • Children experiencing bullying • Youth in their late teens • Children with disabilities or neurodiversities • Roma children
Employment and income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents or guardians, especially of multiple children • People with disabilities • Underemployed refugees • People who were not economically active before arrival in the host country • Refugees reliant on employment agencies • People who do not speak the local language • People based outside of major cities • People near retirement age
Community, social, and political life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People suffering from trauma • People employed in long-hour jobs • People separated from family and/or in the host country alone • Elderly people • Children and young people in their late teens • LGBTQIA+ refugees • People with disabilities and neurodiversities • Roma refugees • People who are politically active in supporting the war effort (Slovakia and Moldova)

2.2. Legal status, welfare, and benefits

In March 2022, the Czech Republic,⁴⁷ Poland,⁴⁸ Romania,⁴⁹ and Slovakia⁵⁰ passed legislation implementing the European Union Temporary Directive (TPD)⁵¹ and clarifying administrative procedures for people fleeing Ukraine to claim TP and access humanitarian assistance. On 1 March 2023, Moldova transposed the TPD into its legislation and formalized the right of refugees to remain in the country until 1 March 2024.⁵² In line with the TPD and the March 2022 national legislation packages, Ukrainian citizens and non-Ukrainian third-country nationals (TCNs) are exempt from the regulations regarding short-stay visas to enter the European Union.⁵³ To extend their stay beyond 90 days, Ukrainian citizens (and their non-Ukrainian spouses) must apply for TP or other government schemes such as work permits or asylum.⁵⁴ TCNs are also eligible to apply for TP if they had permanent residency in Ukraine before the invasion or had refugee status in Ukraine and cannot return to their country or region of origin in safe conditions.⁵⁵ While the application process is similar, TCNs effectively face a double burden of proof in that they must demonstrate sufficient ties to Ukraine and a lack of safety in their country of origin.

⁴⁷ Ministry of Interior (2023). [Dočasná ochrana](#), accessed 23 March 2023.

⁴⁸ European Commission (2022). [Poland: parliament adopts law on assistance to Ukrainian refugees](#)

⁴⁹ Government of Romania (2022). [DECISION no. 367 of March 18, 2022, regarding the establishment of conditions for ensuring temporary protection, as well as for the modification and completion of some normative acts in the field of foreigners](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

⁵⁰ European Commission (2022). [Slovakia adopts package of legislative changes to facilitate integration of those fleeing Ukraine](#)

⁵¹ European Union (2022). [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/382, 4 March 2022](#)

⁵² Prior to this, Moldova offered refugees from Ukraine a form of temporary protection similar to that of TP, but issued through Moldova's National Commission on Exceptional Situations. Since this fell under state of emergency legislation, the entry rights and refugee protection were valid only for a renewable 60-day period of a state of emergency. While the repeated extensions were welcome, this system brought about more uncertainty than TP status.

⁵³ Government of Romania (2022). [Arrival in Romania](#), accessed 20 March 2023; Ministry of Interior (2023). [Dočasná ochrana](#), accessed 23 March 2023; European Commission (2022). [Poland: parliament adopts law on assistance to Ukrainian refugees](#); European Commission (2022). [Poland: parliament adopts law on assistance to Ukrainian refugees](#)

⁵⁴ Government of Romania (2022). [Arrival in Romania](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

⁵⁵ European Union (2022). [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/382, 4 March 2022](#)

Once granted TP, refugees have the right to access healthcare, education, housing, and other services and benefits on par with citizens of the host country. In some cases, there are differences in access or process between Ukrainian citizens and TCNs (such as in Poland, where TCNs from Ukraine must obtain a TP certificate from the Office of Foreigners within 15 days of arrival).⁵⁶ In other cases, there are slight restrictions on the benefits available to refugees compared to citizens (such as in Slovakia, where Ukrainians under TP are not automatically entitled to child, parental, maintenance, funeral, or childbirth allowances).⁵⁷

There are also requirements related to the renewal of TP status. Refugees in the Czech Republic had to re-register online no later than 31 March 2023 and then attend an in-person appointment at the Ministry of Interior;⁵⁸ those in Poland were required to re-register 18 months after 24 February 2022 but no earlier than nine months from the date of their entry into Poland.⁵⁹ In Romania, TP had to be renewed in March 2023 and then every six months.⁶⁰ In Slovakia, TP is currently granted until March 2024.⁶¹

Some focus countries—in particular, the Republic of Moldova and Romania—see themselves also as transit countries, given the number of Ukrainian refugees who travel through them to reach other destinations.⁶² Those countries have established humanitarian mechanisms to support safe onward travel for refugees. For example, in collaboration with multilateral partners, the Government of Romania established ‘green corridors’ to support people travelling to other border crossing points in Europe. As of 13 January 2023, the government had provided no-cost travel through Romania to 687,820 refugees from Ukraine.⁶³

The desk-based research and research workshops identified the groups discussed below as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

Separated or unaccompanied children were identified as particularly vulnerable in all five countries. The invasion of Ukraine resulted in the separation of many families, with minors often left in the care of people other than their immediate relatives. Research from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) shows that, of households surveyed between October 2022 and March 2023, 2 percent had children separated from both parents.⁶⁴ The International Centre for Migration Policy Development reports that many Ukrainian children who entered Poland in the first three months following Russia’s escalation of the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 were accompanied by relatives or caregivers who were not their legal guardians, meaning that their care needed to be formalised in Poland. As a result, 19,200 temporary guardianships were appointed for 23,000 Ukrainian refugee children in Poland by June 2022.⁶⁵ While the figures for unaccompanied children in the region are less clear, media⁶⁶ and government⁶⁷ reports cite cases of children leaving Ukraine and entering neighbouring countries alone. The Czech Government Commissioner for Human Rights and National Coordinator for Adaption

⁵⁶ European Union Agency for Asylum (2022). [Poland](#)

⁵⁷ Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs, and Family (2023). [Useful information for citizens of Ukraine](#), accessed 21 March 2023.

⁵⁸ Government of the Czech Republic (2022). [Informace k prodloužení dočasné ochrany](#), accessed 27 March 2023.

⁵⁹ Government of Republic of Poland (2022). [Amendment to the law on assistance to Ukrainian citizens in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of the country](#)

⁶⁰ European Union Agency for Asylum (2022). [Information on temporary protection in Romania](#)

⁶¹ UNHCR (2022). [Help Slovakia: Temporary Protection](#) accessed 21 March 2023.

⁶² UNHCR (2023). [Operational Data Portal](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶³ Government of Romania (2023). [Romania’s Response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis](#)

⁶⁴ UNHCR (2023). [Protection Risks and Needs of Refugees from Ukraine](#), accessed 13 April 2023.

⁶⁵ The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (2022). [Temporary protection in Poland – what solutions for vulnerable groups?](#)

⁶⁶ Guardian (2022). [Slovak hails boy, aged 11, who travelled 700 miles alone from Ukraine](#)

⁶⁷ SPRAVY (2022). [Unaccompanied children fleeing Ukraine are also housed in Centers for Children and Families](#), accessed 22 March 2023.

and Integration of Refugees, Klára Šimáčková Laurenčiková, told media sources that, as of March 2023, there were approximately 30,000 child refugees in the Czech Republic unaccompanied by legal representatives.⁶⁸ This group is likely to face even greater vulnerabilities, including risks of trafficking, abuse, and violence.⁶⁹ Unaccompanied children may also lack access to proper identification documentation and legal advice⁷⁰ and struggle to access TP without a parent or guardian to confirm their registration.⁷¹

Participants in the research workshops considered unaccompanied children among the most vulnerable groups within the Ukrainian community in Romania, citing examples of severe loneliness and isolation; higher risks of mental health problems, self-harm, and addictive behaviours; and vulnerability to exploitation due to their inability to support themselves financially.⁷²

The elderly, particularly travelling alone: Participants in the research workshop noted that the elderly, particularly if travelling alone and lacking knowledge of the local language, may experience challenges in accessing the necessary information to register for TP and welfare support.⁷³ This risk may be compounded for elderly refugees with poor digital literacy, who find online information more challenging to access and who will rely upon in-person information provided at border crossings and registration centres.⁷⁴ According to REACH's multi-sectoral needs assessment in Poland, elderly people face additional barriers in adapting to the new situation and accessing services.⁷⁵ They may require additional support or alternative non-digital communication channels to ensure they fully understand and access their legal status, rights, and benefits.

People with disabilities, particularly those with disabilities that limit mobility: People with disabilities face challenges in registration and accessing benefits,⁷⁶ particularly since many processes require an in-person application. The Bratislava research workshop participants op commented that regional locations also affect these limitations. People outside of Bratislava reported longer and more difficult journeys to state offices, which are additionally challenging for people with mobility issues.⁷⁷ Deaf Ukrainians in Moldova face challenges, as minimal sign language interpretation is available, and Russian (used in Moldova) and Ukrainian sign languages are unrelated. In Romania, people with disabilities cannot send a family member in their place to register for their temporary protection status, so they are required to travel personally.⁷⁸ In the Czech Republic, the Ministry of the Interior has allowed individuals to send representatives if they cannot attend an in-person appointment to finalise their TP status (based on power of attorney rights and the presentation of a medical report). Still, this bureaucratically complex process requires significant pre-documentation.⁷⁹ This may be challenging for some individuals, particularly those who have a mobility-limiting disability and are travelling alone without a trusted individual to act on their behalf.

⁶⁸ Ceske Noviny (2023). *Commissioner: There are about 30,000 unaccompanied child refugees from Ukraine in the Czech Republic*

⁶⁹ European Commission (2022). *SRSF on Migration and Refugees publishes reports of visit to Czech and Slovak Republic*

⁷⁰ European Union (2021), *Briefing – Vulnerability of unaccompanied or separated child migrants*

⁷¹ Ministry of Interior (2023). *Dočasná ochrana*, accessed 23 March 2023.

⁷² Bucharest focus groups workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

⁷³ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁷⁴ IOM (2022). *Assistance to people fleeing the war in Ukraine: IOM Slovakia*

⁷⁵ UNHCR REACH (2022). *Multi-sector needs assessment Poland*

⁷⁶ UNHCR (2022). *Slovakia: protection brief – May-October 2022*; World Health Organization (2023); *Enabling support for Ukrainians with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova*, accessed 23 March 2023.

⁷⁷ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁷⁸ Government of Romania (2022). *Apply for temporary protection*, accessed 29 March 2023.

⁷⁹ Ministry of Interior (2023). *Dočasná ochrana*, accessed 23 March 2023.

Other people unable to attend in-person registration or cover the related costs: Due to the requirement for in-person visits to finalise TP registration, people who face barriers to travel can experience delays in securing their legal status and benefits. This might include those residing in remote areas for whom travel distance can be prohibitive and adults who care for young, elderly, or unwell relatives.⁸⁰ According to the UNHCR, Slovakia (30 percent) and Romania (26 percent) have the highest reported number of Ukrainian refugee households with at least one person with specific needs (defined as a disability, serious health conditions, or old age vulnerabilities) in the region neighbouring Ukraine (Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia).⁸¹ Costs associated with applying for TP can include transportation to government offices for in-person appointments and computer or internet access for electronic registration or access to legal advice or assistance. People living below the poverty line or on low incomes may not have access to the resources necessary to complete the application process.

People with low digital literacy: Information on legal status, rights, and benefits is primarily available online, and this may be challenging for people who have low digital literacy skills. According to media reports, as of 17 March 2023 in the Czech Republic, only 277,000 of approximately 500,000 refugees had submitted the necessary documentation to renew their TP beyond March 2023, with up to one in 10 Ukrainian refugees experiencing problems with the process and documentation requests.⁸² The Refugee Aid Organisation noted that seniors and unaccompanied minors without a legally recognised guardian to complete their application were particularly vulnerable.⁸³ Those refugees may struggle to navigate the application process or communicate with officials and thus risk losing their TP status.

People with incomplete or inaccurate documentation from Ukraine or those not properly recorded upon entry could experience issues and delays registering for legal status and benefits. Ukrainians from eastern regions were more likely to have fled their homes without documentation as the hostilities escalated.⁸⁴ In addition, some people may have lost documents during multiple displacements. According to the UNHCR, 26 percent of Ukrainian refugees in Romania, for example, were displaced internally in Ukraine at an earlier date.⁸⁵ Participants in the workshop also shared examples of temporary protection cards issued by Romanian officials with handwritten or incorrect information; those cards were invalidated later and required re-registration.⁸⁶

People with complex cases for temporary protection, including TCNs: Some countries, such as the Czech Republic, operate slightly different forms of registration for displaced persons fleeing Ukraine, depending on whether an individual is a Ukrainian citizen (and whether they were resident in the Czech Republic before or after 24 February 2022) or a TCN. While information is available regarding different cases for TP, such as the Ministry of the Interior website, which publishes guidance in Czech, English, and Ukrainian,⁸⁷ the differences in status and registration processes may leave some individuals unclear regarding their legal status and rights. There are additional complexities for Ukrainians who held a valid residence permit in another EU country before February

⁸⁰ Bucharest focus groups workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

⁸¹ UNHCR (2022). [Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine](#)

⁸² ČT 24 (2023). [Vyplnit potřebné dokumenty nezvládají desetitisíce uprchlíků. Problémy mají senioři, handicapovaní i děti bez doprovodu](#), accessed 23 March 2023.

⁸³ ČT 24 (2023). [Vyplnit potřebné dokumenty nezvládají desetitisíce uprchlíků. Problémy mají senioři, handicapovaní i děti bez doprovodu](#), accessed 23 March 2023.

⁸⁴ HIAS, VOICE (2022). [Ukraine Assessment Report - Waiting for the Sky to Close: The Unprecedented Crisis Facing Women and Girls Fleeing Ukraine](#), accessed 29 March 2023; Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

⁸⁵ UNHCR (2022). [Romania Protection and Profiling Monitoring Factsheet](#)

⁸⁶ Bucharest focus groups workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

⁸⁷ Ministry of Interior (2023), [Dočasná ochrana](#), accessed 23 March 2023.

2022 and those who held a valid residence permit in the Czech Republic but did not extend their stay after 24 February 2022. The Ministry of the Interior states that these groups may not be eligible for TP in the Czech Republic. Instead, they must apply for TP in the state that granted their residence permit or apply for other provisions in the Czech Republic, such as asylum.⁸⁸ A report on the fact-finding mission to the Czech Republic by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration and Refugees in May 2022 highlighted the absence of free legal aid and state-funded counselling to support individuals with unusual or exceptional cases, leaving them vulnerable and potentially unable to secure their TP status.⁸⁹ Participants in the research workshop also expressed concerns about the legal aid and judicial review process, particularly restrictions on the right of appeal. In addition, there are reports of discrimination faced by non-Ukrainians fleeing the invasion. In July 2022, the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants commented that there was ‘a double standard approach’ between Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian citizens arriving in Poland, adding that ‘those with specific vulnerabilities, including the ones with irregular migratory status face heightened difficulties in obtaining residence permits and proper shelter’.⁹⁰ Finally, TCNs from Ukraine who do not meet the criteria to apply for TP⁹¹ must apply for asylum or a similar national protection system, which usually provides fewer benefits. For example, Poland grants the right to work only after six months if no decision on the application has been reached.⁹² TCNs who lack documentation are particularly vulnerable, as they may be unable to secure legal status, leaving them at greater risk of exploitation and abuse. While the total number of stateless TCNs arriving in the region is relatively low, cases of TCNs who are struggling were raised in the workshops. One participant shared a story of an Armenian man who arrived from Ukraine without papers and required specialist NGO support to avoid destitution.⁹³

People who do not speak the local language: While all five countries have made significant efforts to provide all necessary documentation in multiple languages, including Ukrainian, refugees can still struggle with some bureaucratic processes and practicalities when they do not speak the local language. This was particularly discussed in Romania workshops, where the local language differs most significantly from Ukrainian compared to the other research countries. Many workshop participants raised the issue of language barriers, noting that before 2022 Romania had only a small bilingual community. Data from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) supports this, reporting that as of August 2022, only 11 percent of Ukrainians in Romania could speak Romanian.⁹⁴

Transgender Ukrainians experience particular difficulties at this stage in the journey since their legal documentation can be incongruous or may not reflect their lived identity or chosen name.⁹⁵ This was noted in the workshops in Romania, for instance.⁹⁶ A hotline was established for LGBTQIA+ people entering Moldova, but there is very little public-facing information about the impact of the refugee crisis on transgender people.⁹⁷ HIAS and VOICE produced a joint report that suggests transgender people perceive a risk of violence at border

⁸⁸ Ministry of Interior (2023). [Dočasná ochrana](#), accessed 23 March 2023.

⁸⁹ Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees (2022). [Report of the fact-finding mission to the Czech Republic by Ms Leyla Kayacik](#) (4–6 May), accessed 7 January 2023.

⁹⁰ United Nations Office at Geneva (2022). [Top rights expert questions double standard Ukraine’s war displaced](#)

⁹¹ Either (1) having been a stateless person recognised as living within Ukraine before 24 February 2022, (2) a refugee or TCN reliant on protection from the Ukrainian government before 24 February 2022, or (3) a family member or relative of a displaced Ukrainian national.

⁹² General Inspectorate for Migration (2023). [Drepturi și obligatii](#), accessed 31 March 2023.

⁹³ Bucharest focus groups workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

⁹⁴ IOM (2022). [Ukraine intervention – 9 month report, 24 February - 24 November 2022](#)

⁹⁵ Lee, J. (2022). [‘Danger everywhere’: War and transphobia create perfect storm for trans Ukrainians](#), accessed 26 March 2023.

⁹⁶ Bucharest focus groups workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

⁹⁷ Stiri, M.D. (2022). [Refugiaților LGBT+ din Ucraina li se va acorda ajutor în Moldova](#), accessed 23 March 2023.

crossings and echoed that outdated documentation may prevent them from crossing international borders.⁹⁸ There are reports of discrimination against transgender refugees on the Ukrainian and Romanian sides of their shared border, for instance. On the Ukrainian side, NGOs reported cases of transgender women being asked to submit to humiliating ‘bio-medical’ checks and of others who have not undergone gender-affirming surgery being immediately conscripted and sent back.⁹⁹

Members of the Roma community are noted as being discriminated against at the borders. Examples have been shared of border guards refusing to stamp passports,¹⁰⁰ leading to problems at reception centres—where there were further reports of discrimination.¹⁰¹ Before the escalation of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, it is estimated that as much as 20 percent of Ukraine’s Roma community was undocumented, which can cause particular problems, as noted above.¹⁰² The lack of targeted resources and support for Roma means that the specific issues those populations face—many of which arise from prejudice or exclusion—are under-addressed. This led to post-arrival challenges in accessing full legal status and entitlements, including housing,¹⁰³ education, and employment.¹⁰⁴ Workshop participants in Moldova reported that Roma people were less likely to have all the information required to obtain official documentation in Ukraine, which may compound challenges in accessing legal status in the country.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, there have been reports that Roma in Moldova are not believed when they say they are fleeing the war or are not given access to the same quality of service as ethnic Ukrainians, although they are fleeing the same hostilities.¹⁰⁶

Single-parent families may face additional challenges in attaining legal status, particularly in Moldova, due to Moldovan laws that require both parents’ consent for decisions affecting a child’s status. Single parents may also face challenges at the border if they have different surnames. According to the IOM, parents travelling alone with a minor child should have been granted power of attorney by the second parent to be eligible for IOM assistance to travel to another country.¹⁰⁷ This reflects Moldova’s national law, which requires two parents to be registered on the birth certificate for a child to receive Moldovan documentation.¹⁰⁸ The absence of partners is compounded by the fact that some parents are unaware of each other’s whereabouts, and the war has made it more challenging for families, partners, and ex-partners with shared custody to remain in contact with each other and their children.

One participant detailed the case of a woman she knew who, before TP’s introduction, could not attain settled status for her child without the co-signature of her ex-husband. The woman was no longer in contact with the man and had no means to contact him

⁹⁸ HIAS, VOICE (2022). [Ukraine Assessment Report - Waiting for the Sky to Close: The Unprecedented Crisis Facing Women and Girls Fleeing Ukraine](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

⁹⁹ HIAS and Voice (2022). [Romania Assessment Report - Waiting for the Sky to Close: The Unprecedented Crisis Facing Women and Girls Fleeing Ukraine](#)

¹⁰⁰ Mirga-Wójtowicz, E., Talewicz, J., and Kolaczek, M., UNHCR (2022). [Human rights, needs and discrimination – the situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine in Poland](#)

¹⁰¹ Amnesty International (2022). [Refugees from Ukraine in Poland](#) and Mirga-Wójtowicz, E. and Fiałkowska, K., Boll Foundation (2022). [Anti-gypsyism in the time of war](#)

¹⁰² Roma Support Group (2022). [March 2022 Newsletter](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

¹⁰³ Mirga-Wójtowicz, E., Talewicz, J., and Kolaczek, M., UNHCR (2022). [Human rights, needs and discrimination – the situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine in Poland](#)

¹⁰⁴ Roma Association in Poland (2022). [The situation of the people of Roma origin](#)

¹⁰⁵ Chisinau Research Workshops 1 and 2 March 2023.

¹⁰⁶ Roma Support Group (2022). [March 2022 Newsletter](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

¹⁰⁷ DOPOMOGA.GOV.MD (2023). [IOM – International Organization for Migration](#), accessed 22 March 2023.

¹⁰⁸ DOPOMOGA.GOV.MD (2023). [IOM – International Organization for Migration](#), accessed 22 March 2023.

since the full-scale invasion. Therefore, she could not register her child for settled status in Moldova.¹⁰⁹

2.3. Healthcare

Refugees from Ukraine who have been granted TP have the right to access healthcare in their country of residence. As there are differences in the national health systems of each focus country, there are different means of accessing healthcare.

In Poland, Ukrainian citizens under TP are entitled to access publicly funded healthcare on the same terms as Polish citizens.¹¹⁰ TCNs who fled Ukraine are also entitled to healthcare in Poland, but it is provided through a different system and via designated medical facilities that have signed an agreement with the Head of the Office for Foreigners.¹¹¹ In Romania, refugees under TP are entitled to free national healthcare services, including primary healthcare, emergency medical assistance, and treatment for acute or chronic diseases. Services not typically free for Romanians, such as dental care, are also not free to Ukrainians.¹¹² For refugees who have not yet applied for or received TP status, border crossing documents can be used as evidence of the right to access national health services.¹¹³

In the Czech Republic, Ukrainian refugees under TP are automatically registered in the Czech health system, and the government covers health insurance payments during the first 150 days of their residency in the country.¹¹⁴ After 150 days, refugees must organise their own payments for health insurance¹¹⁵ through employer contributions, independent payments, or state support via the Labor Office of the Czech Republic.¹¹⁶ Without insurance, Ukrainian refugees can also apply for the Extraordinary Immediate Assistance scheme as a one-off, means-tested emergency allowance when there is a serious risk of injury.¹¹⁷ In Slovakia, emergency care is provided free of charge, but other forms of healthcare require insurance coverage.¹¹⁸ All citizens and residents, including refugees, must have health insurance, paid either through employers or directly by the individual.¹¹⁹ However, since January 2023, the Government of the Slovak Republic has ensured that refugees under 18 who are not covered by public health insurance still have access to the full range of healthcare support available under the scheme.¹²⁰

¹⁰⁹ Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

¹¹⁰ This includes access to general and emergency healthcare, prescriptions, infectious disease prevention measures, COVID-19 vaccinations for adults, and standard preventative vaccinations for children.

¹¹¹ National Health Fund Poland (2022). [Assistance for Ukrainian citizens guaranteed in a special act. What do healthcare providers need to know?](#) accessed 15 March 2023.

¹¹² Dadnam, D., Lomasney, E., Gartshore, L., and McKernon, S., British Dental Journal (2021). [Romanian dilemmas](#)

¹¹³ European Commission (2022). [Romania: New order facilitates access to healthcare for people arriving from Ukraine](#)

¹¹⁴ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2023). [Pomoc pro občany Ukrajiny a jejich zaměstnavatele](#), accessed 12 February 2023.

¹¹⁵ Ministry of Health (2022). [Ministerstvo zdravotníctví odstartovalo očkovací kampaň pro Ukrajince](#), accessed 15 February 2023.

¹¹⁶ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2023). [Pomoc pro občany Ukrajiny a jejich zaměstnavatele](#), accessed 12 February 2023.

¹¹⁷ Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees (SRSG) (2022). [Report of the fact-finding mission to the Czech Republic by Ms Leyla Kavacik](#) (4–6 May), accessed 7 January 2023.

¹¹⁸ IOM UN Migration (2023). [Information and assistance in connection with the war in Ukraine](#), accessed 23 March 2023.

¹¹⁹ OECD (2017). [State of Health in the EU – Slovak Republic – country health profile 2017](#)

¹²⁰ Ministry of Health (2023). [Determination of the scope of healthcare needed](#)

Since 1 March 2023, Moldova's TP status has provided the basis of access to healthcare in the country for Ukrainian refugees; displaced people with TP status can access basic healthcare without additional registration.¹²¹ A number of private healthcare providers have waived costs for Ukrainian residents in Moldova.¹²²

In addition, specific challenges and barriers to access remain. The groups discussed below were identified through the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

Elderly people: Ukrainian refugees aged 60 and over report the highest need for healthcare. For example, 46 percent of refugees surveyed in Poland over 60, and 45 percent in Romania, reported a healthcare need within the previous 30 days.¹²³ In Romania, Ukrainian refugees aged 60 and over also reported the lowest access to healthcare (by age) amongst those who needed it, with only 61 percent of respondents saying that they were able to access the medical care they needed compared to 70 percent of adults under age 60 and 93 percent of children.¹²⁴ In Poland, access to healthcare is limited by factors such as elderly refugees travelling alone, residing in a collective shelter, and not having Polish language skills.¹²⁵ In addition, a higher number of elderly people in Poland have reported mobility issues, further increasing the risk of failing to access healthcare.¹²⁶ Participants in the Prague research workshops added that elderly refugees can be under extreme stress, as they must navigate new systems in a new culture and language and may feel that they are a burden to their already struggling adult caregivers.¹²⁷

People with mental health conditions and/or experiencing trauma or PTSD: The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that one in five people fleeing war will have a mental health condition within 10 years, with one in 10 developing a severe condition like PTSD or psychosis.¹²⁸ Evidence from protection monitoring also suggests that new arrivals—having been exposed to conflict in Ukraine for a longer time—are likely to have more compounded and complex mental health conditions that require specialised medical support.¹²⁹ Participants in the research workshops discussed barriers to accessing mental health support, including pre-existing limitations in provision, long waiting times, high costs, and feelings of shame or guilt in seeking mental health support.¹³⁰ Approximately 13 percent of Ukrainian refugees surveyed in Poland in November 2022 reported being internally displaced before coming to Poland,¹³¹ and evidence from other conflicts indicates that those who have experienced multiple displacements are likely to have experienced more trauma. Mental health problems were reported in 14 percent of Ukrainian refugees surveyed by UNHCR in Poland, with those aged 60 or over the most affected.¹³² In September 2022, one survey found that approximately 75,000 adult Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic need professional mental healthcare, but only around 5,000 (3 percent) have received it.¹³³ A

¹²¹ Treatment for Ukraine (2023). [General Information and legal support within Moldova](#), accessed 22 March 2023.

¹²² United for Ukraine (2023). [Healthcare: Moldova](#), accessed 22 March 2023.

¹²³ UNHCR REACH (2022). [Multi-sector needs assessment Poland](#); UNHCR REACH (2022). [Multi-sector needs assessment Romania December 2022](#)

¹²⁴ UNHCR REACH (2022). [Multi-sector needs assessment Romania December 2022](#)

¹²⁵ UNHCR REACH (2022). [Multi-sector needs assessment Poland](#)

¹²⁶ UNHCR REACH (2022). [Multi-sector needs assessment Poland](#)

¹²⁷ Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023.

¹²⁸ ReliefWeb (2022). [WHO promotes action on urgent mental health needs of Ukrainian refugees](#)

¹²⁹ UNHCR (2023). [Regional Refugee Response Plan January – December 2023](#)

¹³⁰ Prague research workshops 1–2 February 2023; Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

¹³¹ UNHCR (2022). [Refugees from Ukraine in Poland Regional Profiling Update November 2022](#)

¹³² UNHCR REACH (2022). [Poland: multi-sector needs assessment 2022 refugees from Ukraine](#)

¹³³ PAQ Research (2022). [Hlas Ukrajinců: Duševní zdraví uprchlíků](#), accessed 20 November 2022.

UNHCR area-based assessment in Slovakia that looked at the four main cities found that 54 percent of refugees surveyed were unaware of mental health and psychological support services available nearby.¹³⁴

People with disabilities: The UNHCR reports that persons with disabilities typically constitute at least 15 percent of any displaced population and face a range of vulnerabilities, including inadequate access to basic services and information.¹³⁵ Disability certificates issued in Ukraine are not always automatically recognised, for example, in Poland and the Czech Republic. Ukrainian refugees are eligible to apply for the Polish disability certificate, yet the process can be slow and is exacerbated by the requirement to produce medical documents in Polish confirming the state of health or disability.¹³⁶ In the Czech Republic,¹³⁷ people who do not have documents confirming their disability may not be entitled to the same social benefits and financial allowance as Czech citizens with a disability. Delays in securing the certificate can make people with disabilities more vulnerable. For example, in Poland, disabled persons residing in collective centres are exempt from the amendment that requires a financial contribution for accommodation costs; however, proof of disability is required to secure this exemption.¹³⁸ Many specialist institutes and NGOs with particular healthcare offerings in Moldova have established outreach services for Ukrainians. Still, workshop participants raised that refugees with disabilities continued to experience challenges accessing information. More widely, families of children with disabilities have been noted to have considerable needs that are not met due to cost, lack of a disability certificate, transportation challenges, and lack of services for adolescents.¹³⁹

People with chronic health needs: Participants in the research workshops reported that challenges around waiting times and the ability to secure general practitioner referrals to specialist services were experienced by both refugees and the host community.¹⁴⁰ Additional barriers for refugees, including high service costs, missing or foreign healthcare records, and language differences, are reported to delay or prevent people with chronic health conditions from accessing essential healthcare assistance or medicines.¹⁴¹ Participants in the Bucharest workshop shared stories of individuals with chronic health conditions whose medical records were in Ukrainian and who faced additional delays in securing needed medical support.¹⁴² A study by the Help to Help Ukraine association reported that many patients were asked to translate their medical records or re-submit to a full medical evaluation in Romania, a costly and time-consuming process risky for people with urgent treatment needs.¹⁴³ In the Czech Republic, 9 percent of refugees surveyed reported that they had a chronically ill child who was unable to receive appropriate treatment.¹⁴⁴

Women seeking sexual or reproductive health support: The UNHCR has highlighted reports of gender-based violence, including sexual violence toward women and girls in Ukraine, and urged host countries to strengthen their response services and specialised care such as emergency contraception, HIV prophylaxis, and abortion.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁴ UNHCR REACH (2023). [Slovakia: area based assessment \(Bratislava, Kosice, Nitra and Zilina\) - February 2023](#)

¹³⁵ UNHCR (2022). [Ensuring the protection of persons with disabilities fleeing from Ukraine](#)

¹³⁶ The Commissioner for Human Rights Poland (2022). [Problems of refugees from Ukraine with obtaining disability certificates](#); Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

¹³⁷ Zakony Pro Lidi (2022). [Act No. 108/2006 Coll., Social Services Act](#), accessed 27 March 2023.

¹³⁸ The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration (2023). [Amendment to the Act on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine signed by the President, 25 January 2023](#)

¹³⁹ World Health Organisation (2022). [Health of refugees from Ukraine in Poland 2022: survey findings](#)

¹⁴⁰ Warsaw workshop 9 February 2023.

¹⁴¹ UNHCR REACH (2022). [Multi-sector needs assessment Poland](#)

¹⁴² Bucharest focus groups workshop 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁴³ Help to Help Ukraine (2023). [Access to healthcare for Ukrainian refugees in Romania](#)

¹⁴⁴ PAQ Research, [Hlas Ukrajinčů: Zdraví a služby](#), accessed 26 November 2022.

¹⁴⁵ UNHCR (2022). [Regional Ukraine Refugee Response: Gender-Based Violence Sub-Working Group](#)

Poland is one of only two states within the EU where performing or aiding abortion is criminalised (except in two exceptional circumstances).¹⁴⁶ Even in those circumstances, however, abortions are rarely performed legally. Participants in the research workshops added that this could be shocking to women arriving from Ukraine, where abortion is more accessible as a healthcare right; this leaves women who have experienced sexual violence at risk.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, in Poland, prescriptions are required for emergency contraception, adding another barrier. In Romania, according to a cross-NGO Gender Analysis Brief completed in May 2022, while abortion before 14 weeks is legal, doctors may often refuse to carry out an abortion or refer patients to private practices with higher fees, leaving female Ukrainian victims of sexual violence extremely vulnerable.¹⁴⁸

People who do not speak the local language or English: Language barriers were mentioned in research workshops in Romania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland as complicating refugees' access to information on healthcare services and adding further burdening overstretched healthcare staff who must communicate via an interpreter or in a language they are not (very) familiar with. This was particularly discussed in Romania, where Ukrainian-Romanian interpreters are lacking, and the healthcare system is complex.¹⁴⁹ In Slovakia, 30 percent of refugees surveyed reported language as a main barrier to accessing care.¹⁵⁰

Refugees living in more remote regions: Residence in more remote and poorer regions with existing service provision gaps can compound the vulnerabilities experienced by refugees. In Romania, the IOM found significant differences in Ukrainian refugees' ability to access hospitals and general healthcare depending on their region of residence.¹⁵¹ For example, 82 percent of Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest reported that they had 'easy' access to a local hospital compared to just 36 percent of Ukrainian refugees in Constanta. Similarly, while 76 percent of Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest reported that they had 'easy' access to a local health clinic, only 44 percent of Ukrainian refugees in Galati said the same. Participants in the research workshops shared examples of Ukrainian refugees residing in rural areas in poorer regions of Slovakia who could not access information about local healthcare provision and cases of refugees who could not access general practitioner assistance and even ambulance services.¹⁵²

People on lower incomes can find accessing some types of healthcare challenging. In Romania, people on low incomes are less able to afford medical treatment that is not publicly funded or not readily available (such as dental care).¹⁵³ Those on low incomes living in more remote areas might struggle to afford travel to healthcare providers. In countries where health insurance is required for broader care after a certain period, such as Slovakia, unemployed people might struggle to arrange the necessary support.

2.4. Housing

Refugees' accommodation includes collective sites, hosted and rented private accommodation, and social/public housing. All five focus countries offer a form of emergency shared accommodation via collective sites or refugee

¹⁴⁶ Centre for Reproductive Rights (2020). [European abortion laws, a comparative overview](#)

¹⁴⁷ Warsaw workshop 9 February 2023.

¹⁴⁸ CARE/SERA | The Federation of NGOs for Child Protection | The Federation of Social Services | Plan International (2022). [Rapid Gender Analysis Brief Ukrainian Refugees in Romania](#)

¹⁴⁹ World Health Organisation (2023). [Understanding the obstacles faced by Ukrainian refugees in Romania](#)

¹⁵⁰ UNHCR. [Protection Risks and Needs of Refugees from Ukraine](#), accessed 13 April 2023.

¹⁵¹ International Organisation for Migration (2022). [Ukraine response – Romania evolution of needs report](#)

¹⁵² Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

¹⁵³ UNHCR (2022). [Protection Profiling Romania – September 2022](#)

accommodation centres (RACs).¹⁵⁴ These sites are generally intended to provide only short-term accommodation, but some refugees have lived in RACs longer. For example, in Moldova, 90 percent of residents in RACs in December 2022 had been there for more than two months.¹⁵⁵ Some governments have introduced payment charges for refugees staying in collective accommodation for extended periods. For example, in the Czech Republic, refugees in collective accommodation for longer than 150 days must agree on payment terms with the provider or find alternative accommodation;¹⁵⁶ in Poland, as of 1 March 2023, refugees who stay in collective centres for more than 120 days must contribute 50 percent of their costs (not more than PLN 40—approximately \$9 USD or £7 GBP), and those who stay for more than 180 days must contribute 75 percent of their costs (not more than PLN 40—approximately \$14 USD or £11 GBP).¹⁵⁷

Hosted private accommodation has been prevalent, particularly in countries close to Ukraine that have welcomed significant numbers of refugees. In August 2022, the UNHCR reported that across Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia (collectively recording 1,747,096 Ukrainian displaced persons in the country at that time), 36 percent of Ukrainian refugees were staying with private hosts, making this the most common form of immediate accommodation at that time.¹⁵⁸ Government subsidies have supported host-matched accommodation in the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.¹⁵⁹ For example, the Government of Romania introduced the 50/20 programme¹⁶⁰ under which individuals who host a Ukrainian refugee receive 50 RON (approximately \$11 USD and £9 GBP) for accommodation and 20 RON (approximately \$4.50 USD and £3.50 GBP) per day for food for each refugee hosted. In Slovakia, the government provides allowances to citizens who host Ukrainian refugees or offer accommodation free of charge.¹⁶¹ These were increased by 25 percent in September 2022 to a maximum of 710 EUR to 1,790 EUR per month for properties with one to four rooms.¹⁶² Moldova has had no state-sponsored system to assign Ukrainians to live in privately hosted accommodation, which has been arranged through informal networks.

Under TP status, Ukrainian refugees are entitled to access the private rental market. According to UNHCR data, as of January 2023, up to 44 percent of Ukrainian refugees living in Poland were in private rental accommodation.¹⁶³ In the Czech Republic, as of January 2023, approximately 75 percent of Ukrainian refugees were recorded as living in private housing.¹⁶⁴ There is also limited provision of social housing in some focus countries (such as the Czech Republic) and efforts to increase capacity (such as in Romania).¹⁶⁵

Finding sustainable longer-term accommodation remains an issue in all five focus countries,¹⁶⁶ with contextually specific challenges in each. For example, in Poland, the rapid arrival of refugees occurred in the context of

¹⁵⁴ OECD (2022). [Housing support for Ukrainian refugees in receiving countries](#)

¹⁵⁵ UNHCR (2023). [Moldova Refugee Accommodation Centre \(RAC\) Weekly Needs Monitoring; Update as of 27.12.2022 \[EN/RO\]](#), accessed 27 March 2023.

¹⁵⁶ See [Act No. 65/2022 Coll., Act on Certain Measures in Connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of Ukraine Caused by the Invasion of the Russian Federation Troops](#) for more details; also, Česká justice (2022). [Vnitro chce prodloužit dočasnou ochranu Ukrajinců, změkčí se podmínky pro lékaře](#), 2 November 2022, accessed 12 January 2023; and OECD (2022). [Rights and Support for Ukrainian Refugees in Receiving Countries](#), accessed 12 January 2023.

¹⁵⁷ The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration (2023). [Amendment to the Act on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine signed by the President, 25 January 2023](#)

¹⁵⁸ UNHCR (2022). [Operational Data Portal](#), accessed 23 September 2023.

¹⁵⁹ OECD (2022). [Housing support for Ukrainian refugees in receiving countries](#)

¹⁶⁰ Dopomoha / Help for Ukrainians in Romania (2022). [The 50/20 programme](#)

¹⁶¹ Ukraine Slovakia (2022). [Accommodation](#), accessed 23 March 2023.

¹⁶² European Commission (2022). [Slovakia: accommodation allowance for refugees from Ukraine to increase](#)

¹⁶³ UNHCR (2023). [Regional Refugee Response Plan January – December 2023](#)

¹⁶⁴ UNHCR (2023). [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan \(January-December 2023\)](#)

¹⁶⁵ Government of Romania (2023). [Romania's Response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis](#)

¹⁶⁶ UNHCR (2023). [Regional Refugee Response Plan January – December 2023](#)

significant housing challenges, including high demand, insufficient supply, and rising rental and mortgage costs;¹⁶⁷ there are reports of Ukrainians—particularly those on lower or single incomes—in precarious housing situations and contractual agreements.¹⁶⁸ In the Czech Republic, the UNHCR reported that social housing capacity outside Prague remains limited, and refugees outside the capital may require additional support (such as cash grants) to access sustainable private rental or social housing.¹⁶⁹ The groups discussed below were identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

Elderly people and people with a disability or mobility issue: Elderly refugees are already more likely to face access barriers due to language barriers, no employment or low-income levels, and difficulties adapting to a new situation. Elderly people with disabilities or mobility issues face additional challenges in accessing appropriate housing, including adapted housing and affordable housing outside of collective sites. In Moldova, the WHO highlights that the UNHCR-led disability taskforce has supported people with disabilities to find temporary accommodation. However, a lack of suitable facilities and assistive equipment, along with lengthy bureaucratic processes, have made it challenging to transition from temporary accommodation to private or independent living for refugees with disabilities.¹⁷⁰ As of December 2022, 42 percent of RAC residents in Moldova were people living with disabilities and 9 percent had serious medical conditions, suggesting that these groups use RACs more widely than private housing.¹⁷¹ This may be in part because 17 percent of RACs in Moldova were adapted from specialist facilities to cater for people with mental health issues or disabilities, making them some of the most adequate long-term housing options to date.¹⁷²

People on lower incomes are in more vulnerable and precarious positions in relation to all types of housing: People on lower incomes will struggle to leave collective accommodation for private rented housing due to cost. This brings additional challenges around access to employment, education, and social assistance. In the Czech Republic, for instance, all these require an official residence address.¹⁷³ Furthermore, the lower an individual's or household's income, the greater the percentage spent on rent, which in an inflationary market leaves people with low incomes even more vulnerable to sudden price rises. This also makes them vulnerable to exploitative landlords; one participant in the research workshop cited an example of a tenant being extorted by their landlord.¹⁷⁴ People on low incomes living in unsafe or abusive situations in hosted accommodation might not be able to secure alternative housing. Participants in the Prague research workshop also noted that refugees who cannot secure independent accommodation, and in cases where local housing capacity and crisis shelters are exhausted, must move to a new location or town. This can lead to additional feelings of displacement and/or challenges accessing services and maintaining or gaining employment.¹⁷⁵ In Romania, where accommodation provision for refugees continues to be subsidised, an upcoming review of the programme might create uncertainty and risks of entering poorer quality housing or returning to collective centres.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁷ Telewizja Polska (2019), [Poland lacks over 2 million flats: report](#)

¹⁶⁸ Warsaw workshop 9 February 2023.

¹⁶⁹ UNHCR (2023). [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan \(January-December 2023\)](#)

¹⁷⁰ World Health Organization (2023) [Enabling support for Ukrainians with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova](#), accessed 23 March 2023.

¹⁷¹ UNHCR (2023). [Moldova Refugee Accommodation Centre \(RAC\) Weekly Needs Monitoring; Update as of 27.12.2022 \[EN/RO\]](#), accessed 27 March 2023.

¹⁷² UNHCR (2023). [Moldova Refugee Accommodation Centre \(RAC\) Weekly Needs Monitoring; Update as of 27.12.2022 \[EN/RO\]](#), accessed 27 March 2023.

¹⁷³ UNHCR (2023). [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan \(January-December 2023\)](#)

¹⁷⁴ Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023.

¹⁷⁵ Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023.

¹⁷⁶ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

Roma: There have been reports of Ukrainian Roma refugees facing discrimination and prejudice when accessing core services, particularly housing. The UNHCR found that, in Poland, in the initial months after the invasion of Ukraine, proportionally fewer Roma refugees were offered hosted accommodation than non-Roma refugees.¹⁷⁷ As a result, Ukrainian Roma refugees remain disproportionately represented in collective sites and less likely to access other forms of accommodation. At the same time, there are reports of anti-Roma discrimination in collective sites, including hostile behaviour from non-Roma staff and racist verbal attacks.¹⁷⁸ Media coverage by CNN found that Ukrainian Roma refugees in Romania faced issues including accusations of not being Ukrainian, segregation into lower-quality accommodation, and being given misleading information about their rights.¹⁷⁹ Moldova's Ombudsman's report of April 2022 cites cases of administrators of RACs refusing to accept Roma refugees, multiple cases of police warning local accommodation centres not to accept Roma refugees, and a heating system being intentionally disconnected at an accommodation centre during below-freezing weather. The report concludes that discrimination has impacted decision-making about the provision of housing to Roma and that 'intentionally or not, the accommodation of ethnic groups in some temporary centres was nevertheless affected by existing (predominantly negative) social stereotypes about them.'¹⁸⁰ The European Roma support group reported that the few RACs where all Roma were housed in Moldova lacked food, medicine, and warm clothing, and were often overcrowded.¹⁸¹

Women suffering abuse, including domestic abuse: If women have few accommodation options, they may be forced to stay in places where they do not feel safe.¹⁸² Research from VOICE reports that poor accommodation in Slovakia affects exposure to gender-based violence and other risks to women,¹⁸³ supporting findings from the UNHCR multi-sectoral needs assessment that cited the impressions of women and girls who live in collective centres about lack of safety and security.¹⁸⁴ Workshop participants in Slovakia highlighted that low-income households living in poor quality smaller rented housing were likely to experience challenges in both reporting abuse and in finding suitable and safe alternative housing.¹⁸⁵ In Romania, in the context of significant landlord power and limited tenants' redress mechanisms, participants in the research workshop noted that single women are particularly vulnerable to both high housing costs and potential exploitation by landlords.¹⁸⁶ The limited visibility of refugees living in private accommodation raises the risk that harms, including gender-based violence, exploitation, inadequate living conditions, and arbitrary eviction go undetected. A UNHCR rapid survey found that over half of all respondents did not know where to report cases of violence or abuse related to the 50/20 housing programme in Romania, demonstrating an important information gap for refugees.¹⁸⁷

¹⁷⁷ Mirga-Wójtowicz, E., Talewicz, J., and Kolaczek, M., UNHCR (2022). [Human rights, needs and discrimination – the situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine in Poland](#)

¹⁷⁸ Mirga-Wójtowicz, E., Talewicz, J., and Kolaczek, M., UNHCR (2022). [Human rights, needs and discrimination – the situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine in Poland](#)

¹⁷⁹ Kottosova, I., CNN (2022). [‘You are not a refugee.’ Roma refugees fleeing war in Ukraine say they are suffering discrimination and prejudice](#)

¹⁸⁰ Avocatul Poporului, Ombudsman. (2022). [Report No. 1 on the monitoring the observance of the rights of foreigners from Ukraine in the context of the state of emergency for the period from February 25 to April 30, 2022](#). Unofficial translation from Centrul de Drept al Avocatilor, accessed 28 March 2023.

¹⁸¹ Roma Support Group (2022). [March 2022 Newsletter](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

¹⁸² VOICE and HAIS (2022). [Slovakia Assessment Report - Waiting for the Sky to Close: The Unprecedented Crisis Facing Women and Girls Fleeing Ukraine](#)

¹⁸³ VOICE and HAIS (2022). [Slovakia Assessment Report - Waiting for the Sky to Close: The Unprecedented Crisis Facing Women and Girls Fleeing Ukraine](#)

¹⁸⁴ UNHCR REACH (2022). [Slovakia multi-sectoral needs assessment 2022](#)

¹⁸⁵ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

¹⁸⁶ Bucharest focus groups workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁸⁷ UNHCR (2022). [Rapid survey of the 50-20 programme – UNHCR Romania thematic report](#)

Workshop participants in Romania noted that refugees might be reluctant to come forward to raise specific issues with authorities due to uncertainty about legal and procedural matters relating to these topics and fears that they will not be believed (especially if they raise a complaint against a Romanian citizen who is likely to be both more familiar with the processes and procedures in the country and able to better express themselves in Romanian to refute any claims).¹⁸⁸

Single parents: Single parents (disproportionately women) face a number of barriers to accessing housing. First, widespread family separation and a lack of social networks in the host country makes childcare a challenge,¹⁸⁹ limiting single mothers' ability to find employment and thus afford private rental accommodation. Even where single mothers can work, single-salary households face financial challenges in securing private rental accommodation, particularly in the larger, more expensive cities. Second, even when mothers with children can afford private rental accommodation, there can be discrimination or prejudice against renting to single earners with children.¹⁹⁰ This means that mothers with children can find it hard to secure a private rental agreement (or may be asked to provide additional guarantees with public notary assistance). Third, as a result of these barriers, Ukrainian families are often forced to rent accommodation that is smaller or of a lower quality than is needed.

Residents in collective shelters: Evidence indicates that residents in collective shelters are among the more vulnerable groups, reporting lower incomes and savings,¹⁹¹ increased financial pressure,¹⁹² and higher rates of health conditions than Ukrainians in private or hosted accommodation.¹⁹³ They are also more likely to experience multiple displacements, increasing the risk of mental health issues. Within collective centres, specific groups may be particularly vulnerable, including women (at risk of sexual exploitation), Roma and LGBTQIA+ individuals (facing discrimination and prejudice in shared sites), and the elderly, as well as solo refugees (experiencing greater isolation and barriers to accessing services). After a certain period, Poland and the Czech Republic require residents to co-fund stays in collective accommodation, with exceptions in Poland for certain vulnerable groups. This means that those who do not fall within those groups might find themselves in even more vulnerable situations.¹⁹⁴ Standards of collective centres also vary. The Refugee International team has noted that some centres have relatively high-quality facilities and services, including physical and mental healthcare, language classes, and facilities for mothers and children.¹⁹⁵ Other centres have lower standards (including poor preparation for winter weather), are less sustainable (due to funding or dependence on volunteers), and may face closure as they are returned to their original use (such as schools). Therefore, residents of collective sites are often in a precarious position in terms of longer-term sustainability and the appropriateness of accommodation. Furthermore, collective centres might not be suitable for people with special needs. For example, a UNHCR REACH multi-sectoral needs assessment in Slovakia found that only 34 percent of collective accommodation sites were accessible to people with disabilities.¹⁹⁶ Participants in the Bratislava research workshop also

¹⁸⁸ Bucharest focus groups workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁸⁹ UNHCR (2022). [Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine – regional protection analysis 1](#). For example, according to the Protection Profiling in Poland, since the invasion of February 2022, the majority of respondents (80 percent) have been separated from their immediate family members. UNHCR (2022). [Refugees from Ukraine in Poland Regional Profiling Update October 2022](#)

¹⁹⁰ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023; Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023; Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

¹⁹¹ IOM (2022). [Ukraine Response 2022 - Poland: Needs Assessment Analysis Dashboard 17 June-26 September](#)

¹⁹² Norwegian Refugee Council (2023). [One year on: seven out of ten refugees from Ukraine risk falling into poverty in neighbouring countries](#)

¹⁹³ UNHCR REACH (2022). [Multi-sector needs assessment shelter Poland](#)

¹⁹⁴ Relief Web (2023). [Poland: Amendments to Ukrainian refugee hosting laws showcase the need for continued humanitarian support](#)

¹⁹⁵ Panayotatos, D., and Cone, D. (2022). [Preparing for the unpredictable: ensuring the protection and inclusion of refugees from Ukraine in Romania and Moldova](#)

¹⁹⁶ UNHCR REACH (2022). [Slovakia multi-sectoral needs assessment 2022](#)

commented on the strict rules attached to certain forms of collective temporary accommodation,¹⁹⁷ noting that, while rules are in place to protect some vulnerable groups, they may inadvertently impact other groups. For example, one participant commented on the link between trauma and alcohol and drug use and expressed concern that people suffering from addiction could easily fall afoul of social behaviour rules in the centres and face eviction and homelessness.¹⁹⁸

People renting privately without a formal contract: Workshop participants highlighted that people without formal rental contracts are among the most vulnerable refugees.¹⁹⁹ Participants in the Moldova workshop indicated that many landlords were unwilling to pay the 12 percent²⁰⁰ withholding tax applied to rent and preferred to make informal arrangements.²⁰¹ This was echoed by a participant in Bratislava who shared examples of landlords using ‘unofficial’ contracts as a way to avoid tax payments, which can be appealing to refugees because of the flexibility but leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and without access to proper tenants’ rights.²⁰² People without legal rental agreements are also vulnerable to eviction and sudden homelessness. In addition, refugees without a rental contract may face issues when renewing their TP status without this proof of residency.²⁰³ Workshop participants also discussed landlords’ common perception of Ukrainians as short-term, unreliable tenants and reluctance to sign formal contracts with them for less than a one-year period. The law in Moldova also allows landlords to change the rent on private property in case of changes in price, without regulation, so renters across the board face a potentially precarious situation.²⁰⁴

2.5. Education

According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), up to 2 million children have been displaced from Ukraine since February 2022.²⁰⁵ Under TP, school-age Ukrainian children have the right to access education. However, levels of enrolment in primary and secondary schools across the five focus countries are varied—and generally relatively low—as many Ukrainian children continue to receive online education. For example, fewer than 1,000 Ukrainian children were registered as fully enrolled in Romanian schools as of January 2023.²⁰⁶

In the Czech Republic, enrolment in pre-primary, primary, and secondary grades (up to the age of 15) is mandatory for all children, including refugees. For the 2022–23 school year, UNICEF reported that 50,285 Ukrainian children had been accepted into Czech kindergartens, primary schools, and secondary schools (it was estimated that, at the end of 2022, 70 percent of kindergarten-aged refugee children attended kindergartens, 90 percent of primary school-aged children attended primary schools, and less than half of adolescents attended secondary schools).²⁰⁷ In Poland, Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia, all school-age children must be enrolled in education; for Ukrainian refugee children, this can include enrolment in an online Ukrainian school. Many Ukrainians in these countries report choosing to continue with online schooling provided by Ukrainian authorities for reasons including language barriers, uncertainty over length of stay in the host country, bureaucratic

¹⁹⁷ City of Bratislava (2023). [City Hostels](#), accessed 24 March 2023.

¹⁹⁸ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

¹⁹⁹ Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

²⁰⁰ PWC (2023). [Worldwide Tax Summaries: Moldova](#), accessed 31 March 2023.

²⁰¹ Chisinau research workshops 1 March 2023.

²⁰² Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

²⁰³ IOM (2023). [Migration Information Centre](#), accessed 13 April 2023.

²⁰⁴ Global Property Guide (2019) [Income tax in Moldova](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

²⁰⁵ European Commission (2022). [Refugee flows from Ukraine](#)

²⁰⁶ Government of Romania (2023). [Romania: Report on the national response to those displaced from Ukraine](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

²⁰⁷ PAQ Research (2023). [Hlas Ukrajinců: Vzdělávání](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

difficulties, costs, space restrictions in schools,²⁰⁸ concerns that school certifications may not be recognised in Ukraine in future, and a general preference for schooling in Ukrainian.²⁰⁹

Governments and NGOs across the five focus countries have developed extracurricular educational support and provision, both attached and unattached to schools. For example, in Romania public schools and local authorities deliver after-school Romanian language programmes.²¹⁰ Poland's Ministry of Education has prepared guidance for teachers and educators on supporting Ukrainian refugees, including training in multi-cultural and intercultural education and teaching Polish as a foreign language, and recommended school-led initiatives such as Polish language classes and the hiring of Ukrainian-speaking teaching assistants.²¹¹ In Slovakia, the UNHCR has noted a number of informal learning opportunities are available for Ukrainian students and encouraged further expansion of these activities.²¹² The groups below were identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

Pre-school children: Evidence from UNICEF's work on early childhood development indicates that access to quality care and education programmes helps to provide children with emotional, social, cognitive, and language foundations that are linked to positive education and wellbeing outcomes throughout childhood.²¹³ Before the arrival of refugees from Ukraine, kindergartens, especially in large cities, experienced serious pressure on places; this has become more severe since February 2022.²¹⁴ In the Czech Republic, it is estimated that 15 to 20 percent of preschool children may be excluded from education precisely because of the insufficient capacity of schools and kindergartens.²¹⁵ Furthermore, Ukrainians arriving with few or no social-communal networks struggle to access both informal and formal childcare. Limited access to preschool care and educational programmes outside the home adds to the vulnerability of younger preschool children displaced from Ukraine. In the Czech Republic, an alternative and temporary solution was the opening of adaptation groups and centres (which in practical terms means separate classes for Ukrainians). While some argue these may make children feel segregated and excluded,²¹⁶ those who have attended such adaptation groups more often moved on to formal education (85 percent).²¹⁷

Children who do not speak the local language: Language barriers were mentioned as a significant barrier to education in all workshops, particularly Romania, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. According to a PAQ survey, in the Czech Republic fewer than one-quarter of children under the age of three (22 percent) can communicate

²⁰⁸ For example, it is estimated that 3 percent to 5 percent of primary school pupils and roughly 10 percent of teenagers may be excluded from education because of the insufficient capacity of Czech schools. PAQ Research (2023). [Hlas Ukrajinců: Vzdělávání](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

²⁰⁹ UNHCR (2023). [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#), accessed 23 March 2023; UNHCR REACH (2022). [Slovakia multi sectoral needs assessment October 2022](#); UNHCR (2023). [Slovakia: regional refugee response plan 2023](#); UNHCR REACH (2023). [Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment Poland](#), accessed 24 March 2023; Kafembe, I., UNICEF (2022). [Using innovation in Romania to get Ukrainian children learning again](#); UNHCR, [Protection Risks and Needs of Refugees from Ukraine](#), accessed 13 April 2023; REACH UNHCR (2022). [Multi-Sector Needs Assessment: Key Findings](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

²¹⁰ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²¹¹ Public Information Bulletin of the Commissioner for Human Rights, (2022). [Problems of education of children and youth from Ukraine - recommendations of the Ombudsman. The answer of MEiN](#)

²¹² UNHCR (2023). [Slovakia: regional refugee response plan 2023](#)

²¹³ UNICEF (2021). [The formative years: UNICEF's work on measuring ECD](#)

²¹⁴ Public Information Bulletin of the Commissioner for Human Rights (2022). [Problems of education of children and youth from Ukraine - recommendations of the Ombudsman. The answer of MEiN](#); Gromada, A., and Richardson, D., UNICEF (2021). [Where do rich countries stand on childcare?](#); PAQ Research (2023). [Hlas Ukrajinců: Vzdělávání](#), accessed 28 March 2023; United Nations Development Fund (2020). [INEQUALITIES IN URBAN AND RURAL MOLDOVA: Beyond incomes and averages, looking into the future of inequalities](#), page 45, accessed 31 March 2023.

²¹⁵ PAQ Research (2023). [Hlas Ukrajinců: Vzdělávání](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

²¹⁶ Deník, N. (2022). [Krizové řešení: Skupiny místo školy. Ukrajinským dětem ale hrozí segregace, varují experti](#), accessed 16 December 2022.

²¹⁷ PAQ Research (2023). [Hlas Ukrajinců: Vzdělávání](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

in common situations, and almost half of children (45 percent) know few or no Czech words.²¹⁸ This also applies to those children who have been in the Czech Republic for more than half a year.²¹⁹ A survey of refugees in Slovakia reported that, for those who had not completed education, not speaking the language was one of the most commonly reported reasons for not attending school (at 12 percent of respondents).²²⁰ Language support was also lacking in some schools; none of the nine schools that The Centre for Educational Analysis visited in Bratislava had the necessary tools to support children from Ukraine to overcome the language barrier.²²¹ Furthermore, a study by Comenius Institute reported that 85 percent of teachers surveyed said that language barriers were the biggest challenge in educating and integrating Ukrainian refugees, with 67 percent requesting additional language support in education and 58 percent asking for support to adapt curriculum content for non-Slovak children.²²² Save the Children reported that nearly three-quarters of Ukrainian children had little or no knowledge of Romanian and were unable to continue their education in the Romanian education system due to language barriers²²³ or struggled to join at the correct educational grade.

One participant in the workshop said that Ukrainian parents were concerned about their children falling behind educationally and that this was a key reason for preferring to continue with online Ukrainian schooling.²²⁴

In addition, Ukrainian children may face psychological problems such as anxiety, trauma, and fear following displacement and experiences of war that, when combined with language barriers, can make integration into a new school system particularly challenging.

Children attending online Ukrainian school: Those attending online-only schools have fewer opportunities for integration, language learning, and building social bonds. Workshop participants raised concerns about isolation, stigma, and demotivation among children, particularly the longer they attend online-only schools.²²⁵ In addition, it is difficult to monitor how many children not enrolled in local schools are in fact attending online Ukrainian schools, with the UNHCR estimating that up to 16 percent of Ukrainian children in Poland may not be attending school at all.²²⁶ Young people not attending either in-person or online school are especially vulnerable to exploitation, risky behaviours (such as criminality), and/or negative mental health outcomes.²²⁷

Children experiencing bullying: Workshop participants in Slovakia and Moldova commented that peers from pro-Russian parts of society might bully Ukrainians at school and online, with specific examples shared of some wearing pro-Russian tee-shirts to taunt Ukrainian children.²²⁸ Participants highlighted the mental toll on children when peers accuse them of lying about what happened in Ukraine in order to get support and hearing 'Why don't you go home? There's no bombing there anymore'.²²⁹ Among secondary school children in Slovakia, 28.3 percent reported being bullied multiple times per month, with the figure increasing for those from lower socio-economic

²¹⁸ PAQ Research (2023). [Hlas Ukrajinců: Vzdělávání](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

²¹⁹ PAQ Research (2023). [Hlas Ukrajinců: Vzdělávání](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

²²⁰ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). [Fleeing Ukraine: Displaced People's Experiences in The EU](#), accessed 5 April 2023.

²²¹ Centre for Educational Analysis (2023). Inclusion of male and female pupils from Ukraine in education. Qualitative survey of nine Bratislava schools, accessed 4 April 2023.

²²² European Commission (2022). [Slovakia: challenges in the education of refugee children from Ukraine](#), accessed 26 March 2023.

²²³ Save the Children Romania (2022). [Save the Children Romania education survey](#)

²²⁴ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²²⁵ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²²⁶ UNHCR, REACH (2023). [Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment Poland](#), accessed 24 March 2023.

²²⁷ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

²²⁸ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

²²⁹ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

backgrounds.²³⁰ This feeds into a culture where, as workshop participants explained, Slovak children are not told off for bullying and the behaviour is considered ‘kids being kids’.²³¹ Moreover, without knowledge of the local language, Ukrainian children cannot effectively advocate for themselves.²³² Bullying is also known to have a negative impact on reading performance and wellbeing, risking increased education gaps for Ukrainian refugees.²³³

Youth in their late teens: Students close to or at the point of finishing high school can fall between the Ukrainian and host country education systems. To complete the Ukrainian high school diploma, students need to sit in-person exams in Ukraine, which is in many cases impossible. Older teenagers are more likely to study online,²³⁴ as entrance exams for high schools, for example in the Czech Republic, can be extremely challenging for Ukrainian children who come from a different educational background and do not speak Czech. Older teenagers are also at greater risk of dropping out of full-time education and report higher incidences of mental health issues.²³⁵ One participant in the workshops shared examples of young people approaching the age of 18 expressing guilt and anxiety over whether they should return to Ukraine to fight, adding to the risk of dropping out of school and discontinuing employment or education.²³⁶

Children with disabilities or neurodiversities: Workshop participants, particularly in Slovakia, highlighted that Ukrainian children with neurodiversities such as dyslexia or autism struggle to get the extra support they need at home and in schools.²³⁷ Participants stated that even being admitted to a school was a challenge.²³⁸ This is partly due to a shortage of support for children with special needs, with only 12.1 percent of children under age seven in Slovakia having access to early childhood services.²³⁹

Roma children: Roma children might be particularly vulnerable due to: (1) generally lower educational levels in some cases; (2) limited Ukrainian language skills; and (3) discrimination. Before the escalation of the war, the Roma community in Ukraine had higher rates of illiteracy and school dropouts than the wider community, and it was estimated that almost half of Roma had not completed secondary education.²⁴⁰ This has made it more challenging for Roma communities to integrate into host schooling systems. In the Czech Republic, non-participation of Roma children in education is higher than Ukrainian refugee averages, particularly in preschool²⁴¹ and primary education,²⁴² where surveys estimate up to 90 percent and 78 percent non-attendance rates, respectively. Furthermore, a PAQ Research study found that only 25 percent of Ukrainian Roma respondents attended online Ukrainian schools.²⁴³ There is some evidence to suggest that Roma refugees are also less likely to attend education initiatives provided by the government, such as adaptation groups.²⁴⁴ These factors increase the challenges of adapting to life in the Czech Republic. Furthermore, estimates suggest as many as 34 percent

²³⁰ European Commission (2021), *Education and Training Monitor 2021*, Slovakia, accessed 12 April 2023.

²³¹ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

²³² Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

²³³ European Commission (2021), *Education and Training Monitor 2021*, Slovakia, accessed 12 April 2023.

²³⁴ See, for example, UNHCR REACH (2022). *Slovakia multi sectoral needs assessment October 2022*, accessed 13 April 2023.

²³⁵ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

²³⁶ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

²³⁷ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

²³⁸ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

²³⁹ European Commission (2021). *Education and Training Monitor 2021*, Slovakia, accessed 12 April 2023.

²³⁹ IOM UN Migration (2023). *How to get a job in Slovakia*, accessed 23 March 2023.

²⁴⁰ Roma Support Group (2022). *March 2022 Newsletter*, accessed 20 March 2023.

²⁴¹ PAQ Research (2022). *Hlas Ukrajinců: Šetření o romských ukrajinských uprchlících*, accessed 15 December 2022.

²⁴² PAQ Research (2022). *Hlas Ukrajinců: Šetření o romských ukrajinských uprchlících*, accessed 15 December 2022.

²⁴³ PAQ Research (2022). *Hlas Ukrajinců: Šetření o romských ukrajinských uprchlících*, accessed 15 December 2022.

²⁴⁴ PAQ Research (2022). *Hlas Ukrajinců: Šetření o romských ukrajinských uprchlících*, accessed 15 December 2022.

of the Roma community do not speak Ukrainian.²⁴⁵ Some Roma children, particularly those from Western and Southern Ukraine, are more likely to speak Romani at home than Ukrainian.²⁴⁶ While there are government initiatives to support Ukrainian refugees, efforts are largely focused on supporting children who speak Ukrainian (e.g., through translation of school resources, use of interpreters and dictionaries in exams, etc.), and there is little or no provision for students who do not speak Ukrainian well.

2.6. Employment and income

Under the rights of TP,²⁴⁷ Ukrainian refugees are entitled to access the host country labour market on par with citizens. Governments in the five focus countries have supported access to employment in different ways, including by establishing online job portals for Ukrainians—for example in Poland,²⁴⁸ Moldova,²⁴⁹ Romania,²⁵⁰ and Slovakia.²⁵¹ The Romanian National Agency for Employment also provides free advisory services and training opportunities for Ukrainian refugees.²⁵² Additional advice is provided by multilaterals such as IOM, which has a website dedicated to Ukrainians seeking employment in Slovakia that contains information on rights and entitlements.²⁵³ According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the pace of taking up employment has been higher among Ukrainian refugees than other refugee groups in Europe,²⁵⁴ estimating, for example, that at the start of 2023 between 25 percent and 40 percent of Ukrainian refugees in Poland were in employment.²⁵⁵ However, there are significant variations between countries. Finding work is still reported to be one of the primary difficulties for refugees in many countries,²⁵⁶ with 25 percent of individuals in Slovakia reporting in a recent survey that their main reason for unemployment is the lack of opportunities.²⁵⁷ According to IOM research in August and September 2022, in the Czech Republic, financial support (86 percent), language courses (60 percent), and job search support (60 percent) were refugees' three greatest needs with regard to work.²⁵⁸ The same survey conducted between October and November revealed changes mainly in regard to the financial support (mentioned by 64 percent),²⁵⁹ with language courses (48 percent), and employment support (58 percent) remaining among the frequently mentioned needs.²⁶⁰

The groups discussed below were identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

Parents or guardians, especially of multiple children: Responsibilities associated with being a single parent can be challenging for separated families, with the burden falling disproportionately on women. The UNHCR estimates that 78 percent of refugees from Ukraine experienced separation during their refugee journeys.²⁶¹ This

²⁴⁵ Roma Support Group (2022). [March 2022 Newsletter](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

²⁴⁶ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (2010). [Written comments of the European Roma Rights Centre and the International Charitable Organisation Roma Women Fund "Chiricli"](#)

²⁴⁷ European Union (2022). [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/382, 4 March 2022](#)

²⁴⁸ [Central Database of Job Offers](#), accessed 15 March 2023.

²⁴⁹ Government of Moldova (2023). [Pa6oma](#), accessed 6 April 2023.

²⁵⁰ Dopomoha (2022). [Dopomoha \(Help\)](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

²⁵¹ IOM UN Migration (2023). [How to get a job in Slovakia](#), accessed 5 April 2023.

²⁵² Dopomoha (2022). [Dopomoha \(Help\)](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

²⁵³ IOM UN Migration (2023). [How to get a job in Slovakia](#), accessed 23 March 2023.

²⁵⁴ OECD (2023). [What we know about the skills and early labour market outcomes of refugees from Ukraine](#)

²⁵⁵ OECD (2023). [What we know about the skills and early labour market outcomes of refugees from Ukraine](#)

²⁵⁶ UNHCR REACH (2023). [Area-Based Assessment, Slovakia](#), accessed 6 April 2023.

²⁵⁷ UNHCR. [Protection Risks and Needs of Refugees from Ukraine](#), accessed 13 April 2023.

²⁵⁸ IOM (2022). [DTM Report](#), accessed 20 November 2022.

²⁵⁹ IOM (2023). [DTM Report](#), accessed 5 February 2023.

²⁶⁰ IOM (2023). [DTM Report](#), accessed 5 February 2023.

²⁶¹ UNHCR (2022). [Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine – regional protection analysis 1](#)

means that familial, social, and communal networks are severely disrupted, and traditional support networks are not in place. A 2021 UNICEF study found that more than 50 percent of parents in Romania relied on informal care provided by family, friends, and neighbours.²⁶² When refugees arrive with few or no existing social-communal networks, they face challenges in accessing informal childcare.²⁶³ Without access to childcare and therefore employment, parents or guardians are more vulnerable to poverty.

The limited supply of nursery and kindergarten places in all research countries is felt by Ukrainian refugees.²⁶⁴ Lack of adequate childcare is among the key barriers to single parents entering the labour market in all five countries.²⁶⁵ Also, many refugee women are not entitled to maternity or parental benefits, which take into account whether the applicant has paid social and health insurance.²⁶⁶

People with disabilities: The UNHCR highlights how refugees with disabilities across the world experience obstacles to employment and, without work, lose out on self-reliance, a critical factor in their resettlement.²⁶⁷ This is the case in the current Slovak labour market, for instance, with refugees with disabilities struggling to access work and the assistance mechanisms that can enable it.²⁶⁸ Workshop participants highlighted that refugees with disabilities find securing employment challenging due to discrimination by employers and barriers to access, and that many face exploitation at work, including not being paid for hours worked.²⁶⁹ Some support does exist, however. Slovak citizens who are unable to work due to health issues can apply for an invalidity pension,²⁷⁰ and on 2 December 2022, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family began the provision of a 'severe disability allowance' to provide subsidies to support refugees with severe disabilities, either in or out work.²⁷¹

Underemployed refugees: Research workshop participants in all countries raised concerns that highly qualified Ukrainians were not able to find work in their preferred fields in the host countries. Particularly in Moldova, this was linked to the perception that Ukrainians are not regarded as a sustainable workforce since most intend to return to Ukraine, and some might choose to leave the country with little notice.²⁷² Studies and workshop participants in all countries noted language skills as a barrier to higher-paying jobs,²⁷³ including in Moldova, where proficiency in both Russian and Romanian is required for some higher-skilled roles.²⁷⁴ During the research workshops in Poland, participants commented that Ukrainian refugees feel that working in jobs that they perceive as below their skill level and professional background creates additional anxiety and mental strain.²⁷⁵ Participants also shared examples of professionals struggling to have their qualifications recognised in Poland and the Czech

²⁶² Gromada, A., and Richardson, D., UNICEF (2021). [Where do rich countries stand on childcare?](#); UNHCR REACH (2022). [Slovakia multi-sectoral needs assessment 2022](#)

²⁶³ Deloitte (2022). [Refugees from Ukraine in Poland: challenges and potential for integration](#)

²⁶⁴ Public Information Bulletin of the Commissioner for Human Rights (2022). [Problems of education of children and youth from Ukraine - recommendations of the Ombudsman. The answer of MEIN](#); Gromada, A., and Richardson, D., UNICEF (2021). [Where do rich countries stand on childcare?](#); PAQ Research (2023). [Hlas Ukrajinců: Vzdělávání](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

²⁶⁵ Deník Referendum (2022). [Český sociální systém nezohledňuje, že z Ukrajiny prchají především ženy s dětmi](#), accessed 22 December 2022; UNHCR (2022). [Multi-Sector Needs Assessment Romania - Key preliminary findings, November 2022](#); UNHCR, REACH (2023). [Poland: Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment 2022](#), accessed 24 March 2023.

²⁶⁶ Czech Social Security Administration/CSSA (2023). [O jaké nemocenské pojištění se zajímáte?](#), accessed 20 February 2023.

²⁶⁷ UNHCR (2021). [Integration Handbook](#), accessed 12 April 2023.

²⁶⁸ UNHCR (2023). [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan - Slovakia Chapter \(January-December 2023\)](#), accessed 5 April 2023.

²⁶⁹ Košice research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

²⁷⁰ European Commission (2023). [Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion](#), accessed 12 April 2023.

²⁷¹ Mareena & Human Rights League, [State contribution: Financial support for migrants and refugees in Slovakia](#), accessed 11 April 2023.

²⁷² Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

²⁷³ OECD (2023). [What we know about the skills and early labour market outcomes of refugees from Ukraine](#)

²⁷⁴ Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

²⁷⁵ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

Republic.²⁷⁶ In addition, time and cost barriers to having Ukrainian qualifications recognised in host countries can prevent more Ukrainian refugees from finding employment in their chosen or skilled professions.

People who were not economically active prior to arrival in the host country: According to a survey by the Multiculturalism and Migration Observatory, approximately 68 percent of adult refugees in Poland were economically active before departure from Ukraine.²⁷⁷ For those who were not active in the formal labour market in Ukraine (such as carers), seeking employment in a new country can be particularly daunting despite sometimes finding themselves the sole or primary income earner due to family separation during displacement.

Refugees who rely on employment agencies: Low incomes can limit access to opportunities such as education, job training, and networking, making improvement of an individual's social-economic situation more difficult and increasing risks of exploitation. Across the EU, the UNHCR has reported on the likelihood of the exploitation of Ukrainian refugees in employment and other spaces.²⁷⁸ One form of employment of foreigners in some countries, such as the Czech Republic, is through employment agencies, which can provide accommodation and thus represents a simpler way to obtain both employment and accommodation.²⁷⁹ However, agency employment, especially if linked to accommodation, can come with potential exploitation issues (e.g., informal work, which can come without guaranteed breaks, with irregular payment, non-compliance with labour regulations, and no contract), as many people do not report abuse, fearing reprisal.²⁸⁰ Some Czech NGOs that provide legal and social counselling have reported that problems of agency exploitation have worsened with the number of refugees.²⁸¹ In Slovakia, there have been stories of temporary staffing agencies sending Ukrainian workers to jobs and accommodation that do not comply with regulations.²⁸² Workshop participants in Bratislava also highlighted that employment agencies have been reported to take financial cuts and exploit refugee workers, for example by paying them less than the minimum wage.²⁸³

People who do not speak the local language: A survey across EU countries accepting refugees found that 52 percent of women and 45 percent of men reported not being employed due to their language skills, and 48 percent of respondents said that their current job was below their education level.²⁸⁴ Language skills were raised as an issue in all countries, impacting refugees' ability to find employment opportunities, take part in interviews, and obtain employment. For example, a PAQ survey in the Czech Republic found that one of the main reasons for unemployment was insufficient knowledge of the Czech language.²⁸⁵ In Romania, 41 percent of respondents to the UNHCR multi-sectoral needs assessment reported that language barriers were a challenge in obtaining enough income to meet their household needs.²⁸⁶ Participants in the Bucharest research workshops noted that refugees who speak English may have better access to employment opportunities, but refugees with neither

²⁷⁶ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023, Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023.

²⁷⁷ Pędziwiatr, K., Brzozowski, J., and Nahorniuk, O., (2022). [Multiculturalism and Migration Observatory, Refugees from Ukraine in Kraków](#)

²⁷⁸ UNHCR (2022). [Statement on risks of trafficking and exploitation facing refugees from Ukraine attributed to UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Protection](#), accessed 11 April 2023.

²⁷⁹ Seznam Zprávy (2022). [Ukrajinci ve spárech otrockých agentur: v Česku dřou zdarma, bez pauz i smluv](#), accessed 15 December 2022.

²⁸⁰ Seznam Zprávy (2022). [Ukrajinci ve spárech otrockých agentur: v Česku dřou zdarma, bez pauz i smluv](#), accessed 15 December 2022.

²⁸¹ Seznam Zprávy (2022). [Ukrajinci ve spárech otrockých agentur: v Česku dřou zdarma, bez pauz i smluv](#), accessed 15 December 2022.

²⁸² Spiegel International (2022). [Ukrainian Refugees Report Cases of Exploitation in Europe](#), accessed 5 April 2023.

²⁸³ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

²⁸⁴ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). [Fleeing Ukraine: Displaced People's Experiences in The EU](#), accessed 5 April 2023.

²⁸⁵ PAQ Research (2022), [Hlas Ukrajinců: Chudoba](#), accessed 25 November 2022.

²⁸⁶ UNHCR (2022). [Multi-Sector Needs Assessment Romania - Key preliminary findings, November 2022](#)

Romanian nor English language proficiency were unlikely to secure employment.²⁸⁷ In Slovakia, multiple studies report that language barriers are the primary reason that refugees struggle to find employment.²⁸⁸

People based outside of major cities: There is a disparity in unemployment rates and types of work between larger cities, particularly in Romania, Slovakia, and Moldova. Unemployment rates also differ significantly. For example, in 2021, the Romanian National Institute of Statistics estimated that the lowest rates of registered unemployment were in Bucharest (0.8 percent) and the highest were in the southwest (4.3 percent).²⁸⁹ After Bucharest, the city of Constanta hosts the second highest number of refugees from Ukraine residing in Romania.²⁹⁰ Participants in the research workshop discussed the seasonal nature of employment in Constanta, with more work available in the summer season. This makes it challenging for Ukrainian refugees living there to secure stable, reliable work at other times of year.²⁹¹ A UNHCR area-based assessment of Constanta from August 2022 found that 92 percent of refugees surveyed were reliant on savings to meet household income needs, and that livelihoods could become a priority need for Ukrainian refugees in the city as the conflict protracts.²⁹² In Moldova, agricultural work is disproportionately undeclared compared to other industries,²⁹³ and a lack of decent infrastructure such as roads and electricity impacts on the ability of rural regions to develop economically.²⁹⁴ There is also a significant brain drain from rural regions to the capital and to other countries, resulting in a lack of economic growth and opportunities in Moldova's rural regions.²⁹⁵ These factors make finding quality employment more challenging for Ukrainians living in rural settlements or outside of the larger cities.

People near retirement age: Participants in the Romania research workshop noted that refugees who are close to retirement age face additional challenges.²⁹⁶ Those who want to find employment in Romania have fewer routes into the labour market, particularly if they are unable to speak Romanian, and others who were able to work in Ukraine might be compelled to keep working (and, potentially, travelling) due to uncertainty about accessing their pensions.²⁹⁷ Digital literacy may also limit older people's access to information on employment opportunities. People aged 60 and above were the group most likely to prefer receiving information in person or from their friends and family.²⁹⁸

2.7. Community, social, and political life

Since February 2022, the initial focus in all five countries has been on humanitarian response and immediate needs. However, as the situation protracts, governments are increasingly looking at integration and community cohesion, with different approaches shaped by historic trends of immigration and asylum, the existence of

²⁸⁷ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²⁸⁸ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). [Fleeing Ukraine: Displaced People's Experiences in The EU](#), accessed 5 April 2023.

²⁸⁹ UNHCR REACH (2023). [Area-Based Assessment, Slovakia](#), accessed 6 April 2023; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). [Fleeing Ukraine: Displaced People's Experiences in The EU](#), accessed 5 April 2023; and UNHCR. [Protection Risks and Needs of Refugees from Ukraine](#), accessed 13 April 2023.

²⁸⁹ European Commission (2021). [Labour market information: Romania](#)

²⁹⁰ UNHCR REACH (2022). [UNHCR Romania: Situation Overview in Constanta, Area-Based Assessment \(As of July-August 2022\)](#)

²⁹¹ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²⁹² UNHCR REACH (2022). [UNHCR Romania: Situation Overview in Constanta, Area-Based Assessment \(As of July-August 2022\)](#)

²⁹³ International Labour Organisation (2022). [Turning Moldova "white" – The Moldovan government takes bold steps to encourage the formalization of employment](#), accessed 25 March 2023.

²⁹⁴ World Bank (2020) [Local roads bring greater connectivity and support to rural communities in Moldova](#), accessed 25 March 2023.

²⁹⁵ Chemonics International (2023) [Turning Moldova's Brain Drain into Brain Gain](#), accessed 25 March 2023.

²⁹⁶ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²⁹⁷ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²⁹⁸ UNHCR (2022). [Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine – regional protection analysis](#)

Ukrainian communities before February 2022, and the political climate.²⁹⁹ Engagement on integration issues focused on social and community issues by governments and multilateral organisations has been noted in all five countries, and activities are conducted at the national and local government levels and by active civil society and NGO networks. The groups discussed below were identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journeys.

People suffering from trauma: Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of adult refugees in a survey reported experiencing trauma since the war started, and 62 percent reported impacts on their wellbeing such as panic attacks and a loss of self-confidence.³⁰⁰ A workshop participant shared, ‘everyone coming from Ukraine these days is traumatised.’³⁰¹ The impact of trauma means that many Ukrainian refugees may struggle to participate in social and community life, and this was mentioned as a significant characteristic that can impact Ukrainian refugees in all five research countries. One participant in the Bucharest research workshop added that living with family members who are suffering from trauma also created barriers to integration, sharing examples of young people struggling to support parents who exhibited signs of apathy, depression, and anxiety.³⁰² A participant in the Poland workshop described struggles in the initial months in Poland, commenting:

‘It was difficult for me to understand how people can smile on the streets and look happy when such atrocities were happening in Ukraine, how they could continue with their lives as if nothing was happening. I went to therapy and after six months I started seeing the good things in life again, enjoying the theatre, discovering new places’.³⁰³

The potential impacts of trauma can become especially acute for people who do not receive adequate mental health support or counselling. This might be due to high demand of such services. For example, 14 percent of refugees seeking medical or psychological support in Slovakia reportedly have not received it.³⁰⁴ On the other hand, stigma around mental health in both host communities and Ukraine can mean that refugees might not seek help when needed.³⁰⁵ Slovakia’s League for Mental Health also argues that many refugees who hope to return to Ukraine imminently struggle to integrate as their disbelief in their ‘new reality’ means that they invest less in their current situation.³⁰⁶

People employed in long-hour jobs: Ukrainian refugees in employment are likely to be working in ‘low-skilled’ sectors, often working irregular or long hours, which makes integration into community life challenging. This challenge can be exacerbated by other barriers such as lack of language skills or childcare, or other caring responsibilities. Participants in the Poland workshops added that the loss of previous peer groups, combined with

²⁹⁹ UNHCR (2023). [Ukraine situational regional response plan January-December 2023 Romania chapter](#)

³⁰⁰ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). [Fleeing Ukraine: Displaced People’s Experiences in The EU](#), accessed 11 April 2023; for other surveys, see PAQ Research (2022). [Hlas Ukrajinců: Duševní zdraví uprchlíků](#), accessed 20 November 2022.

³⁰¹ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

³⁰² Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

³⁰³ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

³⁰⁴ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). [Fleeing Ukraine: Displaced People’s Experiences in The EU](#), accessed 11 April 2023.

³⁰⁵ de Vetten-Mc Mahon, M., Shields-Zeeman, L.S., Petrea, I., et al. (2019). [Assessing the need for a mental health services reform in Moldova: a situation analysis](#). *Int J Ment Health Syst* 13, 45; Romaniuk, P., Semigina, T. Ukrainian health care system and its chances for successful transition from Soviet legacies. *Global Health*. 2018 Nov 23;14(1):116. Doi: 10.1186/s12992-018-0439-5. PMID: 30470237; PMCID: PMC6260664.

³⁰⁶ Relief Web (2022). [Supporting Mental Health as Ukrainian Refugees Navigate Life in Slovakia](#), accessed 12 April 2023.

few opportunities to meet new people while working long hours and trying to secure meaningful accommodation, education, and employment opportunities made it difficult for Ukrainian adults to integrate into Polish community life and to attend regular Polish language courses.³⁰⁷

People separated from family and/or in the host country alone: The UNHCR estimates that 78 percent of refugees from Ukraine experienced separation during their refugee journeys,³⁰⁸ meaning that familial, social, and communal networks are severely disrupted, and traditional support networks are not in place. Separated family members face multiple challenges including difficulty accessing support and resources, negative impacts on mental health, and greater risk of exploitation or harm. Participants in the Romania research workshop noted that elderly people who were separated from family and in Romania alone faced greater risks of social isolation and higher barriers to integration.³⁰⁹

Elderly people: Older refugees are particularly at risk of social isolation, having lost their social networks and lacking easy ways to form new relationships through children or education.³¹⁰ Workshop participants in Slovakia also raised that refugees in this age group are the most vulnerable to social isolation due to lack of targeted activities for seniors.³¹¹

Children and young people in their late teens: Children and adolescents, particularly if they do not speak the local language or are enrolled in online Ukrainian school, can experience social isolation.³¹²

LGBTQIA+ refugees can experience challenges in a range of countries. Discrimination has tangible impacts on how people integrate into society, with just 25 percent of LGBTQIA+ refugees living in the EU reporting that they feel part of their communities, as compared to 34 percent of their non-LGBTQIA+ counterparts.³¹³ LGBTQIA+ rights have become an increasingly politicised issue in recent years, with anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric used for political purposes.³¹⁴ Since January 2020, more than 100 Polish municipalities have declared themselves ‘free from LGBT ideology’.³¹⁵ This can create an unwelcoming environment for LGBTQIA+ refugees, particularly outside of major cities. Some activists are working to provide resources such as safe housing and financial aid for medications for LGBTQIA+ refugees, but they face a lack of assistance from the government and rely on grants from international organisations.³¹⁶ In Slovakia, numerous cases of online harassment of the LGBTQIA community, hate speech, and violence have been recorded.³¹⁷ LGBTQIA+ persons from Ukraine report having experienced discrimination, physical violence, and, in some cases, detention by Slovak authorities.³¹⁸ In addition, LGBTQIA+ refugees may have specific needs and sensitivities that are more difficult to meet when they are displaced. For example, 47 percent of Ukrainian LGBTQIA+ respondents in the EU considered lack of privacy in their housing to be a

³⁰⁷ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

³⁰⁸ UNHCR (2022). [Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine – regional protection analysis](#)

³⁰⁹ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

³¹⁰ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

³¹¹ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

³¹² The Slovak Spectator (2023). [The silent toll of the war in Ukraine is on minds](#), accessed 4 April 2023; UNHCR REACH (2023). [Area-Based Assessment, Slovakia](#), accessed 6 April 2023.

³¹³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). [Fleeing Ukraine: Displaced People’s Experiences in The EU](#), accessed 12 April 2023.

³¹⁴ Reid, G. (2021). [Poland breaches EU obligations over LGBT and women’s rights](#), Human Rights Watch 2021.

³¹⁵ Ash, L. (2020). [Inside Poland’s LGBT-free zones](#), BBC News 2020.

³¹⁶ Su, Y., Valiquette, T., Greatrick, A., Robinson, C., The New Humanitarian (2022). [How LGBTQI+ to LGBTQI+ support is helping Ukrainian refugees find safety in the EU](#)

³¹⁷ Reuters (2022). [‘Radicalised teenager’ killed two outside Slovakia gay bar](#), accessed 12 April 2023.

³¹⁸ VOICE and HAIS (2022). [Slovakia Assessment Report – Waiting for the Sky to Close: The Unprecedented Crisis Facing Women and Girls Fleeing Ukraine](#), accessed 12 April 2023.

problem—figures higher than non-LGBTQIA+ refugees surveyed.³¹⁹ Furthermore, in the EU, LGBTQIA+ refugees struggle to know where to access services and information to support their specific needs more than non-LGBTQIA refugees (45 percent versus 30 percent in one survey).³²⁰

People with disabilities and neurodiversities: People with disabilities can be excluded from community life in several ways, depending on the disability and the social and cultural context in which they live. Many public spaces, such as buildings, sidewalks, and transportation systems, are not designed to be accessible to people with physical disabilities, making it difficult for them to navigate and join community activities. People with disabilities may face social isolation due to stigma, discrimination, or lack of social support. Economic exclusion due to discrimination in employment or lack of access to education or training opportunities can limit the ability to participate and contribute to society. Workshop participants also noted that the lack of accessible state schools or support for children with disabilities may lead to social isolation.³²¹ People with some disabilities or neurodiversities may also face communication barriers that make it difficult for them to participate in social interactions, access information, or communicate their needs and preferences. Refugees with disabilities may be overlooked, as they may have limited access to information and may be separated from their support networks, leaving them unable to respond to the situation and navigate through the new environment.³²²

Roma refugees: The Roma community faces deeper issues than other refugee groups regarding discrimination and lack of access to services. In monitoring the treatment of Ukrainian Roma refugees in Poland, Amnesty International reported examples of discrimination and prejudice and expressed concern about the impact of xenophobic stereotypes.³²³ The UNHCR reported that discrimination faced by Roma meant that Ukrainian Roma refugees faced problems with service access and support that non-Roma refugees were less likely to encounter.³²⁴ In one survey in the Czech Republic, 30 percent of Roma refugees said they encountered intolerance from the general population, including 14 percent by Czech authorities and institutions and 9 percent by other Ukrainian refugees.³²⁵

People who are politically active in supporting the war effort (Slovakia and Moldova): With a section of society reporting pro-Russian sentiments,³²⁶ Ukrainian refugees who overtly support Ukraine in the war, particularly in Slovakia and Moldova, risk attracting attention from pro-Russian groups that are actively hostile to their presence and support to the war. Participants in the workshops highlighted cases of Ukrainians in Moldova who faced anti-Ukrainian rhetoric in their hosts' homes due to the influence of Russian media sources or historic sympathy for Russia.³²⁷ Indeed, much of the Russian-language media in Moldova has in the past often come from Russia itself,³²⁸ and some Russian-speaking communities have more sympathetic views of Russia in the context of the invasion—for example, a recent poll in Gagauzia found that support for the pro-Western

³¹⁹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). [Fleeing Ukraine: Displaced People's Experiences in The EU](#), accessed 12 April 2023.

³²⁰ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). [Fleeing Ukraine: Displaced People's Experiences in The EU](#), accessed 12 April 2023.

³²¹ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

³²² OHCHR (2022). [Ukraine: 2.7 million people with disabilities at risk, UN committee warns](#), accessed 26 March 2023.

³²³ Amnesty International (2022). [Poland: "We came here, they wouldn't let us in." Roma from Ukraine treated as unwanted refugees](#)

³²⁴ Mirga-Wójtowicz, E., Talewicz, J., and Kolaczek, M., UNHCR (2022). [Human rights, needs and discrimination – the situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine in Poland](#)

³²⁵ PAQ Research (2022). [Hlas Ukrajinčů: Šetření o romských ukrajinských uprchlících](#), accessed 15 December 2022.

³²⁶ GLOBSEC (2023). [Ukrainian refugees in Visegrad countries: Societal Attitudes and Challenges of Accommodating People Fleeing the War](#), accessed 11 April 2023; GLOBSEC (2022). [New report shows that the V4 population supports Ukrainian refugees with some reservations](#), accessed 22 March 2023; [Slovak Academy of Science](#), GLOBSEC (2022). [New poll: Slovaks want Ukraine to win the war, Not Russia](#), accessed 22 March 2023.

³²⁷ Chisinau research workshop 2 March 2023.

³²⁸ Broadcasting Board of Governors (2016). [Role of Russian Media in the Baltics and Moldova](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

Moldovan government was as low as 2 percent, with 85 percent to 90 percent of respondents reporting having trust in the Russian Federation.³²⁹

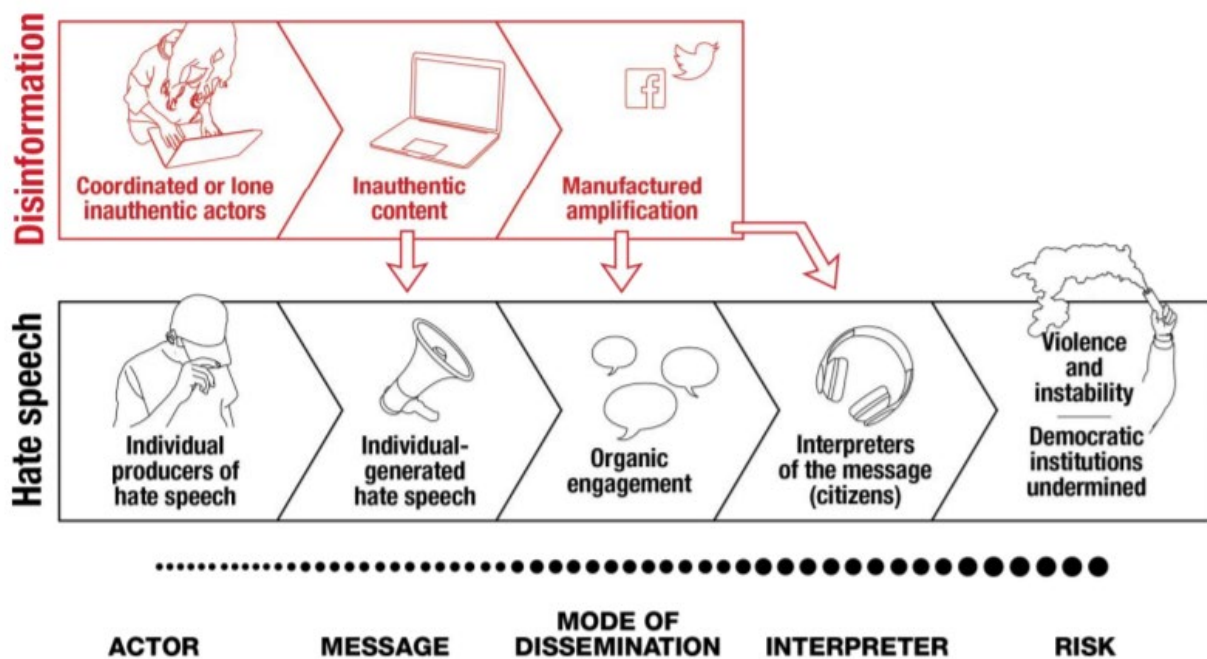
³²⁹ Gagauzyeri.com (2023). [Підробно об итогах соцопроса в Гагаузіи](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

Chapter 3: Misleading or Incendiary Discourses About Ukrainian Refugees

3.1. Overview

This chapter discusses key misleading or incendiary discourses about refugees in the region. The analysis is based on the IFES Chain of Harm framework,³³⁰ which maps the path by which disinformation, misinformation, and dangerous speech (DMDS) move through an information ecosystem, depicting the ways in which directed disinformation commonly amplifies hate speech or other divisive narratives to achieve its aims. The Chain of Harm framework enables researchers and practitioners to map DMDS along five stages, from the initial actors creating DMDS to the ultimate risks that manifest. Breaking down the challenges of DMDS in this way enables researchers and practitioners to identify discrete intervention points where the Chain of Harm can be disrupted to reduce the ultimate harms that would otherwise occur.

FIGURE 1. The IFES Chain of Harm Framework



The five stages of the Chain of Harm—actor, message, mode of dissemination, interpreter, and risk—are used below to analyse the different aspects of narratives in circulation in the five focus countries.

³³⁰ IFES (2019). *Disinformation Campaigns and Hate Speech: Exploring the Relationship and Programming Interventions*, accessed 31 March 2023.

3.2. Actors spreading misleading or abusive messages

While public discourse in the five countries regarding the influx of Ukrainian refugees has been largely positive, anti-Ukrainian narratives began percolating online soon after the outbreak of the war. Some have gained greater traction as the war has continued.³³¹

Russian and pro-Kremlin propaganda/Kremlin aligned sources (trolls): Russian-aligned stakeholders have been active in spreading disinformation in all five countries. These include anti-Ukraine narratives, for instance ‘blaming Ukraine and NATO for the war and pinning high energy prices on their own government rather than Russia cutting gas supplies’,³³² as well as those targeted directly at Ukrainian refugees. The Kremlin ecosystem approach is to spread ‘as many explanations or accusations as possible in order to muddy the waters and to see what sticks’ [in terms of conspiracy theories],³³³ including with regard to refugees.³³⁴

Pro-Russian groups: Pro-Russian groups are present in all countries to varying degrees. Slovakia³³⁵ and Moldova³³⁶ have the most significant proportions of pro-Russian groups of the five research countries. Pro-Russian public demonstrations have taken place in Bratislava, although there have been more in support of Ukraine.³³⁷ In Moldova, pro-Russian political figures have spread messages that Ukrainians are harmful to the community and that they steal and are violent toward Moldovans.³³⁸ In other countries, a small proportion of individuals held pro-Russian views³³⁹ that have not significantly altered since the war began. For example, in the Czech Republic, one group has been influenced by pro-Russian perspectives and disinformation and often wants a neutral national foreign policy,³⁴⁰ as there is a feeling that it is not worth distinguishing between allies and opponents because ‘all major powers behave badly’.³⁴¹

Far right and populist parties often have an anti-immigrant and anti-refugee stance. Far-right, ultranationalist, and extremist groups and networks, some linked to Russian actors, have been the most vocal actors spreading misinformation and incendiary narratives regarding refugees.³⁴² Populist parties often appeal to voters who are concerned about the impact of migration on their communities and the economy, and may present themselves as the only ones willing to take a strong stance against migration.³⁴³ These parties often position themselves as protectors, ‘proper patriots’, and ‘supporters of conservative values and the traditional family’.³⁴⁴

³³¹ Tymińska, A. (2022). *Granice nienawiści. Mowa nienawiści w kontekście kryzysów humanitarnych na granicy polskiej (2021/2022)*, Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka, page 30.

³³² Bond, S. (2023). *From TV to Telegram to TikTok, Moldova is being flooded with Russian propaganda*, accessed 29 March 2023.

³³³ Euvsdisinfo.eu (2022). *NORD STREAM 1 & 2 SABOTAGE – DISINFORMATION A LA MH-17?*, accessed 10 March 2023.

³³⁴ See, for instance, *Trollové se aktivovali. Za raketu v Polsku může kdokoli, jen ne Rusko*, iDNES (2022); *Trollové se aktivovali. Za raketu v Polsku může kdokoli, jen ne Rusko*, accessed 20 March 2023.

³³⁵ GLOBSEC (2022). *GLOBSEC Trends 2022: CEE amid the war in Ukraine*, accessed 11 April 2023.

³³⁶ See Section 4.7 of this report.

³³⁷ Police of the Slovak Republic (2023). *Report of the police force on disinformation*, accessed 28 March 2023.

³³⁸ Cosoi, P. (2022). VIDEO *Refugiați ucraineni „OBRAZNICI”! Ion Ceban: Ne putem trezi cu furturi, tâlhării, abuzuri și vandalism*, accessed 29 March 2023.

³³⁹ STEM (2022). *Hodnocení vztahu občanů české republiky k vybraným zemím Evropy a světa během války na Ukrajině*, accessed 17 March 2023.

³⁴⁰ HlídacíPes.org (2023). *Kremelské propagandě se v Česku loni nedařilo. Směřovat na východ chce jen pět procent lidí*, accessed 18 March 2023.

³⁴¹ HlídacíPes.org (2023). *Kremelské propagandě se v Česku loni nedařilo. Směřovat na východ chce jen pět procent lidí*, accessed 18 March 2023.

³⁴² International Republican Institute (2023). *Hostile Narrative Brief War In Ukraine*, accessed 29 March 2023; INFOSECURITY.SK (2023). *Slovak far-right politicians are spreading false narratives about refugees, the West is being blamed for the ongoing energy crisis*, accessed 29 March 2023.

³⁴³ E15 (2023). *Problém je osamělost lidí. Ztrácejí kontakt s realitou, říká o dezinformacích v kampani expertka*, accessed 20 March 2023.

³⁴⁴ E15 (2023). *Problém je osamělost lidí. Ztrácejí kontakt s realitou, říká o dezinformacích v kampani expertka*, accessed 20 March 2023.

Anti-migration, anti-vaccination, and anti-pandemic restriction activists and influencers:³⁴⁵ The same groups of people who, in recent years, spoke out against migration and/or COVID-19 restrictions can be observed to have switched gradually to the topic of supporting the Russian invasion. In the Czech Republic, according to analyst Roman Máca from the Institute for Politics and Society, this change of focus toward Ukrainian refugees was expected since some participants and speakers at anti-COVID-19 restriction demonstrations openly admitted that they looked up to Russia and the Russian president.³⁴⁶ Individuals have been documented as starting campaigning against Islam and refugees at the time of the migration crisis in 2015; they then focused on COVID-19 and recently called for demonstrations under the slogan ‘the Czech Republic in the first place’, demanding, among other things, ‘the end of the planned dilution of the nation by Ukrainian refugees’,³⁴⁷

Reasons for spreading misleading or incendiary content

The United Kingdom Government Communications Service has identified a variety of reasons why actors could spread misleading or incendiary content.³⁴⁸ These are applicable to actors spreading misleading or incendiary narratives about Ukrainian refugees in the Central European countries:

1. **Genuine belief in the messages**, which might resonate with strongly held personal beliefs. In some instances, the actors sharing messages may recognise they are false or misleading but believe that the sentiment is illustrative of ‘the kind of thing that goes on’.
2. **Grievances**. As inflation rises, for example, some people’s standards of living are deteriorating. Others might have lost their jobs, even though unemployment on the whole has not risen in the past year. Ukrainian refugees might be easy scapegoats for such problems.
3. **Lack of consequences for promoting misleading messages**. Actors may take advantage of the anonymity of online spaces and gain respect within certain online communities.
4. **Personal or institutional gain** by discrediting specific individuals (e.g., politicians) or organisations (e.g., government institutions, businesses, NGOs, multilateral organisations, etc.). This may also be for the purpose of **mobilising voters** in response to an imagined threat and building support as a result of anti-refugee rhetoric.³⁴⁹
5. **Contributions to polarisation**, aiming to crowd out any differing opinions. For example, research from the International Republican Institute (IRI) notes that refugee-related themes attempt, albeit unsuccessfully to date, to ‘divide Polish society, often by highlighting the cost of maintaining refugees or using historical narratives to fuel conflict between Poles and Ukrainians.’³⁵⁰
6. **Financial gain**, either benefiting from increased traffic to websites to view posts or by selling specific products. For instance, discourses such as those that Ukrainians are driving up the prices, and, rents in particular, might also be propagated by a broader group of actors who might stand to benefit, such as landlords who might choose to raise rents unnecessarily.³⁵¹

³⁴⁵ Rambousková, M. (2022). [Covid už netáhne. Z dezinformátorů se stali „přátelé Ruska a míru”](#).

³⁴⁶ Zprávy, S. (2022). [Covid už netáhne. Z dezinformátorů se stali „přátelé Ruska a míru”](#), accessed 18 March 2023.

³⁴⁷ Kaboň, R., Cihla, J., Štraub, M., and Rumler, L., Deník.cz (2022). [Proti vládě, proti cenám, proti EU. V Česku opět demonstrovaly desetitisíce lidí](#), accessed 17 March 2023.

³⁴⁸ Government Communication Service (2021). [Resist 2: Counter-disinformation toolkit](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁴⁹ International Republican Institute (2023). [Hostile Narrative Brief War In Ukraine](#), accessed 29 March 2023; and Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (2023). [Raport „Granice nienawiści”](#), page 91, accessed 31 March 2023.

³⁵⁰ International Republican Institute (2023). [Hostile Narrative Brief War In Ukraine](#), accessed 29 March 2023; and Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (2023). [Raport „Granice nienawiści”](#), page 90, accessed 31 March 2023.

³⁵¹ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

7. **Geopolitical gain**, through which hostile actors aim to destabilise other countries—financially and security-wise. This particularly links to Russian state propaganda activities. The aim of Russian trolling is often to create a sense of chaos and confusion as to what information is true, given the large number of conflicting ‘facts’ being proposed to audiences.³⁵²

3.3. Types of messages and approaches

The most common narratives fit within six categories.

1. They’re taking what’s ours, and we are worse off.

First, quite universal discourses are found in all five countries that could be summarised by the sentiment that ‘the refugees are taking what is ours, and we’re worse off for that.’ This might refer to kindergarten spots, subsidised housing, jobs, healthcare capacity, or financial support. For example, in the Czech Republic, with the increase in fuel and energy prices and high inflation (15.1 percent),³⁵³ discourses have appeared that say, ‘Ukrainian refugees are draining our social system at a time when domestic citizens are being crushed by inflation—money can be found for “foreigners,” while no one will help ‘our people’.’³⁵⁴ In Poland, workshop participants said that the narrative that Ukrainians are taking the places of Poles for healthcare is relatively widespread, regarding both the general healthcare system and special services set up for Ukrainians (e.g., rehabilitation services that Poles cannot use).³⁵⁵ One participant shared that their organisation took down a social media post about a health service being started for Ukrainian refugees, as within an hour they received 500 negative comments from accounts that the organisation confirmed to be people rather than bots. These included messages such as ‘My wife didn’t get the help she needed because Ukrainians were prioritised’. Another example is the response to a Twitter post from the Polish Ministry of Health (Figure 2), which read, ‘A campaign to promote the vaccination of children from Ukraine in Poland and support for the supply of vaccines – these are the main points of the cooperation agreement signed today by Minister Adam Niedzielski and UNICEF coordinator Rashed Mustafa’.³⁵⁶

FIGURE 2. Twitter post from the Polish Ministry of Health



There were many negative responses to this post, including (in translation): ‘Already the Ukry [derogatory term for Ukrainians] are running to get whatever vaccination there is. In Ukraine they don’t do this but for sure they’ll do it listening to the criminal Niezielski. Another waste of public funds.’ Another response reads, ‘5 million Ukrainians entered Polish territory without any health checks (...) Poles are dying and waiting for years for specialist health, and you are helping foreigners.’

³⁵² Tyimińska, A. (2022). *Granice nienawiści. Mowa nienawiści w kontekście kryzysów humanitarnych na granicy polskiej (2021/2022)*, Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka.

³⁵³ The average annual inflation rate in 2022 was 15.1 percent. See [Public database CZSO](#) and Inflation rate for more details.

³⁵⁴ Czech Elves (2022). *Monthly report – May*, accessed 20 March 2023.

³⁵⁵ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

³⁵⁶ Twitter page of the Ministry of Health in Poland (2022). Tweet: [campaign to promote the vaccination of Ukrainian children in Poland](#), accessed 27 March 2023.

2. They don't deserve what they get. Second, resonating across all five countries, to varying degrees, are discourses referring to the sentiment that 'they get more than poor locals' or 'they don't deserve what they get'. Whereas the first category refers to scarcity of finite resources, this one refers to merit in receiving support. For example, the illustration in Figure 3 claims that Ukrainians receive more in various benefits than Czechs, citing details that do not match the official figures.³⁵⁷ Discourses in Moldova compare the circumstances of Ukrainians with Moldovans, often juxtaposing the perceived wealth of refugees against the hardships faced by elderly, unemployed, or disabled Moldovans.³⁵⁸ Popular discourses under this category also claim that refugees don't want to work³⁵⁹ or that they are economic migrants in the country primarily for work.³⁶⁰ Related to this, workshop participants in all countries discussed narratives about Ukrainians being rich and not needing support; stories of refugees driving expensive cars are abundant.³⁶¹ This has also been observed online, with sarcastic comments such as the post illustrated in Figure 4 (below): 'Poor things. Give them food, some rations to put in those 80-litre tanks, and full medical care, and don't forget to pin a blue and yellow badge to the lapels of their jackets'.³⁶² Some also claim that refugees do not appreciate the support they receive. Finally, the topic of social benefits, social security, and a person's economic status is closely connected with 'merit,' a feature particularly valued by Slovak³⁶³ and Czech³⁶⁴ societies: a belief that a person must earn his or her social and economic status in life and not get it 'from others.' Therefore, ideas around the abuse of social benefits and of excessive state support to individuals who do not deserve it can resonate with a wide range of people.³⁶⁵ Messages under this narrative include, 'Czechs have to work hard to pay for housing/rents, and Ukrainians get it for free', or 'Ukrainian refugees live for free'.

FIGURE 3. Misleading Facebook post about differences in support received by Czechs and Ukrainians



3. They're making the economic situation worse. A third, related type of misleading and incendiary discourse identified is more specifically about economic fears and concerns that refugees are making the economic situation in host countries worse.³⁶⁶ For example, in the Czech Republic, posts have appeared linking the two discourses above to making the economic situation worse, such as, 'Do you understand that they will replace the Czechs?'

³⁵⁷ [The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs](#) data on the support received is different (i.e., for the first person in a household, it is CZK 4,470 and not CZK 3,550, as listed in the photo).

³⁵⁸ Vasilache, M. (2022). [Război în Ucraina: Campanie online împotriva refugiaților ucraineni din Republica Moldova](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

³⁵⁹ See, for example, Vinš, Jan P., Prague Security Studies Institute (2022). [Dezinformační narativy o válce na Ukrajině v ČR a ve střední a východní Evropě](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

³⁶⁰ Czech Elves (2022), [Monthly report – May](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

³⁶¹ Project research workshops; see also: Czech Elves (2022). [Monthly report – November 2022](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

³⁶² Topky.sk (2022). [Slováci sa zasa vyfarbili: Ukrajincom závidia pomoc aj zdravotnú starostlivosť, fotia si ich „drahé“ autá!](#), accessed 13 April 2023.

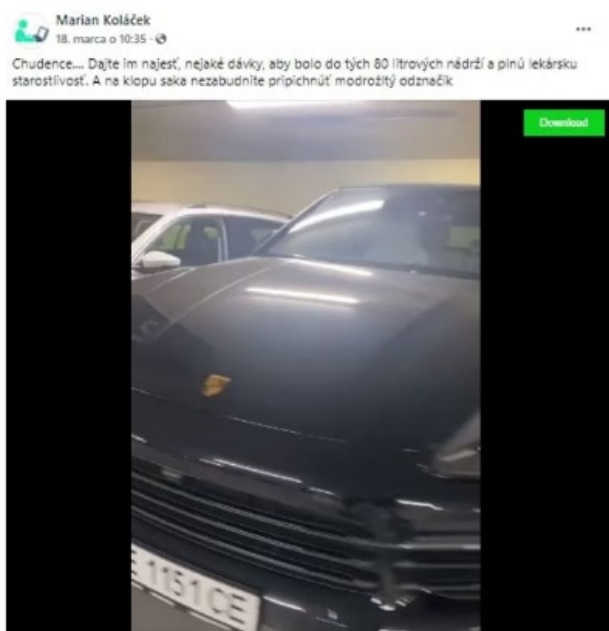
³⁶³ Bratislava research workshop 8 March 2023.

³⁶⁴ STEM (2021). [Jedna-společnost—různé-světy](#), Accessed 17 January 2023.

³⁶⁵ STEM (2021). [Jedna-společnost—různé-světy](#), accessed 17 January 2023.

³⁶⁶ See, for example, Vinš, Jan P., Prague Security Studies Institute (2022). [Dezinformační narativy o válce na Ukrajině v ČR a ve střední a východní Evropě](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

FIGURE 4. Facebook post on the support received by Ukrainians, highlighted by Topky.sk



Will they take people's jobs, kick you out of your apartment (...) That they get everything for free? And that they will make everything more expensive?'³⁶⁷

4. Ukrainians are making us less secure.

Fourth, particularly in Slovakia and Moldova, political discourses relate to the war itself. The 'peace narrative' is particularly popular in Slovakia, where a broad range of people claim that Ukraine should not prolong the suffering by continuing to fight but should negotiate and concede on whatever is necessary to stop the humanitarian situation from becoming worse.³⁶⁸ A continuation of Ukraine's defence can be portrayed as endangering other countries—both economically, through soaring inflation as well as

physically, by possibly bringing the war to their doorstep.

5. Discourses in some countries relate to historic grievances. The Volhynia massacre, during which it is estimated that up to 60,000 Polish people were killed between 1943 and 1945,³⁶⁹ is used in particular to stir up historical grievances by characterising Ukrainians as anti-Polish nationalists. Similarly, workshop participants in Moldova noted an emerging discourse about Ukrainian nationals who supported Transnistria in the conflict against the Moldovan state in the 1990s. Narratives ask why Moldovans should provide support to Ukrainians when the Ukrainian state was perceived to have fought against Moldovans' interests historically.³⁷⁰ In Romania, a narrative draws upon the allegedly poorer treatment of Romanian minorities in Ukraine and political concerns about their rights.³⁷¹ Participants in the research workshop commented that since the Russian invasion there has been increased coverage of this issue in the national media.³⁷² This narrative has the potential to reduce Romanian support to Ukrainians, leading to apathy or resentment.

6. Discourses in some countries refer to the effects of refugees on culture and 'social fabric'. In Poland, the 'Ukrainisation of Poland' discourse refers to the threat of the disintegration of the fabric of Polish national and cultural identity.³⁷³ The narrative includes a range of messages, from focusing on the alleged domination of Ukrainian symbols in public spaces and Ukrainian language to the deterioration and potential dissolution of Polish culture. Some narratives go as far as speculating about the possibility of parts of Ukraine and Poland becoming

³⁶⁷ Czech Elves (2022). [Dezinformace na Facebooku – 24.3.2022](#), accessed 26 March 2023.

³⁶⁸ Učeň, P. (2023). "The Russia–Ukraine War and the Radicalization of Political Discourse in Slovakia." In: *The Impacts of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine on Right-wing Populism in Europe*. Ivaldi, G. and Emilia Zankina, E (eds.). European Center for Populism Studies (ECPS). March 8, 2023, accessed 11 April 2023; International Republican Institute (2023). [Hostile Narrative Brief War In Ukraine](#), accessed 29 March 2023; Bratislava research workshop 7 March 2023.

³⁶⁹ Tymińska, A. (2022). [Granice nienawiści. Mowa nienawiści w kontekście kryzysów humanitarnych na granicy polskiej \(2021/2022\)](#), Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka.

³⁷⁰ Chisinau research workshop 2 March 2023.

³⁷¹ See, for example, IONEL SCLAVONE, evz.ro (2023). [Diana Șoșoacă, scenariu conspirationist despre viitorul României: „Există o factiune ce porneste din Iași”](#), accessed 23 March 2023.

³⁷² Balkan Insight (2022). [Ukraine seeks closer ties to Romania, vows to resolve minority issues](#)

³⁷³ Dzierzanowski, M., Wprost Info (2019). [Jak Kreml gra rzeźnia wołyńska: 'Obejrzymy Ogniem i Mieczem'](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

unified into ‘Ukropolin’,³⁷⁴ ‘Ukropolin’ would involve large planned population resettlements and come ‘at the expense of Polish national identity’.³⁷⁵ The Ukraine Monitor project reported that the term ‘Ukrainisation of Romania’ originally applied to the alleged efforts of the Government of Ukraine to forcibly assimilate Romanians in Ukraine.³⁷⁶ This has also been noted in the Czech Republic, mainly referring to Ukrainian flags that are often displayed on Czech public holidays. These include specific messages such as, ‘the Ukrainization of the Czech Republic continues. The ceremony of awarding the Memory of the Nation in the National Theater on the anniversary of November 17 was accompanied by the Ukrainian anthem’.³⁷⁷ Similar assertions have been noted in Romania alongside the discourse that ‘Russians and Ukrainians are basically the same’. The latter was partly driven by lower levels of interaction and exchanges between Romania and Ukraine than between other neighbouring countries and Ukraine, along with greater linguistic differences.

Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging

As much as possible, counter-narratives should be targeted at specific audiences and the fora with which they engage, and should be tailored based on these audiences’ attitudes, perceptions, values, and norms.

It is also important to use emotionally evocative language to capture attention and increase recall of the messages shared,³⁷⁸ and to build on the target audience’s values³⁷⁹—for example, aligning with patriotic ideals and showing how Ukrainians are fighting for all of Europe. Correcting facts alone is unlikely to be effective when attempting to change attitudes regarding sensitive issues tied to people’s values, social norms, and beliefs.

This approach should be combined with a messaging strategy that seeks to assure as much as it seeks to convince. This means including messaging such as, ‘There’s enough to go around’, or ‘We’re in this together’.

Finally, as much as possible, counternarratives should not be tied to the state of politics so as not to let far-right voters believe that this may be a political campaign of the opposing camp.

³⁷⁴ Ukraine Monitor (n.d.). [“Ukrainianization” in pro-Russian propaganda in Romania, Poland, Serbia and Hungary](#), accessed 31 March 2023.

³⁷⁵ Ukraine Monitor (n.d.). [“Ukrainianization” in pro-Russian propaganda in Romania, Poland, Serbia and Hungary](#), page 56, accessed 31 March 2023.

³⁷⁶ Global Focus (2022). [“Ukrainianization” in pro-Russian propaganda in Romania, Poland, Serbia and Hungary](#)

³⁷⁷ Czech Elves (2022). [Monthly report – November 2022](#), accessed 20 March 2023; and Czech Elves (2022). [Monthly report – October 2022](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

³⁷⁸ Brady, W., Gantman, A., and Van Bavel, J. (2020). [Attentional capture helps explain why moral and emotional content go viral](#). *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 149, pages 746–756.

³⁷⁹ Feinberg, M., and Willer, R. (2015). [From Gulf to Bridge: When Do Moral Arguments Facilitate Political Influence?](#) *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41(12), pages 1665–1681.

The table below summarises the discourses about refugees that were identified in the workshops and through research by third parties and triangulated through CrowdTangle. The top five discourses in each country are categorised as relatively ‘low risk’, ‘medium risk’, or ‘high risk’, depending on their potential to affect community cohesion in the country in the medium term and taking into account the prevalence of the narratives and the likely severity of impact of the narratives on community cohesion. It is important to stress the ‘relative’ aspect of the risk: this is in relation to other discourses in the country. A discourse noted as ‘relatively high risk’ may still be niche and not likely to create tension for the majority of society, but it can be a much higher risk than other discourses in that country.

TABLE 3. Misleading or incendiary discourses about refugees in the region

Misleading or Incendiary Discourses about Ukrainian Refugees	Poland	Slovakia	Czech Republic	Romania	Moldova
Legal status, welfare, and benefits					
They are economic migrants who could be planning to stay in the host countries permanently	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk
Refugees from Western Ukraine/ less affected regions are not genuine refugees—the war hasn’t really affected them; they don’t deserve support	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
They abuse the benefits system (e.g., cross the border to just get the money)	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
There is corruption within support systems for Ukrainian refugees	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Ukrainians are supported more than other refugees	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Healthcare					
Ukrainians are creating a burden on the healthcare system , taking locals’ places	Relatively high risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Local doctors don’t want to treat Ukrainians	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk

They are health tourists	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk
They misuse services (unnecessary ambulance calls, emergency room visits, doctors' visits)	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
They are a health/disease risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk
Housing					
Ukrainians are creating a burden on the housing system	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Refugees have more or unfair access to housing	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk
Education					
Ukrainians are creating a burden on the education system (schools and kindergartens), taking locals' places	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Ukrainian students are not making an effort at school	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk
Employment and income					
Economic challenges/energy crisis are fuelled by hosting refugees ('they drive prices up')	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk
New arrivals from Ukraine are taking jobs from the local population; they are willing to work for significantly lower wages; they are destroying the labour market	Relatively high risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively high risk
Ukrainians don't want to pay taxes, or they want to work illegally	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
They don't want to work	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk

Ukrainians are rich , drive around in fancy cars and spend their time at malls and cafes while locals are working; they're in the host country on holiday ; they don't need assistance	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively high risk
Refugees receive more financial support and better benefits than the local population; help to refugees comes at the cost of the local population; 'We should help our poor, not the Ukrainians'	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively high risk
Local populations are excluded from support provided to vulnerable people	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk
They don't need help as the language and culture in the host country and Ukraine is similar	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk
Community, social, and political life					
Refugees are ungrateful , have high expectations and demands for support and shelter; and they abuse hospitality —they leave messy apartments and are disrespectful; refugees are selective about the types of support that they receive—e.g., they don't want to live in small cities, only want certain types of products	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk
They should be in Ukraine defending their country, not here	Medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk
Women come to look for husbands and citizenship	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk
They are not really traumatised ; they go to cafes and live a nice, normal life	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk
Refugees are coming to nazify the host society	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Portray local citizens as not welcoming Ukrainian refugees and refugees not receiving help on arrival or do not support Ukraine any more	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk

Threaten a country's national identity, culture, and social fabric (Poland: 'Ukrainisation of Poland')	Relatively high risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk
Ukrainians and Russians are basically the same	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively low risk
They treat the host country's minorities in Ukraine badly	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively low risk
Ukraine is not really a country	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk
Ukrainian refugees create diplomatic tensions with Russia; they need to accept their fate, negotiate, and, if needed, become part of Russia and move on; they are endangering other countries (including the host country) by resisting	Relatively low risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Ukrainian refugees in country create diplomatic tensions between the host country and the EU/other EU countries, as insufficient support is given by the EU	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk
They're not the host country's responsibility	Low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
The host country is trying to regain some of Ukraine's territory (e.g., Poland/Lviv)	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk
Historic tensions or figures (e.g., Volhynya in Poland, Transnistria in Moldova [1992 Ukraine's role])—'Ukrainians didn't help us then/fought against us; why should we help now?'	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk
Negative perceptions of refugees caused by political views relating to Russia	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk
They are reckless drivers , don't follow local rules	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk

Local men will be required to serve in the military if support to Ukraine and Ukrainians continues	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk
Refugees are a crime risk or security threats (e.g., prone to criminality, anti-social behaviour; organised crime coming from Ukraine)	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk

3.4. Modes of dissemination

Social media, websites, and messaging apps: Social networks have so far been only a minimally regulated environment, serving as relatively cheap and fast platforms to create disinformation campaigns that can reach a large audience.³⁸⁰ A multitude of right-leaning groups, political parties, and extremist groups operating on social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, have been sharing misleading and incendiary messages about refugees.³⁸¹ Slovakia, for example, has an extremely active and powerful interlinked online disinformation space with a network of over 1,800 Facebook pages and groups that spread various DMDS.³⁸² Comments enable individuals and groups to perpetuate disinformation by engaging directly with politicians and political groups. Anonymous social media accounts and fake accounts created by the Russian propaganda machine (trolls) are also used to spread discourses. In addition, some websites, such as the Kancelaria Lega Artis in Poland, share ‘fake news’ regarding refugees.³⁸³ In Moldova, Russian language websites may be more likely to spread such discourse. Chisinau workshop participants noted OK.Ru, as a mode of dissemination, for example.³⁸⁴ The Chisinau Institute for Public Policy reports that pro-Russian voices play a major role on OK.Ru, for example by perpetuating Russian propaganda, including overtly pro-Russian messaging.³⁸⁵ In the Czech Republic, disinformation spread in these groups usually originates from pro-Kremlin media outlets with a Czech web presence, such as Sputnik News, Aeronet, and První zprávy.³⁸⁶ The websites continue longstanding anti-immigration narratives that feed fears about newcomers, even those from a relatively similar cultural background.³⁸⁷ Interestingly, much anti-Ukrainian refugee messaging on social media has been published by accounts and profiles that previously shared anti-vaccine disinformation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.³⁸⁸

The most common way to propagate desired messages is through image- and video-based content.³⁸⁹ Images and videos are ideal for manipulating public opinion because they are easily consumed through social media or other digital platforms and can have a powerful emotional impact.³⁹⁰ They can evoke feelings of fear, anger, or empathy, which can make them more persuasive and memorable. They can also be edited in ways that change their meaning or impact or be used out of context. One common practice is using old photos and attributing their content to the present.³⁹¹

³⁸⁰ European Values Center for Security Policy (2022). [Policy brief within Kremlin Watchers Movement project](#), accessed 15 March 2023.

³⁸¹ EDMO (2022). [European Digital Media Observatory \(2022\). ‘Ukrainian refugees and disinformation: situation in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania’](#), accessed 31 March 2023; International Republican Institute (2023). [Hostile Narrative Brief War In Ukraine](#), accessed 29 March 2023; Global Focus (2022). [“Ukrainianisation” in pro-Russian propaganda in Romania, Poland, Serbia and Hungary](#); Bond, S. (2023). [From TV to Telegram to TikTok, Moldova is being flooded with Russian propaganda](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

³⁸² Blbec.online (2023). [Disinformation synthesis website](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

³⁸³ EDMO (2022). [European Digital Media Observatory \(2022\). ‘Ukrainian refugees and disinformation: situation in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania’](#), accessed 31 March 2023.

³⁸⁴ Chisinau research workshop 2 March 2023.

³⁸⁵ Institutul de politici publice (2023). [Russian Propaganda on „ODNOKLASSNIKI”: The case of Republic of Moldova](#), accessed 31 March 2023.

³⁸⁶ Czech Elves (2023). [Monthly report – December+January 2023](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

³⁸⁷ Czech Elves (2022). [Monthly report – May](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

³⁸⁸ Tymińska, A. (2022) [Granice nienawiści. Mowa nienawiści w kontekście kryzysów humanitarnych na granicy polskiej \(2021/2022\)](#), Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka, page 46.

³⁸⁹ EEAS (2023). [1st EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats](#), accessed 25 March 2023.

³⁹⁰ See the TrendLabs study [The Fake News Machine](#) for more about the costs associated with the spread of disinformation; EEAS (2023). [1st EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats](#), accessed 25 March 2023.

³⁹¹ Demagog.cz (2022). [Fotografie z roku 2017 vuyžita proti uprchlíkům z Ukrajiny](#), accessed 19 March 2023.

Email has been used for anti-refugee messaging. According to research by the Ipsos agency, almost four out of 10 Czechs receive chain email messages from acquaintances, and 460,000 of those people forward the chain emails on.³⁹² Experts also noted that chain emails often include a mix of information that may have a basis in reality—but it is taken out of context or the meaning is greatly inflated.³⁹³ Participants in the research workshop noted that seniors might be a particular target for chain email messages and are most likely to share them.³⁹⁴ Seniors often do not have the skills to verify information because of their lower digital literacy and thus can become easy targets. In April 2022, Poland saw a large troll attack aimed at diverting attention from Russian war crimes by focusing on the Volhynia massacre and accusing ‘Ukrainian Nazis’ of war crimes. The attack involved threatening emails sent to Polish politicians, email spam to Polish media, and mass postings on Twitter.³⁹⁵

Traditional media: Television and radio are also modes for disseminating harmful narratives; media produced in Russia and by pro-Russian groups has a higher propensity to perpetuate anti-refugee rhetoric³⁹⁶ and is often hostile to Ukraine.³⁹⁷ The Moldovan government’s decision to ban news and political analysis produced in Russia, as well as some domestic television channels in the country, has limited Russia’s ability to push disinformation through traditional media. However, this has led to accusations of bias against Russia in censorship laws.³⁹⁸ The ban applies to analysis from countries that have not ratified the Convention on Transfrontier Television.³⁹⁹ More broadly, mainstream TV channels have been reported to propagate disinformation and fake news accidentally or intentionally, targeting both Romanians and Ukrainian refugees.⁴⁰⁰

Politicians during campaigns: Populist politicians exploit themes associated with refugees to strengthen their own voter preferences through deflection, misinterpretation, and placing information in a different context.⁴⁰¹

Events and public announcements: Politicians from right-wing, conservative parties have made public statements that align with some of these discourses on the news and in public discussions. Cases include a local politician using his platform to suggest that supporting refugees comes at the cost of local citizens⁴⁰² and a party moderator using his platform to repeatedly suggest that Ukrainians were robbing local businesses.⁴⁰³ These discourses reach a wide audience and may be repeated without fact-checking, in part due to the status of the messenger.

³⁹² Ipsos (2022). *Vnímání dezinformací v České republice a na Slovensku*, accessed 22 March 2023; see also [Více než třetina Čechů dostává řetězové e-maily, statisíce je přeposílají dál](#) for more details.

³⁹³ iROZHLAS (2022). *Řetězové e-maily? Živého obsahu je v nich relativně málo, obsah je ale značně přifouknutý, říká odborník*, accessed 17 March 2023.

³⁹⁴ Prague research workshop February 2–3, 2023.

³⁹⁵ EuvsDisInfo (2022). *The Bucha Massacre: How To Deflect Attention In Poland*, accessed 1 April 2023.

³⁹⁶ Necsutu, M. (2022). *Between anti-Ukrainian propaganda and showbiz: how Russia and its local allies try to maintain their media domination in the Republic of Moldova*, accessed 29 March 2023.

³⁹⁷ Bond, S. (2023). *From TV to Telegram to TikTok, Moldova is being flooded with Russian propaganda*.

³⁹⁸ Veridica (2023). *FAKE NEWS: The government in Chisinau bans Russian press at the behest of the West*, accessed 29 March 2023.

³⁹⁹ Necsutu, M. (2022). *NEWS: Moldova Bans Russian Media to Counter Propaganda Over Ukraine*, accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴⁰⁰ Metamorphosis Foundation (2023). *Interview with Romanian anti-disinformation activist reveals disinformation campaigns often target refugees from Ukraine*

⁴⁰¹ E15 (2023). *Problém je osamělost lidí. Ztrácejí kontakt s realitou, říká o dezinformacích v kampani expertka*, accessed 20 March 2023.

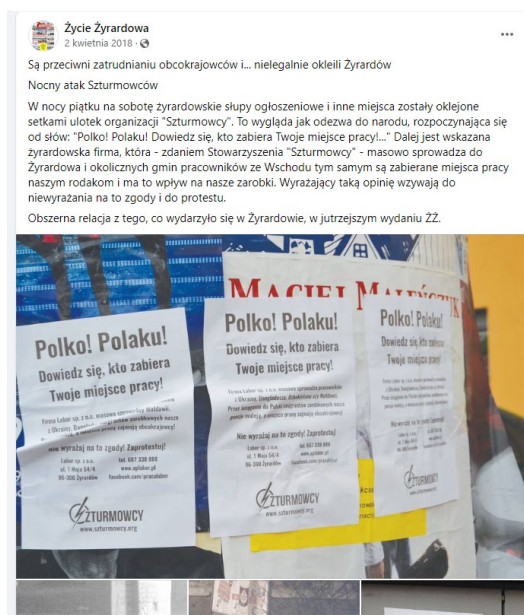
⁴⁰² Cosoi, P. (2022). VIDEO *Refugiati ucraineni „OBRAZNICI”! Ion Ceban: Ne putem trezi cu furturi, tâlhării, abuzuri și vandalism*, accessed 29 March 2023.

⁴⁰³ Zacharias, L. (2022). *Un moderator de petreceri din Chișinău publică video-uri cu mesaje false despre refugiații ucraineni*, accessed 29 March 2023.

Sometimes a traditional form of information dissemination is used, as exemplified by the situation in 2018 in Żyrardow, before the Russian invasion. The city was blanketed with hundreds of leaflets by the so-called Stormtroopers, a nationalist faction of the extreme right (see Figure 5). The leaflets read: ‘Pole [woman]! Pole [man]! Find out who is taking your job! Employers are bringing workers from Ukraine, Bangladesh, Uzbekistan, or Moldova en masse. By attracting migrant workers to Poland our salaries are decreasing and jobs are being taken by foreigners! Do not consent to this! Protest!’ The influx of Ukrainian refugees gives those who believe such ideas additional motivation to spread such narratives.⁴⁰⁴

Word of mouth: Some discourses spread through regular conversations between individuals, including narratives that people first came across online, particularly where discourses relate to increasing financial pressures or other ways in which refugees may be impacting people’s quality of life.⁴⁰⁵

FIGURE 5. ‘Stormtroopers’ leaflets in Żyrardow, Poland



Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:

Social media campaigns could be aimed at the groups most likely to be swayed by the economic migrant narratives, engaging influencers for these groups. Social media, especially in the form of engaging videos and visuals, could also provide guidance on how to talk to friends and family members who say incendiary things about refugees.

Media organisations could help identify refugees who can be called on for quotes in the media or appear on TV and news shows as commentators to increase the representation of refugee voices.

3.5. Host community reactions (interpreters)

The European Digital Media Observatory found that disinformation about refugees was directed at three groups:⁴⁰⁶

- Racist-minded individuals who already had negative attitudes toward refugees;
- Supporters of conspiracy theories; and
- Average concerned citizens—this might refer to rising costs of living, and longer queues for healthcare and education.

⁴⁰⁴ Żyrardowa, Ż. (2018). [Facebook page](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁰⁵ Sadura, P., and Sierakowski, S. (2022). *Polacy Za Ukrainą. Ale Przeciw Ukraińcom Raport Z Badań Socjologicznych*, page 30.

⁴⁰⁶ EDMO (2022). [European Digital Media Observatory \(2022\). 'Ukrainian refugees and disinformation: situation in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania'](#), accessed 31 March 2023.

Right-wing, anti-immigrant nationalist sentiments were present in some parts of host country societies before the Russian invasion,⁴⁰⁷ and individuals holding such views are more likely to share anti-Ukrainian refugee rhetoric—in particular, as fatigue with the war grows. Nationalistic slogans such as ‘Polska dla Polaków’ (‘Poland for Poles’) are used to promote the idea that the country, including its resources, should be reserved for Polish citizens. In the example shown in Figure 6, a member of the public is replying to a post by the politician Pawel Szefermaker, which explains that train stations now have information points for refugees from Ukraine. The reply reads: ‘Poles will give you hell for the privileges granted to Ukrainians. Traitors.’ The main audience of anti-refugee rhetoric is far-right and nationalist supporters ‘which are a small, but not insignificant proportion of the population’.⁴⁰⁸ Slovakia reports the greatest fear toward ‘other groups’ (migrants and Western societies) in the region related to threats to values and identity.⁴⁰⁹ Concurrently, Slovakia has consistently demonstrated greater sympathy for Russia than seen in comparable EU countries.⁴¹⁰ According to IRI’s analysis, narratives on Ukrainian refugees being used as political tools—puppets of NATO or the West, or part of an extremist liberal agenda—were particularly prevalent in Slovakia, largely for an audience of far-right supporters and, to some extent, the general public due to concerns around the economy.⁴¹¹

Many people might lack the skills to identify and address disinformation. According to research from 2019, only one-sixth of Czechs have the skills to fight disinformation.⁴¹² In addition, a survey from July 2022 by Ipsos showed that Czechs with only primary education (14 percent) were the most likely to never check the veracity of information, even if they suspect it is disinformation, and then pass it on.⁴¹³ The survey also pointed out that fewer than 48 percent of Czechs can easily recognise disinformation. Slovakia is one of the countries in the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) region most prone to believing in various conspiracy theories.⁴¹⁴ This provides a context in which disinformation regarding Ukrainian refugees is likely to flourish.

The third group can be quite broad, as high numbers of people are under significant financial strain due to rising inflation, and there are real challenges related to a strained healthcare system, as discussed in Chapter 4. Therefore, some messages that refer to matters affecting people’s day-to-day lives may increasingly resonate with members of host communities. The financially worse-off segments of a host population, particularly in regions with higher unemployment rates, may see Ukrainian migrants as a threat to their own economic wellbeing and

FIGURE 6. Social media user’s reply to Pawel Szefermaker’s post



⁴⁰⁷ Tymińska, A. (2022). *Granice nienawiści. Mowa nienawiści w kontekście kryzysów humanitarnych na granicy polskiej (2021/2022)*. Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka.

⁴⁰⁸ International Republican Institute (2023). *Hostile Narrative Brief War In Ukraine*, page 91, accessed 29 March 2023.

⁴⁰⁹ GLOBSEC (2022). *GLOBSEC Trends 2022: Slovakia*, accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴¹⁰ GLOBSEC (2022). *GLOBSEC Trends 2022: CEE amid the war in Ukraine*, accessed 11 April 2023.

⁴¹¹ International Republican Institute (2023). *Hostile narrative brief: war in Ukraine, a year of aggression*

⁴¹² STEM (2019). *Nová studie zkoumá vztah mediální gramotnosti, důvery v media a náchylnosti k dezinformacím*, accessed 20 March 2023.

⁴¹³ Ipsos (2022). *Vnímání dezinformací v České republice a na Slovensku*, accessed 22 March 2023.

⁴¹⁴ GLOBSEC (2022). *GLOBSEC Trends 2022: Central and Eastern Europe amid the War in Ukraine*, accessed 28 March 2023; Meseznikov, G. (2022). *Stance of the V4 countries towards Russian military aggression against Ukraine*, accessed 11 April 2023.

jobs.⁴¹⁵ According to IRI's analysis, narratives on Ukrainian refugees receiving treatment that is preferential to that given to Romanians were found to resonate most online, largely for an audience of far-right and nationalist supporters.⁴¹⁶ People looking to rent apartments may be more receptive to discourses regarding Ukrainians' role in rising housing prices.⁴¹⁷ People who have little first-hand experience interacting with Ukrainian refugees are also more likely to believe generalisations and misinformation about the refugee community.⁴¹⁸ Messages that incorporate a 'personal touch' with which the audience can easily identify could resonate more with such groups.

Finally, people who are disillusioned with the current state of politics might be more likely to believe and pass on misleading and incendiary discourses, if these are critical of the current government. According to the NGO Czech Elves, which conducts long-term monitoring of the disinformation scene in the Czech Republic, the war in Ukraine confirmed the hypothesis that 'a part of society that is extremely dissatisfied with the state of public affairs and is therefore highly distrustful of the authorities, for whatever reasons, is vulnerable to almost any narrative associated with criticism of the current political arrangement'.⁴¹⁹

Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:

Nudges for people to look at different sources of information could be considered. The Redirect Method is a way to do this online: when an internet user enters keywords 'that indicate an interest in extremist propaganda', a pop-up ad directs them to more information on the topic, redirecting to content that counters the extremist messaging. This could be set up through a partnership with social media platforms or search engines such as Google.⁴²⁰

Another strategy is using social media platforms to promote counternarratives and help individuals identify misleading narratives in the news. These could include Google's (GOOGL.O) Jigsaw subsidiary's initiative, which runs ads on YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, and Meta to educate people on disinformation.⁴²¹ Helping seniors navigate the complex internet environment is the aim of several NGOs, such as Život 90 or Elpida.⁴²² Such initiatives should be supported and expanded.

Accuracy prompts are reminders that 'most people want to share accurate information' which can be used online; for example, as promoted posts on social media platforms. Such non-political and non-ideological prompts have been shown to reduce the spread of misinformation.⁴²³

To support more critical assessments of information spread by the media, another approach is to work with schools to organise activities for youth to promote critical thinking, debating skills, and understanding history from different perspectives.

⁴¹⁵ Hargrave, K., Homel, K., and Dražanová, L. (2023). [Public narratives and attitudes towards refugees and other migrants: Poland country profile](#)

⁴¹⁶ International Republican Institute (2023). [Hostile narrative brief: war in Ukraine, a year of aggression](#)

⁴¹⁷ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁴¹⁸ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁴¹⁹ HlíďacíPes.org (2023). [Kremelské propagandě se v Česku loni nedařilo. Směřovat na východ chce jen pět procent lidí](#), accessed 18 March 2023.

⁴²⁰ Moonshot (2019). [Redirect Method Canada Final Report](#), accessed 5 April 2023.

⁴²¹ Reuters (2022). [Google to roll out anti-disinformation campaign in some EU countries](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

⁴²² European Values, [Russian Disinformation Narratives – January 2023](#), accessed 20 March 2023.

⁴²³ Pennycook, G., McPhetres, J., Zhang, Y., Lu, J. G., & Rand, D.G. (2020). Fighting COVID-19 misinformation on social media: Experimental evidence for a scalable accuracy-nudge intervention. *Psychological Science*, 31, pages 770–780.

Events and activities to help Ukrainians and Slovaks meet and get to know one another could help Slovak communities better understand the refugee experience. More educational activities in form of books, events, and theatre performances to explain the diversity of Ukrainian refugee experiences should be promoted.

3.6. Risks

Incendiary and misleading discourses about refugees present risks on various levels. First, there are risks to Ukrainian refugees, particularly in relation to discrimination and increased challenges in accessing services, especially for the more vulnerable refugee groups, such as those on lower incomes, women with children, and people with disabilities. Discourses in relation to Ukrainians abusing or unduly straining the healthcare system or could impact their access if some working in the sector internalise such beliefs. As this discourse relates to a sector with which most (if not all) of the host society interacts, increasing strains on the system that are perceived as caused by the influx of refugees can create tensions between the host community and Ukrainians.

Micro-aggression and more overt aggression from host communities toward refugees may develop due to growing frustrations regarding the perceived unfairness of Ukrainians receiving state support. All discourses risk moving from the online and verbal space into tangible actions. This has been observed. Media reported that in Slovakia, during the period of free public travel for refugees, some bus drivers refused access to refugees without payment.⁴²⁴ As early as May 2022, Euractiv noted that a ‘Ukrainian family’s car in Slovakia was sprayed with the Russian Z symbol’.⁴²⁵

Highly skilled professionals may also be affected by negative discourses labelling them as economic migrants and accusing them of accessing benefits they are not entitled to. Ukrainian professionals may be discriminated against in the Polish labour market given that, before the war, Ukrainian workers—particularly in Poland and the Czech Republic—worked largely in low-skilled jobs.⁴²⁶ Should employers believe that Ukrainians do not want to work, this may lead to greater discrimination in the job market. A perception may also grow that Ukrainians are not competent to work in certain professions.

Should the economic situation in the five countries worsen, discourses about refugees driving prices up, deepening economic challenges, or taking locals’ jobs could become much more prevalent, fuelling resentment toward Ukrainians by the host community. Ukrainian refugees could be used as scapegoats for economic problems such as inflation, rising costs of living, housing shortages, and high costs.⁴²⁷

Such discourses present risks to community cohesion more broadly. There may be increased distrust and polarisation among the host and Ukrainian communities, which could in some cases manifest in instances of physical and verbal abuse, particularly around specific dates such as, in Poland, the anniversary of the Volhynia massacre.⁴²⁸ Tensions between polarised parts of host society can lead to protests, clashes between opposing politicians on news channels, and fiery, often aggressive comments and discussions on social media channels

424 Euractiv (2022). [Resentment for Ukrainian refugees grows in central and eastern Europe](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

425 Euractiv (2022). [Resentment for Ukrainian refugees grows in central and eastern Europe](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

426 Keryk, M.(2021), Praca, W. [Polsce: naruszenie praw pracowniczych imigrantów z Ukrainy zatrudnionych w budownictwie i sektorze usług](#)

427 Hargrave, K., Homel, K., and Dražanová, L. (2023). [Public narratives and attitudes towards refugees and other migrants: Poland country profile](#)

428 Tymińska, A. (2022). Granice nienawiści. Mowa nienawiści w kontekście kryzysów humanitarnych na granicy polskiej (2021/2022), Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka, page 73.

between groups with opposing values. The spread of negative narratives relating to Ukrainian refugees is likely to impede integration efforts by NGOs, foundations, and agencies. In addition, narratives such as ‘Ukrainians are threatening the Polish national identity’ can exacerbate sentiments of isolation Ukrainians in the host country, making them feel unwelcome.⁴²⁹

Finally, this could have an effect on politics. In Slovakia, due to high levels of belief in conspiracy theories and disinformation, as well as latent sympathy for Russia,⁴³⁰ these discourses risk gaining a hold on the country’s political situation. This is a potentially serious issue, taking into account the upcoming Slovak election in September 2023 that in turn can have an effect on the host community’s support for refugees. In 2022, 56 percent of Slovaks believed that NATO deliberately provoked Russia by surrounding it with its own military bases,⁴³¹ and 68 percent (particularly in households that do not believe Russia is responsible for the war) agreed that support to Ukrainian refugees should be decreased.⁴³² This highlights how existing political perceptions directly impact perceptions and opinions of Ukrainian refugees and provides a fertile ground for DMDS to be believed and spread.

Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:

Continue to monitor and analyse discourses around refugees to understand trends regarding their prevalence and acceptance by the public, as well as their impact on community cohesion.

⁴²⁹ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁴³⁰ GLOBSEC (2022). [GLOBSEC Trends 2022: CEE amid the war in Ukraine](#), accessed 11 April 2023.

⁴³¹ European Digital Media Observatory (2022). [Ukrainian refugees and disinformation: situation in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania](#), accessed 11 April 2023.

⁴³² GLOBSEC (2022). [New report shows that the V4 population supports Ukrainian refugees with some reservations](#), accessed 22 March 2023. There has been debate about methodological approaches to polling conducted by GLOBSEC and the [Slovak Academy of Science](#), such as the different scales given to participants to respond to questions (1–5 or 1–10) and how responses were collected (online and in-person), even when the question posed is the same. See GLOBSEC (2022). [New poll: Slovaks want Ukraine to win the war, Not Russia](#), accessed 22 March 2023.

Chapter 4: Potential Tensions

4.1. Overview

This section discusses the phenomena, policies, and characteristics that are (or could be in the future) sources of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities. It is important to stress that, at the time of writing, these had not necessarily harmed community cohesion. However, they could do so in the medium term—for example, should contextual factors change or should disinformation actors take intentional actions be taken to magnify the tensions. This chapter notes the specific types of risks related to each aspect of the refugee journey, how they have manifested to date, and signs pointing to the likelihood of the tensions becoming more significant.

While the overall risks are generally low, the risk ratings below are in relation to the risks to community cohesion in each country. This means that a tension noted as ‘relatively high risk’ might still be unlikely to materialise, but it is likely to be a higher risk than other tensions in that country. For example, tensions around the generally lower benefits received by TCNs not eligible for TP are unlikely to significantly threaten community cohesion given the very small number of such TCNs in the region; on the other hand, economic concerns are widely felt by the host and refugee populations.

TABLE 4. Potential sources of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities

Potential sources of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities	Poland	Slovakia	Czech Republic	Romania	Moldova
Legal status, welfare, and benefits					
Perception that Ukrainians abuse the benefits system (e.g., cross the border to just get the money)	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Unknown, unclear, or bureaucratic procedures to register for TP and services; (perceived) lack of information on the rights and obligations of people with TP status	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk

Infrastructure parallel to state institutions that is created specifically to support Ukrainian refugees	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk
Differences in welcome and support to refugee or migrant groups not from Ukraine	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk
Ukrainian men smuggled across borders and taking low-paid positions or working illegally	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk
Healthcare					
Additional pressures on the health system that is already experiencing challenges (including long waiting times)	Relatively high risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Differences in how services are used, resulting in a perceived abuse of the services (unnecessary ambulance calls, emergency room visits, doctors' visits)	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk
Ukrainians facing additional challenges, bureaucratic hurdles, in receiving healthcare	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Housing					
Additional pressures on and raising costs of housing (also in the context of a lack of social housing)	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
More support provided for Ukrainian refugees than other refugee groups, such as better housing options ⁴³³	Relatively low - medium risk	Relatively low - medium risk	Relatively low - medium risk	Relatively low - medium risk	Relatively low - medium risk
Overcrowding of refugees in apartments and state-run dormitories, creating pressures on surrounding communities	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk

⁴³³ Covered in more detail under the registration for benefits section.

Ukrainian refugees (Roma in particular) seen as undesirable tenants	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Uncertainty regarding length of stay for Ukrainian refugees in host country, leading to lack of commitment to long-term contracts	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Education					
Ukrainians adding to pressure on schools	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk
Ukrainians adding to pressure on kindergartens and available spaces for children	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk
Integration issues in schools and a lack of specialised programmes, resulting in negative social experiences (such as Ukrainian children experiencing bullying, especially in Russian schools)	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk
Uncertainty regarding length of stay for Ukrainian refugees in host country, leading to poor school attendance and high dropout rates	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk
Employment and income					
High inflation pressures on host and refugee communities	Relatively high risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively high risk
Rising inequalities	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Low Ukrainian engagement in the labour market and entrepreneurial activities	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively high risk
Tensions over distribution of scarce resources between disadvantaged local population and Ukrainians, including poverty among local population	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively high risk

Reduction in financial assistance to refugees could lead to more refugees experiencing poverty and the need for the state (or other organisations) to step in to support the vulnerable	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
High/rising unemployment strains host community and Ukrainian refugees and could lead to scapegoating of refugees	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk
Underemployment of refugees, including difficulties with recognition of qualifications	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Money received by NGOs is earmarked for Ukrainians and can't be used for local populations	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk
Ukrainians receiving higher benefits than host communities, including poor communication about the amount and sources of support	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Ukrainian refugees receiving more support (such as financial support and labour market access) than other refugee groups, including TCNs from Ukraine	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk
Uncertainty regarding length of stay for Ukrainian refugees in host country, leading to low retention of jobs among refugees	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Brain drain to multilaterals and international NGOs (INGOs) from the public sector	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk
Community, social, and political life					
Negative views of Ukrainians provoked by political discourses and parties	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively high risk
Lack of integration of Ukrainian refugees into host society	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk

Language barrier/not learning local language (lack of opportunity or difficulty of language)	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk
Differences between Ukrainians' experiences (including origins in Ukraine, pre- and post-war arrivals, level of integration in Poland, etc.)	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Cultural differences and lack of cultural understanding	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk
Lack of understanding of Ukrainian trauma and its consequences	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Protracted crisis in Transnistria	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk
Fear of insecurity and war, refugees seen as making the situation worse	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Tensions between Ukrainians and host community about who started, is responsible for, or should de-escalate the war and how, leading to tensions between host communities and refugees	Relatively low risk	Relatively high risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk
Historic grievances over the Volhynia massacre (Poland)	Relatively high risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk
Perception of poor or poorer treatment of, e.g., Romanian communities in Ukraine than Ukrainian communities in, e.g., Romania	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk
Locals' fatigue of supporting refugees	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Expectation of more gratitude from refugees	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk
Singular incidents that harm people (e.g., car crash) framing Ukrainians as a danger to host society	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk

Prior conceptions of Ukrainians as economic migrants (pre-February 2022)	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk
Stereotypes of Ukrainians as 'low-skilled'	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively low risk	Relatively low risk
Xenophobia and discrimination	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk	Relatively medium risk

4.2. Legal status, welfare, and benefits

Perceptions that Ukrainian refugees abuse the benefits system (e.g., cross the border just to get money):

In the research workshops in Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia, there were discussions about Ukrainian refugees potentially abusing the benefits system by living in Ukraine and claiming support in other countries. There have been border crossings between Ukraine and its neighbours in both directions. For example, by November 2022, 370,918 Ukrainian refugees and TCNs who had entered Moldova had crossed back into Ukraine.⁴³⁴ Many of the Ukrainians (46 percent) intended to return home for a short visit and then either return to Moldova or migrate onward.⁴³⁵ Ukrainians expressed that they made these trips to reunite with family members (60 percent) or collect their belongings (46 percent),⁴³⁶ but some Moldovans perceived them as efforts to claim benefits in Moldova while living in Ukraine. Under the changes introduced by the TP directive, remaining outside Moldova for more than 45 cumulative days between 1 March 2023 and 1 March 2024 would invalidate TP status, and the individual would lose the right to work and access key public services in Moldova.⁴³⁷ In several countries, including both Slovakia and the Czech Republic, claims of abuse of the benefit system related in part to Ukrainians not generally fitting conventional narratives or stereotypical images of destitute refugees. The perception that Ukrainians abused benefits also aligned with the narrative that the war is not active across all of Ukraine and that Ukrainians should either stay in those regions or fight for their country from Ukraine.⁴³⁸

Unknown, unclear, or bureaucratic procedures to register for TP and services; (perceived) lack of information on the rights and obligations of people with TP status:

In each of the five countries, a TP directive was initiated to ensure Ukrainians are appropriately registered. However, Ukrainian refugees noted a lack of clarity around TP and the service registration processes. Lack of clarity about the procedures is likely to be compounded as TP frameworks—which were generally intended to cover a period of one year—were extended and reregistration is required.⁴³⁹ In the case of Moldova, the TP process was introduced in March 2023, whereas previously refugees' stays were extended every three months and came under the country's state of emergency legislation. Workshop participants indicated that a lack of clarity around the procedures had raised concerns among Ukrainian communities.⁴⁴⁰ Specifically, this related to which documentation would be required to obtain TP status, the availability of in-person appointments at the General Inspectorate of Migration, and the ability to access legal assistance.

One workshop participant shared her account of visiting the information office to ask where she could access some required documentation to register for TP (specifically, an attestation of place of residence) that was not required previously. An employee didn't know and treated her dismissively, saying she needed to figure it out herself.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁴ International Organisation for Migration (2023). [Surveys with Ukrainian and third-country nationals crossing to Ukraine: Observed trends in 2022](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴³⁵ International Organisation for Migration (2023). [Surveys with Ukrainian and third-country nationals crossing to Ukraine: Observed trends in 2022](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴³⁶ International Organisation for Migration (2023). [Surveys with Ukrainian and third-country nationals crossing to Ukraine: Observed trends in 2022](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴³⁷ UNHCR (2023). [Temporary Protection in Moldova](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴³⁸ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁴³⁹ See, for example, information on the Czech Republic's registration process for the extension of TP: Bird&Bird (2022). [Lex Ukraine – Temporary protection 2023](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁴⁰ Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

⁴⁴¹ Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

Given language barriers and other factors such as location and access to technology, it is possible for Ukrainians to slip through the cracks and lose their legal residence status. In the Czech Republic, workshop participants mentioned that this could be a particular risk for youth ages 16 to 17 years who do not have legal guardians and might therefore not re-register process, thus becoming more vulnerable and more easily exploited.⁴⁴² Ukrainians who do not understand the bureaucratic processes may feel unwelcome, and host communities may perceive refugees as not conforming with required procedures.

Parallel infrastructure created to state institutions: The creation of parallel support systems for Moldovans and Ukrainians was discussed throughout the Moldova workshops, often inflected with the assumption that NGO- and multilateral-supported services for Ukrainians were superior⁴⁴³ (often with significant or even greater funding than some pre-existing government structures). For example, in 2022, over \$200 million USD was dedicated to support for Ukrainian refugees in Moldova.⁴⁴⁴ This equates to approximately \$1,868 USD for each refugee in Moldova in the medium to long term. This spending takes place in a country with limited financial resources; as an illustration, per capita expenditure on health for Moldovan citizens is only \$284 USD per year.⁴⁴⁵ Some humanitarian actors aim to work through the government system; for example, the World Food Programme aims to use Moldovan social protection systems to provide support.⁴⁴⁶ Working through national systems is important both to avoid creating parallel infrastructure and the potential perception that refugees are receiving more or better services and support. Although the concern was mentioned only in Moldova, efforts to streamline provision of aid and ensure that state structures are strengthened through the refugee response may also help to address underlying equity issues.

Differences in provision of welcome and support to refugee or migrant groups not from Ukraine: Ukrainian refugees benefit from a regime that differs from those faced by other groups. Specific protections were set up for Ukrainian refugees, and the process to access these protections was easier than those available to other groups. This was the case across all five Central and East European countries.⁴⁴⁷ For instance, in Poland and Slovakia, non-Ukrainian asylum seekers are restricted from the labour market for the first six months while the decisions on their applications are pending.⁴⁴⁸ Though this would concern a small group of people, workshop participants noted that it could create resentment among other refugee groups that did not receive such treatment (and experience associated tensions), as it can be perceived as unfair to them.⁴⁴⁹

Government or NGO funding that is allocated specifically, and for a long period, to support Ukrainians can be a source of tension: Participants in the Slovakia research workshop commented on a sudden—and visible—availability of funding to support Ukrainian refugees.⁴⁵⁰ Such support, while valuable, can create tensions, particularly if it is perceived as exclusively for the assistance of Ukrainians, without providing benefits or additional funding for Slovak citizens in need (such as single mothers, people facing homelessness, or people in poverty).⁴⁵¹ This tension was linked to the discourse that ‘refugees are better supported than the host

⁴⁴² Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023.

⁴⁴³ Chisinau Research Workshops 1–2 March 2023.

⁴⁴⁴ UNOCHA (2023). [Financial Tracking Service Moldova](#), accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴⁴⁵ World Bank (2023). [World Bank Open Data Set](#), accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴⁴⁶ World Food Organisation (2022). [Social Protection – Cash Assistance to Vulnerable Moldovans](#)

⁴⁴⁷ European Commission (2023). [Czech Republic: “Lex Ukraine” law package enters into force](#), accessed 5 April 2023; UNHCR (n.d.) [Asylum in the Czech Republic](#), accessed 5 April 2023; Zaru, D. (2022). *Europe’s unified welcome of Ukrainian refugees exposes ‘double standard’ for nonwhite asylum seekers: Experts*, accessed 5 April 2023.

⁴⁴⁸ UNHCR Poland (n.d.) [Accessing International Protection](#), accessed 2 April 2023.

⁴⁴⁹ Bratislava research workshop 7-8 March 2023.

⁴⁵⁰ Bratislava research workshop 7-8 March 2023.

⁴⁵¹ Bratislava research workshop 7-8 March 2023.

population, and that such support comes at the expense of funding for the host population.⁴⁵² Workshop participants added that, for Slovak citizens, achieving a good quality of life on benefits was challenging and that, should the economic situation in Slovakia continue to worsen, this narrative might gain more traction.⁴⁵³ This tension may be linked to the length of time government-funded support is offered. Opinion polling by the Institute for Sociology and the Institute for Research in Social Communication in March and December 2022 found that a growing number of people polled approved of only short-term support to Ukrainians, and that overall public support for people displaced from Ukraine to Slovakia had decreased slightly.⁴⁵⁴

Ukrainian men being smuggled across borders, taking low-paid positions, and working illegally: Under Ukraine’s martial law, men of fighting age were prevented from leaving, with some exceptions, such as on the basis of their dependents.⁴⁵⁵ In workshops in Chisinau, concern was raised that men may enter Moldova illegally to take low-paying positions. It is unclear whether this is the case, although the international media has reported on men being smuggled into Moldova to escape involvement in fighting.⁴⁵⁶ In light of Moldova’s rising unemployment and economic inequality, singular cases that seem to validate this discourse have the potential to stoke tensions.

4.3. Healthcare

Pressures on health systems that were already experiencing challenges, including long waits: Before the arrival of refugees from Ukraine, the healthcare systems in all five countries were experiencing challenges such as staff shortages⁴⁵⁷ and long waiting times.⁴⁵⁸ In many of the research countries, spending on healthcare is also below the OECD average, as illustrated by the table below.

TABLE 5. Healthcare statistics in the region

	Czech Republic	Poland	Romania	Moldova	Slovakia	OECD/EU average
% GDP spent on healthcare (2020)	9.2% ⁴⁵⁹	6.5% ⁴⁶⁰	6.3% ⁴⁶¹	6.38% ⁴⁶²	7.2% ⁴⁶³	8.1% ⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁵² Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁴⁵³ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁴⁵⁴ European Commission (2023). [Slovakia: slight decrease in support for those displaced from Ukraine](#)

⁴⁵⁵ Tonjdo, L. (2022). *The Guardian*. [Ukraine urged to take 'humane' approach as men try to flee war](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁵⁶ Gentlemen, J., and Pronczuk, M. (2022). *The New York Times*. [Ukraine's Draft dodgers face quilt, shame, and reproach](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁵⁷ OECD (2020). [Health at a Glance: Europe 2020](#), accessed 27 March 2023; *The Economist* (2019). [Romania's health-care system, the EU's worst, struggles to reform](#); European Commission (2019). [Internships for doctors from third countries to address shortage of health professionals in Slovakia](#)

⁴⁵⁸ Prusaczyk, A., Bogdan, M., Vinker, S., Gujski, M., Żuk, P., Kowalska-Bobko, I., Karczmarz, S., Oberska, J., and Lewtak, K. Health (2023). [Care Organization in Poland in Light of the Refugee Crisis Related to the Military Conflict in Ukraine](#). *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*; OECD (2017). [State of Health in the EU – Slovak Republic – country health profile 2017](#)

⁴⁵⁹ Eurostat (2022). [Healthcare expenditure statistics](#), accessed 14 April 2023.

⁴⁶⁰ Eurostat (2022). [Healthcare expenditure statistics](#), accessed 14 April 2023.

⁴⁶¹ Eurostat (2022). [Healthcare expenditure statistics](#), accessed 14 April 2023.

⁴⁶² 2019 data; The World Bank (2022). [Current health expenditure \(% of GDP\) – Moldova](#), accessed 14 April 2023.

⁴⁶³ Eurostat (2022). [Healthcare expenditure statistics](#), accessed 14 April 2023.

⁴⁶⁴ Eurostat (2022) [Government Expenditure on Health](#), accessed 17 April 2023.

Workshop participants said that the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia exacerbates these pre-existing issues and could be perceived as an additional burden on an already over-burdened system.⁴⁶⁵ The arrival of Ukrainians increased the number of people seeking healthcare and demand for specific issues (e.g., war-related injuries and psychosocial issues) that require scarce specialist support that is already stretched in many countries.⁴⁶⁶ The additional complexities of registering and treating Ukrainian patients (such as translation, verifying foreign documentation, and explaining a new healthcare system) were mentioned as increasing pressure in Romania.⁴⁶⁷ In the early stages of the war, Moldova's health minister stated that the refugee crisis had placed the country's health system under 'very big pressure',⁴⁶⁸ and Moldova's healthcare system has been supported by international donors and multilateral organisations throughout 2022. Host communities also feel the pressure: a study conducted by the Union of Polish Metropolises in April and May 2022 found that 68 percent of respondents were concerned about the negative impact that Ukrainian refugees might have on the healthcare system in Poland.⁴⁶⁹ Ukrainian communities may become scapegoats for systemic issues, and the pressure placed on the healthcare system has the potential to contribute to tensions. Ukrainians can also be perceived as receiving more support than local populations:

A participant in the Chisinau workshop raised concerns that, whilst systemic issues in healthcare impact Ukrainian refugees, they also receive additional support from international organisations whereas Moldovans are perceived as ineligible for such additional support.⁴⁷⁰

Differences in how services are used, resulting in perceived abuse: Workshop participants in all countries discussed norms around the health-seeking behaviours of Ukrainians compared to host country populations. Participants believed that Ukrainians call doctors more frequently, ask for ambulance services more readily, and request more support from specialists.⁴⁷¹ This could be due in part to differences in how the system works in Ukraine and host countries, as well as challenges in accessing healthcare through usual means (e.g., due to restrictions on the type of care that refugees' insurance might cover in Slovakia). However, local populations may also visit an emergency room when other services are difficult to obtain. For example, according to the OECD, in 2017, the Slovak Republic had the highest proportion of patients in Europe (74 percent) reporting that they had visited an emergency department because no appropriate primary healthcare was available to them.⁴⁷² Some experts also point out that Ukrainian refugees use health systems differently in part because of their profile—the majority of Ukrainian refugees are female and/or children and so are likely to seek different health care services (for example, maternal and child health services, vaccinations, and/or reproductive health services) compared to the host country population. Furthermore, a population that has fled war will require more mental health support services.⁴⁷³

Workshop participants mentioned that the complexity of the Romanian healthcare system and lack of understanding among Ukrainian refugees meant that Ukrainians were

⁴⁶⁵ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁴⁶⁶ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁴⁶⁷ Bucharest focus group workshop 15–6 February 2023.

⁴⁶⁸ Reuters (2022). [Refugee crisis strains Moldova's healthcare system, minister says](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁶⁹ Union of Polish Metropolises (2022). [Neighbourly help. Residents of the 12 Largest Polish Cities on Helping Refugees from Ukraine](#), accessed 26 March 2023.

⁴⁷⁰ Chisinau research workshop 2 March 2023.

⁴⁷¹ Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023; Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023; Bucharest focus group workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁴⁷² OECD (2017). [State of Health in the EU – Slovak Republic – country health profile 2017](#)

⁴⁷³ Dlouhý, M., Barták, M., Dobiášová, K., Hnilicová, H., Janečková, H., Petráková, A., Agyemang, C., Vázquez, M.-L., Oxford Academic (2022). [Health and health care for refugees and migrants](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

more likely to use or be directed to the wrong referral process.⁴⁷⁴ One participant cited examples of Ukrainian refugees who did not need to go through the same referral steps as Romanians—in effect, skipping a step and accessing specialist treatment more quickly. In the context of long waiting lines for healthcare in Romania, the participant noted that some people viewed this as unfair treatment for Romanians who ‘paid into the system, so why are they waiting?’⁴⁷⁵

In Romania and Poland, workshop participants noted that the lack of interpretation services increases the possibility of misinterpretation⁴⁷⁶ and widens differences in health seeking behaviour.⁴⁷⁷ Participants in Romania noted the lack of incentives for Romanian doctors to register Ukrainian patients, because a doctor receives a set fee per consultation regardless of the length of appointment (and a bilingual or translated consultation with a Ukrainian may take up to twice as long as a consultation with a Romanian).^{478,479} Friction can arise between host community doctors due to the additional work of communicating with patients who do not speak the local language, particularly as they are already very stretched.

Ukrainians face additional challenges and bureaucratic hurdles in receiving healthcare: Participants in Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia reported that registration requirements contributed to bureaucratic barriers for Ukrainians seeking healthcare.⁴⁸⁰ In Moldova, Ukrainians reported being unable to make appointments using the online system, not understanding the mechanisms of a new healthcare system, and not finding information on which services require additional insurance and which are covered.⁴⁸¹ In Romania, participants commented on the complexity of the healthcare system and shared examples of small, bureaucratic obstacles to equitable healthcare delivery.⁴⁸² Several participants discussed specific challenges around registering with a doctor, reporting that Ukrainian identification numbers differed from Romanian ones in format and therefore could not be entered into the public healthcare information technology (IT) systems for doctors to receive payment. This in turn could cause some doctors to refuse to treat Ukrainian patients. In Slovakia, one of the primary challenges experienced by Ukrainians was lack of information about where to go and what services were available.⁴⁸³ Workshop participants agreed that Ukrainians can have limited knowledge of the system.⁴⁸⁴ A UNHCR/REACH assessment’s sample polling found that 23 percent of Ukrainians residents in collective centres and 19 percent of Ukrainian residents in other accommodation reported refusal by service providers as a reason for failing to access healthcare.⁴⁸⁵ Other potential barriers to accessing healthcare could include having the incorrect insurance provision or evidence, or using the incorrect referral route.⁴⁸⁶ Challenges to accessing healthcare can lead to discontent on the part of Ukrainians, which can be perceived as ingratitude by the host population and contribute to tensions.

⁴⁷⁴ Bucharest focus group workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

⁴⁷⁵ Bucharest focus group workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

⁴⁷⁶ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023; Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁴⁷⁷ Prusaczyk, A., Bogdan, M., Vinker, S., Gujski, M., Żuk, P., Kowalska-Bobko, I., Karczmarz, S., Oberska, J., and Lewtak, K. Health (2023). [Care Organization in Poland in Light of the Refugee Crisis Related to the Military Conflict in Ukraine](#), *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

⁴⁷⁸ Help to Help Ukraine (2023). [Access to healthcare for Ukrainian refugees in Romania](#)

⁴⁷⁹ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁴⁸⁰ Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

⁴⁸¹ Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

⁴⁸² Bucharest focus groups workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

⁴⁸³ UNHCR (2022). [Slovakia: Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment](#)

⁴⁸⁴ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁴⁸⁵ UNHCR (2022). [Slovakia: Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment](#)

⁴⁸⁶ One workshop participant shared that her husband needed an excessive number of medical appointments to continue his cancer treatment because the quality of his documentation was deemed insufficient. Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

4.4. Housing

Pressures on housing and the rising cost of housing; pressures on social housing: This study found that housing prices have increased in all five countries in the recent past, and the stock of social and affordable housing is systemically low. A 2022 report from Investigate Europe found that housing prices in all European Union countries (except Cyprus, Italy, and Spain) had risen since 2010 at rates higher than the average rate of growth or inflation.⁴⁸⁷ In Moldova, rent prices climbed in 2022 by as much as 40 percent.⁴⁸⁸ The arrival of Ukrainian refugees poses two challenges in this context: first, Ukrainian refugees place additional demand on tight markets; second, social and affordable housing is sometimes allocated to refugees, at times despite a lack of sufficient housing for the host populations. Perceptions that the most vulnerable in Moldova do not receive adequate housing support from the government could catalyse increased tensions if out-of-context representations of working-age Ukrainians receiving housing support are pitted against the plight of elderly, poor Moldovans.⁴⁸⁹ In addition, the arrival of refugees has exacerbated regional differences in some contexts, such as the Czech Republic, where refugees have been more likely to settle in cities than in rural areas where housing challenges were already more acute.⁴⁹⁰ In these challenging circumstances, it is easy for tensions to arise, as increasing costs can threaten the stability of lower income locals' living situation and way of life, particularly in countries such as Moldova where rent increases and inflation have been especially high.

Overcrowding of refugees in apartments and state-run dormitories, creating pressures on surrounding communities: Issues associated with overcrowding generally affect both host communities and refugee populations, particularly in Poland and Romania,⁴⁹¹ and the stock of social housing in central and eastern European countries is low. For refugees in particular, overcrowding has been recorded in collective centres. Workshop participants commented that, if the refugees' economic situation worsens, this could lead to more significant overcrowding of collective centres. The humanitarian centre in Gabčíkovo,⁴⁹² Slovakia, was cited as an example of where the number of refugees (reportedly 900)⁴⁹³ is very high in comparison to the local population⁴⁹⁴ of approximately 5,250⁴⁹⁵ to 5,550.⁴⁹⁶ Overcrowding can affect specific marginalised groups. For example, in Moldova, concerns around overcrowding have been raised about the RACs used to house Roma refugees; Oxfam's October 2022 report highlighted crowding and lack of privacy as humanitarian priorities, giving the case of one RAC where 10 to 16 people were staying in one dormitory-sized room.⁴⁹⁷ Such crowded collective sites can contribute to the emergence of localised tensions, including concerns about burdening local services and the impact of concentrated groups of refugees seeking support in a single area.⁴⁹⁸ In addition, workshop

⁴⁸⁷ Kálmán, A., Investigate Europe (2022). [Europe strains under rising prices as renters bear brunt of housing crisis](#)

⁴⁸⁸ Strajescu, C. (2022). [On the rental market in Chisinau, prices have exploded](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁸⁹ Ukrainians have received cash support of up to 2,200 MDL per person per month, which is intended to support housing alongside other needs, as well as access to RACs and private apartments in the short term through a partnership between IOM and Airbnb. UNHCR (2023) [Cash assistance for refugees in Moldova](#), accessed 28 March 2023; IOM (2022) [IOM AND AIRBNB: PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION IN MOLDOVA](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁹⁰ OECD iLibrary (2021). [Overview of housing affordability in cities in the Czech Republic](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁹¹ According to data from the Statistical office of the European Union, in 2020, almost 40 percent of the Polish population lived in overcrowded dwellings, almost double the EU average rate. Eurostat (2022). [Living conditions in Europe – Housing](#), accessed 28 March 2023; on social housing in Romania, see Turcu, C. (2017). [Mind the Poorest: Social Housing Provision in Post-Crisis Romania](#).

⁴⁹² Reliefweb (2023). [Living in the moment: Ukrainians find hope in Slovakia](#)

⁴⁹³ Reliefweb (2023). [Living in the moment: Ukrainians find hope in Slovakia](#)

⁴⁹⁴ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁴⁹⁵ City Population (2022). [Gabčíkovo](#), accessed 10 April 2023.

⁴⁹⁶ City Facts (2022). [Gabčíkovo, Trnava Region, Slovakia](#), accessed 10 April 2023.

⁴⁹⁷ Oxfam (2022). [Seeking Safety: Roma Refugees in Moldova](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁹⁸ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

participants expressed concerns about the impact of long-term overcrowding on both refugees and host communities, citing fatigue with the situation and lack of long-term solutions.

‘We’ve been talking about this for one year, but nothing changes. We still have dormitories with three families living in one room.’⁴⁹⁹

– *Workshop participant discussing refugee accommodation*

Ukrainian refugees, and Roma in particular, are seen as undesirable tenants: Likely in part due to the tightness of the housing market, landlords may be selective regarding the tenants they accept. Ukrainian refugees can be considered undesirable tenants, with one participant in the Poland workshop quoting from an advertisement for accommodation for ‘Poles only’.⁵⁰⁰

Workshop participants reported instances of advertisements that explicitly excluded Ukrainians, or being told they could not view properties because they were Ukrainian.⁵⁰¹

Specific groups within the refugee community—notably Roma—experience particular discrimination in the housing market⁵⁰² (and have since before February 2022).⁵⁰³ Mothers with children are especially at risk: according to workshop participants, landlords are likely to discriminate against them due in part to tighter restrictions around eviction of tenants that include mothers and children. Landlords also were noted to have the perception that children will damage the property.⁵⁰⁴ Workshop participants noted that high demand for housing causes some landlords to engage in exploitative practices, such as insisting on informal rent agreements, and significantly increasing rents and even evictions (particularly when no official contract is signed).⁵⁰⁵ Poor housing conditions not only affect refugees’ quality of life, but they could also reinforce negative stereotypes about refugees.

Uncertainty regarding Ukrainian refugees’ length of stay in the host country, leading to lack of commitment to contracts: Ukrainians may be at a structural disadvantage in the housing market. Their return intentions are complex; regional surveys indicate that the majority of refugees say they plan to return to Ukraine once the war ends.⁵⁰⁶ This uncertainty translates to unwillingness to sign long-term rental contracts with landlords. In a tight housing market, unwillingness to commit to longer periods can disadvantage Ukrainian tenants and could breed resentment similar to that discussed above in relation to discrimination in the housing market. Participants in the Moldova workshops reported a perception that landlords did not want to rent to Ukrainians,

⁴⁹⁹ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁵⁰⁰ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁵⁰¹ Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

⁵⁰² Turcu, C. (2017). *Mind the Poorest: Social Housing Provision in Post-Crisis Romania*; Ryšavý, Z. Romea.cz (2022). [Czech research finds one-third of Romani refugees from Ukraine have experienced discrimination here, most children are not in education, dual citizenship has not been “abused” by them](#), accessed 5 April 2023; Popenko, V. (2022). European Roma Rights Centre. [Segregation and sub-standard living conditions: Romani families stuck in limbo in Moldova](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵⁰³ OHCHR (2022). [Experts of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Commend Slovakia on Improving Census Methodologies. Ask about Low School Enrolment Rates for Roma Children and Housing Segregation of the Roma Community](#); Strickland, P. (2017). [Life in Slovakia’s Roma slums: poverty and segregation](#), Al Jazeera; Amnesty International (2022). [Slovakia 2022](#)

⁵⁰⁴ Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023.

⁵⁰⁵ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁵⁰⁶ Mykhailyshyna, D. (2023). [Ukrainian Refugees: Who are they, where did they come from and how to return them?](#) accessed 28 March 2023; UNHCR (2022). [Lives on Hold: Intentions and Perspectives of Refugees from Ukraine #2 \(September 2022\)](#), accessed 25 March 2023.

regarding refugees as a risky investment, since it is unclear how long they will stay in the country.⁵⁰⁷ This has also been noted in the press; for example, Euronews quoted Warsaw estate agent Michał Możarowski as saying ‘Landlords prefer a year-long lease, and no one knows how long the war will continue. This means Ukrainians are not the preferred tenants’.⁵⁰⁸

‘No one thought the war would last this long’, was a repeated phrase during the workshops in Chisinau.⁵⁰⁹ This was reflected in Ukrainians’ accounts of interactions with landlords who were unwilling to sign short-term contracts or asked for prohibitively high deposits (equivalent to three months’ rent—or more) before entering into an agreement.⁵¹⁰

This could lead to increased housing vulnerability and a potential need to live in overcrowded conditions that could contribute to tensions between Ukrainians and those living in the vicinity.

4.5. Education

Pressure on schools: This is generally a medium risk in countries where larger numbers of Ukrainian children attend local schools, such as the Czech Republic and Poland. The risk is low where fewer Ukrainian children attend local schools, such as Slovakia, where about 9,000 children were enrolled in preschool and primary and secondary schools;⁵¹¹ Romania, where fewer than 1,000 Ukrainian children were fully enrolled;⁵¹² and Moldova, where 1,665 were enrolled.⁵¹³ However, as time goes on, these numbers are likely to rise—and have the potential to disproportionately affect areas where refugee populations are higher.⁵¹⁴ Ukrainian students can increase overall class sizes and pose challenges associated with lack of knowledge of the language. This might be particularly felt in countries where per-pupil spending is relatively low, as demonstrated in the table below.

TABLE 6. Education investment in the region

Characteristic	Czech Republic	Poland	Romania	Moldova	Slovakia	OECD/EU average
% of GDP spent on education (2020)	5.1% ⁵¹⁵	5.2% ⁵¹⁶	3.7% ⁵¹⁷	6.4% ⁵¹⁸	4.6% ⁵¹⁹	4.8% ⁵²⁰

⁵⁰⁷ Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

⁵⁰⁸ Jackson, J. (2022). [Refugees, rates and record inflation: How Poland's housing market is under unprecedented pressure](#), Euronews, accessed 25 March 2023.

⁵⁰⁹ Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

⁵¹⁰ Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

⁵¹¹ UNICEF (2022). [Europe and Central Asia Region \(ECAR\) Ukraine Refugee Response in Neighboring Countries Humanitarian Situation Report No. 18 – 2022](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵¹² As of January 2023; Government of Romania (2023). [Romania: Report on the national response to those displaced from Ukraine](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵¹³ Moldpres (2023). [Over 1,600 Ukrainian children study in schools in Moldova](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵¹⁴ UNHCR (2023). [Refugee Response Plan: Slovakia Chapter, page 12](#), accessed 12 April 2023.

⁵¹⁵ The World Bank (2022). [Government expenditure on education, total \(% of GDP\)](#), accessed 14 April 2023.

⁵¹⁶ The World Bank (2022). [Government expenditure on education, total \(% of GDP\)](#), accessed 14 April 2023.

⁵¹⁷ The World Bank (2022). [Government expenditure on education, total \(% of GDP\)](#), accessed 14 April 2023.

⁵¹⁸ The World Bank (2022). [Government expenditure on education, total \(% of GDP\)](#), accessed 14 April 2023.

⁵¹⁹ The World Bank (2022). [Government expenditure on education, total \(% of GDP\)](#), accessed 14 April 2023.

⁵²⁰ Eurostat (2023). [Government expenditure on education](#), accessed 17 April 2023.

Ukrainians in smaller towns and rural areas also might encounter challenges due to lack of experience amongst teachers and schools in integrating foreign pupils.⁵²¹ Ukrainian children also face mental and psychological trauma due to their recent experiences; for teachers who are already poorly paid and face practical challenges,⁵²² it can be difficult to cope with this additional burden.⁵²³ Specific pressures exist with regard to transitioning older students into the education system in some countries, such as the Czech Republic, where high school students need to pass exams to register for secondary school. In part due to these issues, a significant proportion of Ukrainian youth enrol in online education rather than host countries' national school systems. Workshop participants also raised the challenges associated with language barriers and the risk that teachers spending additional time working with students who do not speak the local language well could be perceived as a decline in the quality of education provided to the class.⁵²⁴

Pressure on kindergartens: The inclusion of refugee children in the primary school system was raised as a challenge for both host populations⁵²⁵ and Ukrainian refugees. The arrival of Ukrainians places additional demand on a system that is already stretched in many areas; it can affect both children's development⁵²⁶ and parents' engagement in the labour market.⁵²⁷ One EU research piece quoted a participant: 'It is impossible to find a place in a kindergarten (it is a vicious circle, if a mother arrived alone with a child, she cannot go to work but must stay at home with the child), it is difficult with free places in schools'.⁵²⁸ Workshop participants suggested that problems are more acute in rural areas.⁵²⁹ However, participants across all countries mentioned a shortage of kindergarten spaces; this could lead to the perception that Ukrainian refugees are taking the places of citizens.⁵³⁰ One key informant in Poland also shared that local authority representatives attribute Ukrainian children's low attendance in nurseries and kindergartens to distrust of state childcare facilities and a custom of sending children to school at a later age.

Integration issues in schools: Ukrainians entering national school systems face a number of challenges to integration. The first concerns their own experiences of trauma; the UNHCR reported that many Ukrainian children arriving in host countries are in need of mental health and psychosocial support.⁵³¹ Participants in the research workshop talked about the psychological burden on children entering new schools or studying full-time online while dealing with the trauma of displacement, and how this limits opportunities for integration and relationship building. One participant said that teenagers are particularly overburdened between pursuing education, trying to support parents and families emotionally, and seeking friendships and social bonds in a new environment.⁵³² Schools across the region are often unable to provide specialised programmes and specific mental health and psychosocial support. If Ukrainian children's mental health concerns are not supported, this could lead to the perception that they are disruptive in class.⁵³³ The second challenge concerns bullying.⁵³⁴ In

⁵²¹ Mikulska, A. (2022). "[Musimy sobie poradzić. Jak szkoły w małych miejscowościach przyjmują uczniów z Ukrainy](#)", accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵²² OECD (2022). [Slovakia Country Profile](#)

⁵²³ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁵²⁴ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023; Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁵²⁵ In 2022, the percentage of Slovak children in early childhood education was among the lowest among OECD countries. OECD (2022). [Slovakia Country Profile](#)

⁵²⁶ UNICEF (2021). [The formative years: UNICEF's work on measuring ECD](#)

⁵²⁷ UNHCR (2023). [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter](#).

⁵²⁸ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). [Fleeing Ukraine: Displaced People's Experiences in The EU](#), accessed 5 April 2023.

⁵²⁹ Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023.

⁵³⁰ Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023.

⁵³¹ UNHCR (2023). [Refugee Response Plan: Slovakia Chapter](#)

⁵³² Bucharest focus groups workshop 15-16 February 2023.

⁵³³ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁵³⁴ Chisinau research workshop 1–2 March 2023; Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

workshops in Chisinau, participants raised concerns that Ukrainian children integrated into the Russian language stream of Moldovan education were subject to bullying and intimidation from classmates.⁵³⁵

In Moldova, Ukrainians shared concerns that their children felt that they could not express pride in where they were from and were concerned that the content taught also emphasised Russia's culture and history and, in some cases, pro-Russian political views.⁵³⁶

Workshop participants suggested that teachers and school administrations do not sufficiently address bullying.⁵³⁷ UNHCR have reported similar concerns and have urged Moldova's government to support the sensitisation of teachers to bullying concerns arising from refugees' experiences.⁵³⁸ In sum, bullying could drive young people to absenteeism or drive parents to withdraw their children from schools. The existence of Ukrainian online schools somewhat mitigates this risk, although it does present other risks such as potential loneliness and social isolation.⁵³⁹ Third, a significant proportion of Ukrainian students study online due to differences between the Ukrainian and local education systems.⁵⁴⁰ This can cause integration issues when Ukrainian and host country students do not meet and Ukrainians do not learn about the host country language and culture or build friendships with local children. In the Czech Republic, workshop participants also noted that Ukrainian children who follow the Ukrainian online curriculum in addition to host country curriculum might become exhausted and struggle to make time for new friendships where there is a language barrier.⁵⁴¹

Uncertainty regarding the length of stay for Ukrainian refugees in the host country, leading to poor school attendance and high drop-out rates: Return intentions among Ukrainians living in host countries are uncertain, and this has consequences for decisions regarding school attendance. Workshop participants said the comparatively low numbers of students enrolled in host country public schools, compared to online Ukrainian schools, was in part a reflection of this uncertainty and refugees' hopes to return to Ukraine in the short or medium term.⁵⁴² In Poland, uncertainty around length of stay was a reason for 25 percent of respondents to the UNHCR/REACH survey not to enrol children in local schools.⁵⁴³ In Moldova, prior to the TP directive, there was little clarity about the security of refugees' status. Other reasons for not registering Ukrainian children in local educational systems include language barriers, challenging bureaucratic processes, differences in curricula,⁵⁴⁴ and concerns about the recognition of Romanian or Moldovan education qualifications in Ukraine.⁵⁴⁵ Lack of attendance at in-person schools with host country children could lead to the perception that Ukrainian refugees do not want to integrate, and also presents a missed opportunity for social interaction and building friendships and trust between communities.

Workshop participants pointed to the expectation that refugees are in Poland only temporarily as a reason for lack of enrolment at Polish schools. Enrolment would require a significant investment on the part of the children—learning Polish, adapting to a new

⁵³⁵ Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

⁵³⁶ Chisinau Research Workshops 1–2 March 2023.

⁵³⁷ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁵³⁸ UNHCR (2023). [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵³⁹ European Union (2022). [Slovakia: Ukrainian children at risk of unsuccessful integration into educational system](#)

⁵⁴⁰ See for example: UNHCR (2023). [Refugee Response Plan: Slovakia Chapter](#)

⁵⁴¹ Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023.

⁵⁴² Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023; Chisinau research workshop 1–2 March 2023.

⁵⁴³ UNHCR, REACH (2023). [Poland: Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment 2022](#), accessed 24 March 2023.

⁵⁴⁴ UNHCR (2023). [Moldova 2022: Participatory Assessment](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵⁴⁵ Edupedu (2023). [Very few Ukrainian children go to Romanian schools](#); Chisinau workshops 1–2 March 2023.

curriculum, and, in the meantime, potentially falling behind in subject matter knowledge.⁵⁴⁶

4.6. Employment and income

High inflation pressures on host and refugee communities: 2022 saw not only an inflow of Ukrainian refugees but also a significant increase in inflation rates in all the countries included in this study, as noted in the table below.

TABLE 7. Inflation statistics in the region

Inflation	Czech Republic	Poland	Romania	Moldova	Slovakia
Harmonised index of consumer prices in January 2023 ⁵⁴⁷	19.1%	15.9%	13.4%	27.3% ⁵⁴⁸	15.1%

Moldova was particularly affected, with year-on-year inflation reaching 30.24 percent in December 2022 and remaining high into 2023 at 27.31 percent in January.⁵⁴⁹ Concurrently, reduced Russian gas exports catalysed a spike in energy prices, and consumers faced energy price increases of up to 200 percent in 2022.⁵⁵⁰ An October 2022 EU poll showed that an average of 93 percent of respondents across the EU, and 95 percent of Slovak respondents, were worried about rising costs of living, including increasing food and energy prices.⁵⁵¹ In another study, over 70 percent of Polish citizens in major cities thought hosting Ukrainians would have a negative impact on state finances.⁵⁵²

Ukrainian refugees have the potential to improve the economic situation in host countries,⁵⁵³ but the economic benefits that Ukrainians could bring might: (1) be longer-term; (2) not be very visible to the population as a whole at this stage, particularly in the context of rapid and noticeable price increases in basic goods; and (3) be concentrated among the more affluent, such as business owners. This in turn might lead to tensions between Ukrainian refugees and those who stand to lose out from the evolving economic situation.

The impact of Russia's invasion on European energy prices is also widely reported in the Slovak media, linking the energy crisis to ongoing inflation and economic pressures in Slovakia.⁵⁵⁴ As inflation rises, there is a risk that

⁵⁴⁶ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁵⁴⁷ Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Romania: EU countries: Statista (2023). [Harmonized index of consumer prices \(HICP\) inflation rate of the European Union in January 2023, by country](#), accessed 30 March 2023. Moldova: Reuters (2023). [Moldova's y/y consumer price inflation slows to 27.31% in January](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵⁴⁸ Moldova does not calculate inflation according to EU HCIP, so the figure given is not directly comparable.

⁵⁴⁹ Reuters (2023). [Moldova's y/y consumer price inflation slows to 27.31% in January](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵⁵⁰ St. Leger, A. (2022). Atlantic Council. [Russia's Ukraine invasion is fueling an energy crisis in neighboring Moldova](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵⁵¹ European Commission (2023). [EP Autumn 2022 Survey: Parlemeter](#), accessed 10 April 2023.

⁵⁵² Hargrave, K., Homel, K., and Dražanová, L. (2023). [Public narratives and attitudes towards refugees and other migrants: Poland country profile](#), Figure 12, accessed 27 March 2023.

⁵⁵³ Ciobanu, C. (2023). [A YEAR OF WAR IN UKRAINE: REFUGEES PROVE THEIR VALUE IN POLAND AND ELSEWHERE](#), accessed 28 March 2023; Tucha, O., Spivak, I., Bondarenko, O., and Pogarska, O., National Bank of Ukraine (2022). [Despite current challenges, the impact of forced migration from Ukraine on the economies of recipient countries in the long run will be positive, according to an NBU Staff Discussion Note](#), accessed 28 March 2023; Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic (2022). [Macroeconomic Forecast of the Czech Republic](#), accessed 5 April 2023.

⁵⁵⁴ The Slovakia Spectator (2022). [Energy crisis will force Slovak economy into recession in 2023](#)

frustrations about the economy will be directed at Ukrainian refugees; this can be exacerbated by perceptions that Ukrainian refugees appear well-off (through material items such as expensive cars, jewellery, and clothes).⁵⁵⁵ This perception of affluence can attract resentment, especially when inflation and the cost of living crisis worsens; Ukrainians are at risk of becoming scapegoated for the situation.⁵⁵⁶ Workshop participants also noted that the upcoming 2023 elections in Slovakia could be a trigger point for some of these tensions, particularly because early elections were called following criticism of the government's handling of inflation and rising energy costs.⁵⁵⁷ This is an important tension to monitor.

Rising inequalities: Inequality is strong in some host countries that accept Ukrainian refugees; for instance, in 2015, the European Parliament reported that Romania had the worst income inequality within the EU.⁵⁵⁸ In Slovakia, the October 2022 EU poll showed that 84 percent of Slovak respondents worried about poverty and social exclusion.⁵⁵⁹ Price increases generally have a disproportionate effect on the poorest populations; as a result, some pockets of resentment have been noted over the distribution of government support amongst refugees and worse-off segments of local populations.⁵⁶⁰ In Romania, research workshop participants disputed how much the narrative that 'poor Romanians should be helped before Ukrainians' resonated. However, they noted that poverty levels, income inequality, and a difficult macroeconomic climate⁵⁶¹ meant that rising inequality remained a tension that risked undermining community cohesion efforts.⁵⁶² Some support to Ukrainians also has the potential to increase inequalities among local populations. For example, the Slovak government's allowance to individual citizens who host Ukrainian refugees or offer accommodation free of charge⁵⁶³ was raised in September 2022 to a maximum of 710 EUR to 1,790 EUR per month for properties with one to four rooms.⁵⁶⁴ Such generous support to landlords has the potential to further increase inequalities in a context where lower-income Slovaks have to absorb rent rises. Workshop participants in Romania raised that the 50/20 scheme was profitable for wealthy Romanian landlords (particularly those with multiple properties) who were incentivised to house Ukrainian families on a short-term basis instead of those seeking to rent longer-term, particularly on lower incomes.⁵⁶⁵

'While (relatively) wealthy Romanians benefited from 50/20 by receiving government subsidies and Ukrainians benefited from 50/20 by receiving free accommodation, the average low-middle income Romanian did not benefit and may in fact have been worse off due to rising rental market costs'.

– A research workshop participant⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁵⁵ As discussed in Section 3.3.

⁵⁵⁶ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023; Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁵⁵⁷ Reuters (2023). [Slovakia's former coalition heads agree to early parliamentary elections](#)

⁵⁵⁸ European Parliament (2018). [Romania: the country with the highest income inequality in the European Union](#)

⁵⁵⁹ European Commission (2023). [EP Autumn 2022 Survey: Parlemeter](#), accessed 10 April 2023.

⁵⁶⁰ GLOBSEC (2023). [Despite challenges, V4 societies generally remain supportive of Ukrainian refugees, with more negative attitudes apparent in Slovakia](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Chisinau research workshop 1–2 March 2023.

⁵⁶¹ UNHCR (2023). [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter](#)

⁵⁶² Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁵⁶³ Ukraine Slovakia (2022). [Accommodation](#), accessed 23 March 2023.

⁵⁶⁴ European Commission (2022). [Slovakia: accommodation allowance for refugees from Ukraine to increase](#)

⁵⁶⁵ Bucharest focus group workshop, 15–16 February 2023; Balkan Insight (2023). [Romanians Hosting Ukrainian Refugees Complain of Delay in Payments](#)

⁵⁶⁶ Bucharest focus group workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

Low Ukrainian engagement in the labour market and entrepreneurial activities: Broadly speaking, workshop participants in the country workshops, apart from Poland, stated that that host communities perceived Ukrainian refugees as not wanting to work or engage in the labour market. This perception was most pronounced in Romania. Across countries, access to employment has been challenging for Ukrainians due to a lack of understanding of where to access information and opportunities, childcare issues,⁵⁶⁷ language barriers,⁵⁶⁸ and psychological barriers such as dealing with the impacts of trauma and displacement.⁵⁶⁹

Whether Ukrainians wanted to work generated heated discussions among workshop participants, with some stressing the difference between refugees *wanting to* and *being able to* work, particularly for mothers of multiple children accessing childcare and those who had been out of work for multiple years.⁵⁷⁰ The perception of low levels of refugee employment can lead to discourses about ‘freeloading’ and has strong potential to develop into a notable tension, especially in tandem with discourses that Ukrainians receive state support that is greater than that available to host community citizens or of which they are not entirely deserving.

Tensions over the distribution of scarce resources between disadvantaged local populations and Ukrainians, including poverty among the local population: While poverty rates in all countries included in this research are at medium or low levels, distribution of wealth is often critically uneven. In both the Czech Republic and Slovakia, there is a strong rural and urban divide;⁵⁷¹ in Romania, high levels of income inequality and housing inequality affect rural areas and the Roma community.⁵⁷² Many Moldovans face challenging financial circumstances, and support extended to Ukrainian refugees, such as cash assistance and job matching services, can be perceived as overlooking the needs of Moldovans. In this context, it is likely that tensions will develop around distribution of scarce resources in the form of benefits and services.

This potential tension is linked to the discourse that ‘Ukrainians have nice things and don’t need support.’ In the research workshops in Romania, one participant shared a story of a Ukrainian arriving in a BMW to collect donated goods, triggering the Romanian volunteer to charge for the goods instead of donating.⁵⁷³ Participants in all country workshops conducted under this project noted the risks of discourses around ‘we should support our poor, not the Ukrainians’ gaining traction if the economic situation worsens, although these remain fringe narratives.⁵⁷⁴

Reductions in financial assistance to refugees could lead to more refugees experiencing poverty, and the state (or other organisations) might need to step in to support the vulnerable: Poverty among Ukrainian refugees in most host countries in Europe is high compared to the poverty rates of citizens. In the Czech Republic, for instance, poverty among Ukrainians, taking account of humanitarian aid, is at 35 percent—more than three times the poverty rate of the Czech population.⁵⁷⁵ Reductions in financial assistance are being planned as the

⁵⁶⁷ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁵⁶⁸ UNHCR (2022). [Multi-Sector Needs Assessment Romania – Key preliminary findings, November 2022](#); UNHCR (2023). [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter](#)

⁵⁶⁹ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁵⁷⁰ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁵⁷¹ OECD (2022). [OECD regions and cities at a glance, country note: Slovak Republic](#); Čada, K., GAC (2015). [Analysis of socially excluded localities in the Czech Republic](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵⁷² OECD (2022). [OECD Economic surveys: Romania 2022](#); International Monetary Fund (2022). [Romania: selected issues](#); Turcu, C. (2017). *Mind the Poorest: Social Housing Provision in Post-Crisis Romania*.

⁵⁷³ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁵⁷⁴ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁵⁷⁵ Kavanová, M. (2022). [Voice of Ukrainians: Education, Housing, Employment, Poverty, Mental Health](#), PAQ Research, accessed 28 March 2023.

war continues. For example, in March 2023 the Polish government indicated that some types of assistance to refugees would be reduced.⁵⁷⁶ Workshop participants feared that the international community would stop funding refugees; this would put more pressure on the social services system, the government, or local NGOs.⁵⁷⁷ This in turn could exacerbate the perception that Ukrainians receive more support via local finances than local populations. As these changes take place, it becomes more critical to monitor the ways in which refugees are affected, the degree to which parallel systems are being established, and any incendiary or misleading narratives and tensions that might emerge around refugee support systems. In countries where poverty levels are higher—namely, Moldova and Romania, where poverty rates were around 30 percent⁵⁷⁸—there might be particular challenges in relation to the perception that refugees are receiving more support than host communities, as described below.

Rising unemployment: The potential for tensions to arise around Ukrainians taking the jobs of locals was mentioned in all research countries but Romania.⁵⁷⁹ This was regardless of whether unemployment rates were low (e.g., in the Czech Republic, at 2.5 percent, but with regional differences)⁵⁸⁰ at the time of research, rising sharply (e.g., in Moldova, where the unemployment rate rose sharply in early 2023 to 4.6 percent, particularly in rural and agricultural regions, after a year of stability between 2.5 and 3 percent).⁵⁸¹ Narratives have already been noted to circulate around Ukrainians taking locals' jobs.⁵⁸²

In the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia, workshop participants noted that, as the economic situation becomes more strained, Ukrainian refugees might be scapegoated for locals' unemployment, as they might be perceived as willing to work for less money and longer hours.⁵⁸³ Participants in Poland noted that certain jobs can be seen as exclusively filled by Ukrainians and that Poles can no longer obtain them (e.g., care workers).⁵⁸⁴

In Slovakia, sensitivity around jobs is likely to be high. Recent polling suggests that the general economic outlook among the Slovak population is pessimistic, with 56 percent of people polled by Eurobarometer stating that Ukrainians were weakening the Slovak economy.⁵⁸⁵ Segments of the Slovak population are experiencing long-term unemployment.⁵⁸⁶ This could lead to localised tensions, felt more strongly in regions with high unemployment, around perceived competition for jobs.⁵⁸⁷ The addition of significant numbers of long-term residents to host countries can place pressure on the labour market and provide an easy target for frustration about economic challenges, including unemployment. Participants in the Chisinau workshops highlighted fears that political parties would leverage economic troubles to scapegoat refugees.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁷⁶ Specifically, Ukrainian refugees who live in collective centres for more than 120 days will have to cover half of their accommodation costs; after 180 days, they will have to cover 75 percent of their accommodation costs. Caps apply. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration (2023). [Amendment to the Act on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine signed by the President, 25 January 2023](#)

⁵⁷⁷ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁵⁷⁸ Romania: World Bank (2022). [Multidimensional poverty headcount ratio – European Union](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Moldova: World Bank (2020). [Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines \(% of population\) – Moldova \(2020\)](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵⁷⁹ Where there was a more dominant perception that Ukrainian refugees did not want to work.

⁵⁸⁰ Czech Statistical Office (2023). [Latest economic data](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵⁸¹ Trading Economics (2023). [Moldova Unemployment Rate](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵⁸² As discussed in Chapter 3.

⁵⁸³ Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023.

⁵⁸⁴ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁵⁸⁵ Hudec, M. Euroactiv (2023). [Slovaks believe Ukrainians are making the country worse](#)

⁵⁸⁶ The Slovakia Spectator (2022). [Unemployment under 20% in all Slovak districts](#)

⁵⁸⁷ MUNI ECON (2023). [Attitudes towards migrants and preferences for asylum and refugee policies before and during Russian invasion of Ukraine: The case of Slovakia \(Working Paper\)](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵⁸⁸ Chisinau Research workshop 2 March 2023.

Underemployment of refugees, including difficulties with recognition of certifications: Across the five research countries, refugees were often employed below their qualifications and experience. In the Czech Republic, PAQ research found that 44 percent of Ukrainians who worked for Czech employers were in ‘significantly less qualified jobs’ than they held in Ukraine.⁵⁸⁹ As such, respondents to one survey in Slovakia noted that many jobs taken by refugees are those ‘in which the local population is not interested,’ categorised as ‘unqualified work’ (33.1 percent), machinery operation (26.3 percent), or related to trade and services (12.8 percent).⁵⁹⁰ OECD’s Europe-wide assessment found that Ukrainians’ current employment patterns reflect networks available to them rather than their skill levels and that, with improved recognition of qualifications and facilitation of job matching, Ukrainians have the potential to play important roles in the labour market.⁵⁹¹ Underemployment is driven by a range of factors. Those raised in the five countries included lack of certainty about length of stay, which can lead Ukrainians to seek more temporary jobs and employers to discriminate against Ukrainians; difficulties recognising higher-level skills and qualifications among the refugee population; language barriers; and experience of trauma. In Romania, research workshop participants commented that jobs taken by Ukrainians below their qualifications were often seen as temporary, while they looked for other opportunities. This in turn fuelled narratives around Ukrainian employees being unreliable.⁵⁹²

Workshop participants noted that traumatised refugees may not be in the right state of mind to undertake complex work that might require long hours away from their children, who are also suffering, and that they may prioritise lower-paid manual work with more predictable hours (especially if they are sole guardians).⁵⁹³

Stereotypes of the Ukrainian diaspora, as in some countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic, where relatively large numbers of Ukrainians work in low-skilled positions, can also contribute to underemployment. In Poland, lack of housing opportunities close to urban centres was identified as a reason for unemployment or underemployment. Underemployment of Ukrainian refugees could lead to missed opportunities for them to realise their potential and showcase their broad skills and experience; this could mitigate potential tensions due to Slovaks’ frustrations with Ukrainians not making significant contributions to Slovak society.

Money received by NGOs is earmarked for Ukrainians, but cannot be used for local populations: In some countries, such as Slovakia, Poland, and Moldova, workshop participants shared that some organisations received funding for Ukrainian populations that could not be used for other potentially vulnerable local populations.⁵⁹⁴ Workshop participants in Moldova raised concerns that money from NGOs was used to establish public service support structures that should have existed before but were prioritised only once refugees arrived. They noted that this contributed to a perception that Moldovans were treated as second-class citizens in their own country.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁸⁹ Kavanová, M (2022). [Voice of Ukrainians: Education, Housing, Employment, Poverty, Mental Health](#), PAQ Research, accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵⁹⁰ GLOBSEC (2023). [Despite challenges, V4 societies generally remain supportive of Ukrainian refugees, with more negative attitudes apparent in Slovakia](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵⁹¹ OECD (2023). [What we know about the skills and early labour market outcomes of refugees from Ukraine](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁵⁹² Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁵⁹³ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁵⁹⁴ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023; Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023; Chisinau research workshop 1–2 March 2023.

⁵⁹⁵ Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023.

One NGO representative in the workshops noted that tensions can arise because of perceptions that ‘there are finances for integration for refugees only, not much for single mothers, families, or the homeless. Money is here to sustain the Ukrainian community’.⁵⁹⁶ This has the potential to cause discontent among the local populations. Such narratives can be amplified if the source of funding for Ukrainian refugees is misunderstood, as discussed below.

Ukrainians are perceived to receive higher benefits than host communities, and communication about the amount and sources of support is poor: The perception that Ukrainians receive higher benefits than host communities can cause tension in the Czech Republic, Romania, Moldova, and Slovakia. It is somewhat grounded in reality as systems for refugees were set up quickly and provided status-based rather than means-tested benefits. In Slovakia, the tension is heightened due to the public perception that a large proportion of the government budget is spent on Ukrainian refugees.⁵⁹⁷ In Romania, resentment could arise around the lack of means testing for the 50/20 housing scheme. In all countries, workshop participants noted misconceptions about the sources of the funding, such as assuming that EU or voluntary NGO donations came from local taxpayers, which could lead to frustrations.⁵⁹⁸ In the context of rising unemployment and cost of living, such claims might stoke rhetoric about support that is given to Ukrainians and supposedly withheld from local populations.

Levels of support for Ukrainian refugees differ from support for other refugee groups: Ukrainians have received unprecedented levels of support from governments and communities in CEE—benefits that have not necessarily been enjoyed by other groups of refugees and asylum seekers. In Romania, they are eligible for the 50/20 housing scheme, whereas other refugees are not.⁵⁹⁹ In Poland, Ukrainians are immediately eligible to participate in the labour market, whereas asylum seekers who do not fall under the TP directive need to wait for six months.⁶⁰⁰ The Polish Economic Institute estimated that, in the first three months of the war, the Polish government and private citizens spent 5.45 billion EUR, or close to 1 percent of Poland’s GDP, on support for Ukrainian refugees.⁶⁰¹ Procedures are also quicker for Ukrainians, with one workshop participant in Romania suggesting, ‘Documentation for Ukrainians can take a few hours, for the rest of the refugees it’s two years’.⁶⁰² Differential treatment has the potential to foster discontent among groups of refugees; however, the numbers of refugees that are not eligible for TP in the research countries are low.

Uncertainty regarding the length of stay of Ukrainian refugees in host countries, leading to low retention of jobs among refugees: In all five countries, workshop participants stated that uncertainty around the length of stays for Ukrainians affects not only refugees’ intentions to look for and retain jobs, but also employers’ perceptions of the suitability of Ukrainian refugees for different jobs. In the Czech Republic, participants noted a perception by employers that refugees will not stay in employment long, so they prioritise others if they have a choice.⁶⁰³ In Moldova, workshop participants shared that employers might prefer to employ refugees on service agreements for discrete tasks rather than agreeing to long-term investment in opportunities.⁶⁰⁴ This limits Ukrainian earning potential and contributes to financial insecurity. Conversely, Moldovan participants suggested

⁵⁹⁶ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁵⁹⁷ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁵⁹⁸ Research workshops 1 February–14 March 2023.

⁵⁹⁹ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁶⁰⁰ UNHCR Poland (n.d.). [Accessing International Protection](#), accessed 2 April 2023.

⁶⁰¹ Polish Economic Institute (2022). [How Polish society has been helping refugees from Ukraine; Warsaw: Polish Economic Institute](#), accessed 27 March 2023.

⁶⁰² Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁶⁰³ Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023.

⁶⁰⁴ Chisinau Research Workshops 1–2 March 2023.

that since the battlegrounds in Ukraine have pushed east, western Ukrainians are returning home in larger numbers and do not offer employers the security that they expect of staff.⁶⁰⁵ These factors can impact refugees' financial stability and contribute to further unwillingness to support Ukrainians from the private sector, especially micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, which may be more impacted by staffing changes. Uncertainty around the length of stay in host countries could contribute to lower levels of refugee employment as well as underemployment—and, in turn, tensions about the perceptions of refugees taking advantage of benefits and support provided, alongside a perceived lack of contribution to the host society.

Brain drain to multilaterals and INGOs from the public sector: In Moldova, a workshop participant raised concerns that public sector staff have also sought better-paying jobs with INGOs and multilaterals since the beginning of the crisis.⁶⁰⁶ International organisations were perceived to offer better career prospects, and this could result in a brain drain from Moldovan public services at exactly the time when they are under the most pressure.⁶⁰⁷ If the phenomenon increases in scale, this may reduce the capacity of Moldova's public sector.

4.7. Community, social, and political life

Negative views of Ukrainians provoked by political discourses and parties: To date, most mainstream parties in the research countries have not openly endorsed misleading or incendiary discourses about Ukrainian refugees. However, nationalist right wing political parties present a risk in relation to the rhetoric about Ukrainian refugees. Risks arise particularly around election times, as the fatigue of supporting Ukrainian refugees sets in, and from more fringe political activists or Russia-aligned stakeholders. During the 2022 presidential election period in the Czech Republic, the primary opposition candidate adopted a steadily more anti-refugee platform and was seen as taking the viewpoint that Czech Republic was providing too much support to Ukrainian refugees.⁶⁰⁸ Other parties adopted positions of 'Czech citizens come first,' including advocating to halt temporary protections to Ukrainians.⁶⁰⁹ In Moldova, workshop participants linked pro-Russian mobilisations to an opposition party and suggested that politicians have manipulated economic issues to build opposition to the war in Ukraine and to scapegoat Ukrainian refugees by extension.⁶¹⁰ The public visibility of protests and some politicians' pro-Russian rhetoric can be inflammatory and leave Ukrainians feeling unwelcome. Sizeable portions of the Slovak population harbour pro-Russian sentiments.⁶¹¹ In March 2023, anti-NATO rallies were held in Slovakia, with attendees calling for Slovak military neutrality.⁶¹² In Poland, such discourses remain on the fringes, with some ultranationalist and right-wing parties promoting various negative stereotypes and misinformation about refugees, including from Ukraine.⁶¹³ Given the polarising nature of such discourses, this tension risks affecting community cohesion within host societies as well as potentially between host societies and Ukrainian refugees.

⁶⁰⁵ Chisinau research workshop 2 March 2023.

⁶⁰⁶ Chisinau research workshop 2 March 2023.

⁶⁰⁷ Chisinau research workshop 2 March 2023.

⁶⁰⁸ H. Ridgwell, Voa News (2023). [Czechs Prepare to Choose New President, as Rivals Clash Over Support for Ukraine](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶⁰⁹ M. Švec, Verdica (2022). [Czech Republic: Ukrainian refugees as a political topic](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶¹⁰ Chisinau research workshop 2 March 2023.

⁶¹¹ Euractiv (2022). [Most Slovaks want Russia to win Ukraine war](#); GLOBSEC (2022). [New report shows that the V4 population supports Ukrainian refugees with some reservations](#), accessed 22 March 2023; GLOBSEC (2022). [New poll: Slovaks want Ukraine to win the war, Not Russia](#), accessed 22 March 2023.

⁶¹² Tasnim News Agency (2023). [Massive Anti-NATO Rally Held in Slovakia](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶¹³ Stowazyszenie Nigdy Wiecej (2023). [Jak Policzyć Nienawiść? Hejterzy O Ukraińcach](#), accessed 31 March 2023.; and EDMO (2022). [European Digital Media Observatory \(2022\). 'Ukrainian refugees and disinformation: situation in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania'](#), accessed 31 March 2023.

Lack of integration into host societies: Integration can generally be considered to refer to the degree to which Ukrainian refugees engage with their host communities as colleagues, neighbours, and friends. The countries included in this study varied in their theoretical openness to Ukrainian refugees; the majority of respondents to one survey in Slovakia expressed negative perceptions of refugees. However, on a personal level, respondents from all countries, including Slovakia, expressed willingness to engage with Ukrainians as friends and colleagues.⁶¹⁴ However, participants in all research workshops agreed that the two communities remain poorly connected, with limited occasions to build relationships. Lack of integration is driven partially by return intentions in some contexts. A February 2023 survey by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights found that 49 percent of Ukrainians surveyed in Romania wanted to return to Ukraine despite overall favourable responses on their experiences in Romania.⁶¹⁵ One workshop participant commented that she had not thought initially about integration because her hope had been to return to Ukraine quickly, although this appeared increasingly unlikely.⁶¹⁶ Workshop participants also shared that, as Ukrainian refugees have been in Romania for more than a year now, they will now be very much expected to integrate or migrate further.⁶¹⁷ Contrasted with Ukrainians' uncertainty of length of stay and the difficulty learning Romanian, possibilities for tensions arise.

Other challenges to integration include linguistic barriers, ongoing effects of trauma, and lack of opportunities or time to participate in broader community life, particularly for single parents. This can be a missed opportunity to build trust and connections among the communities.

Language barriers: Language barriers were identified as a potential source of tension across all countries. Particular challenges exist in Romania, as the Ukrainian and Romanian languages are very different. Fewest challenges were identified in Moldova, though some remained—particularly in the context of administrative requirements and higher-skilled jobs that require Romanian language skills, as well as in the context of integration. The lack of a common language has two consequences. First, it impacts refugees' ability to carry out day-to-day tasks and access services. One study found that 20 percent of Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic could not visit a doctor due to the language barrier.⁶¹⁸ Language was also cited as a key barrier to many areas of life and service access for Ukrainians in Romania.⁶¹⁹ Such barriers can exacerbate tensions in contexts where the health and education systems are already stretched and not equipped to manage an inflow of people who do not speak the local language. The second major consequence of the language barrier is on integration. In Slovakia, in February 2023, 48 percent of people surveyed by UNHCR (including Ukrainian refugees and the Slovak host community) reported that communication difficulties contributed to existing tensions in community life, making this the primary barrier found in this survey preventing further integration.⁶²⁰ Reasons for lower engagement in language courses include lack of childcare, as well as the cost, lack of awareness and lack of availability of language courses.⁶²¹ Research workshop participants also noted that it is difficult for working parents to juggle work, childcare, and mental stress or trauma, and to make time for regular language classes.⁶²²

⁶¹⁴ GLOBSEC (2023). [Ukrainian refugees in Visegrad countries: Societal Attitudes and Challenges of Accommodating People Fleeing the War](#)

⁶¹⁵ Romania Insider (2023). [Ukrainians in Romania say they have been treated fairly, but they wish to go home](#) and European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). [Fleeing Ukraine: displaced people's experiences in the EU](#)

⁶¹⁶ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁶¹⁷ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁶¹⁸ Vlasenko, R. (2023). [Overcoming the language barrier for Ukrainian refugees](#), GLOBSEC, accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶¹⁹ UNHCR REACH (2022). [Romania Protection Profiling October 2022](#)

⁶²⁰ UNHCR REACH (2023). [Slovakia: Area-based assessment – Cities of Bratislava – Kosice -Nitra – Zilina \(February 2023\)](#)

⁶²¹ Kavanová, M. (2022). [Voice of Ukrainians: Education, Housing, Employment, Poverty, Mental Health](#), PAQ Research, accessed 28 March 2023; Reliefweb (2022). [Living in Limbo: Displaced Ukrainians in Poland](#), accessed 26 March 2023.

⁶²² Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

Language barriers can reduce the opportunity to build friendships and community cohesion and can increase the risks of misunderstanding, frustration, and potential resentment between groups.

Cultural differences and lack of understanding: Cultural differences were mostly mentioned in Romania. Despite being neighbouring countries, the culture, history, and language of Romania and Ukraine are very distinct. Before the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Romania, there was little knowledge of each other's culture or language. One Romanian citizen who rushed to the Romania-Ukraine border to help refugees as soon as he heard about the war said: 'I never even thought of crossing the border to Ukraine or Moldova before, because in my head these places are Russian (...) But now I see these people arriving: this is not Russia'. Lack of cultural understanding could lead to prejudice and tensions, and indeed one of the potentially most impactful misleading discourses about refugees in Romania is that 'Russians and Ukrainians are the same'.

Lack of understanding of Ukrainian trauma and its consequences: The WHO estimates that one in five people fleeing war will have a mental health condition within 10 years, with one in 10 developing a severe condition such as PTSD or psychosis.⁶²³ The effects of trauma can be debilitating and last for years,⁶²⁴ and people deal with trauma very differently. According to the UNHCR, 14 percent of Ukrainian refugees surveyed in Poland had mental health issues, reporting feeling so upset, anxious, or worried that their functioning was affected.⁶²⁵ In the Czech Republic, one study found that 45 percent of Ukrainian refugee respondents had at least moderate depression or anxiety—four times more than the average Czech population. A workshop participant in the Czech Republic explained that she started working to support Ukrainian refugees in the country to manage trauma, but her work exacerbated her own trauma and caused additional stress.⁶²⁶ A workshop participant in Poland noted that their trauma was so crippling when they arrived in Poland that they could not function normally and did not want to think about participating in various activities.⁶²⁷ The participant noted that it took six months of therapy to overcome the crippling trauma. Another workshop participant in Romania commented that they knew Ukrainian refugees who struggled to complete normal daily tasks and were unable to engage positively in Romanian society, as they were acutely aware of the suffering back in Ukraine.⁶²⁸

Lack of understanding of trauma can lead to friction between local populations, which might perceive some refugees' behaviour as 'lazy' or 'ungrateful', while in reality, the behaviour might be due to strong trauma. The traumatised individuals might also perceive insistence on finding work immediately as very challenging and participating in 'fun' community activities as irritating and diminishing their experience.

Differences between Ukrainians' experiences: Two characteristics could give rise to tensions between different Ukrainian groups: (1) time of arrival to the host country (concerning those who were in the country before February 2022, such as members of the Ukrainian diaspora and migrants) and (2) refugees' place of residence within Ukraine before February 2022. For example, in Poland and the Czech Republic, Ukrainian migrants had held low-skilled jobs for years. This was perceived as contributing to tensions due to the potential stereotyping of Ukrainians as low-skilled labourers.⁶²⁹ In Moldova, tensions could arise between Ukrainians, with a Ukrainian ethnic minority that consumes news produced in Russian, as the majority of Moldova's Russian-speaking

⁶²³ ReliefWeb (2022). [WHO promotes action on urgent mental health needs of Ukrainian refugees](#)

⁶²⁴ Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica (2002). [How well do refugees adapt after resettlement in Western countries?](#) accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶²⁵ UNHCR, REACH (2023). [Poland: Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment 2022](#), accessed 24 March 2023.

⁶²⁶ Prague research workshop 2023.

⁶²⁷ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁶²⁸ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁶²⁹ Chisinau research workshop 2 March 2023.

population, often from within the Russian Federation; many of these individuals have adopted more pro-Russian perspectives as a result.⁶³⁰ Second, in all countries, the possibility of tensions relating to the specific origin of Ukrainians was mentioned. Workshop participants noted discourses about Ukrainians who came from the Western regions of Ukraine but were not seen as genuine refugees—they rented their flats in Western Ukraine to internally displaced people from the eastern part of the country and came to the Czech Republic or Romania to claim financial support, or were economic migrants and not refugees.⁶³¹ Similarly, workshop participants in Slovakia shared a narrative that the war did not affect all parts of the country; therefore Ukrainians could stay in the safe areas and fight for their country; and that their presence in Slovakia is more akin to being economic migrants than refugees.⁶³² Such narratives have the potential to generate tensions between different communities and make refugees from Western Ukraine feel less welcome.

Fear of insecurity and war: In all five countries, significant segments of host populations fear insecurity and war,⁶³³ and fear of insecurity has been a topic in the media.⁶³⁴ The fear was particularly acute in Moldova where, in 2023, Moldovan intelligence confirmed it was monitoring potentially hostile activities within the country. President Maia Sandu has spoken internationally about the potential for the conflict to spread.⁶³⁵ Participants in the Slovakia workshops shared concerns about conscription, and an EC poll from October 2022 showed that 85 percent of Slovak respondents worried about the spread of the war in Ukraine to other countries.⁶³⁶ Political parties can use fear of conflict as a tool to generate anti-refugee discourses. The Polish Anti-War Movement (supported by Russian state propaganda) used fear of insecurity, with social media posts advocating against the war. One example is shown in Figure 7: ‘Let’s not go to this war! This is not our war!’⁶³⁷ The fear of war, and resulting political discourses, generate hesitation and uncertainty among host communities, potentially leading to reduced support and resentment of Ukrainians and thus causing issues for social cohesion between refugees and host communities.

FIGURE 7. ‘Anti-war’ Facebook post



Tensions between Ukrainians and host communities about who started, is responsible for, or should de-escalate the war—and how: In Slovakia and Moldova, responsibility for the conflict and de-escalation of the war was brought up as a source of tension. In Slovakia a prominent ‘peace narrative’ suggests that Ukraine should seek to end the war and ‘unnecessary suffering’, which might include compromises on the part of Ukraine. One

⁶³⁰ In 2016, 69 percent of Moldovans claimed to use Russian language news, and 40 percent of Moldovans claimed to find Russian language news as trustworthy or more trustworthy than domestic Moldovan news. Broadcasting Board of Governors (2016). [Role of Russian Media in the Baltics and Moldova](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶³¹ Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023; Bucharest research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁶³² Bratislava research workshop 8 March 2023.

⁶³³ See, for example, European Commission (2023). [EP Autumn 2022 Survey: Parlemeter](#), accessed 10 April 2023; Kossowska, M., Szwed, P., Szumowska, E., et al. (2023). [The role of fear, closeness, and norms in shaping help towards war refugees](#); Scientific Reports 13, 1465, accessed 26 March 2023; BrnoDaily (2023). [One Third of Czechs Report Fear of War, While Pandemic Concern Drops Dramatically](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶³⁴ Pratama, R.G. (2022). [Romanian consumers fear inflation the most, followed by the Ukraine war and medical service cost](#), accessed 3 April 2023; Adler, K. (2022). [Ukraine war: Fears Russian aggression could spill into Poland](#), BBC, accessed 26 March 2023; Kossowska, M., Szwed, P., Szumowska, E., et al. (2023). [The role of fear, closeness, and norms in shaping help towards war refugees](#). Scientific Reports 13, 1465, accessed 26 March 2023.

⁶³⁵ Mirovalev, M. (2023). [As war rage in Ukraine, is Moldova on the brink of conflict?](#) accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶³⁶ European Commission (2023). [EP Autumn 2022 Survey: Parlemeter](#), accessed 10 April 2023.

⁶³⁷ Polski Ruch Antywojenny (2023). [Facebook group](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

study has called this narrative ‘a euphemism for stopping the military support for Ukraine’; it has also been extended beyond the war to refer to support to Ukrainian refugees.⁶³⁸

Workshop participants reported cases of families hosting Ukrainians who claimed Ukraine was the aggressor in the war; this made some Ukrainians feel unsafe and unwelcome in their accommodation and led to tensions in families and between friends.⁶³⁹

As the war in Ukraine continues, this tension could pose a risk to community cohesion and potential hostility to Ukrainian refugees if they become a focus for frustrations about the continuation of war.

Local fatigue for supporting refugees: Across all countries, strong support for refugees continued during the first year of the war, but workshop participants mentioned that local populations are starting to feel fatigue associated with hosting refugees and that people did not expect the war to last so long. These opinions have been borne out in public opinion polls, research, and media sources.⁶⁴⁰ For example, the proportion of Czechs who ‘refuse to accept Ukrainian refugees’ grew from 13 percent in Spring 2022 to 27 percent in December 2022.⁶⁴¹ Fatigue is associated with the unexpected length of the conflict, poor economic conditions (e.g., high inflation in all countries), and perceptions that Ukrainians receive better services and support than vulnerable members of the host communities (Slovakia and Moldova). This is an area of growing potential tension between communities.

Expectation of more gratitude from refugees: Across the five countries, workshop participants indicated that some segments of host country populations expected Ukrainian refugees to be more grateful for the support provided. These sentiments are underpinned by perceptions that Ukrainian refugees are generally better off than vulnerable populations, particularly in Moldova and Romania.⁶⁴² Slovak perceptions of ingratitude were linked to a perception that the government is spending a significant amount of its budget, meant for host country populations, on refugees. In Poland, specific narratives were raised around Ukrainian families rejecting aid (e.g., accommodation) that Polish families would be willing to accept.⁶⁴³ Workshop participants also observed that such perceived lack of gratitude could arise from a misunderstanding of refugees’ needs, the trauma they have experienced, and their specific needs and/or the services available to them.⁶⁴⁴ It is possible that depicting Ukrainians as ungrateful may stoke further division and tension between Ukrainian and Slovak communities.

Single incidents that harm people (e.g., car crashes) might frame Ukrainians as a danger to the host society: Research workshop participants noted the risk that the media or populations could generalise individual

⁶³⁸ Učeň, P. (2023). *The Russia-Ukraine War and the radicalization of political discourse in Slovakia*. In: *The Impacts of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine on Right-wing Populism in Europe*. G. Ivaldi and E. Zankina (eds). European Center for Populism Studies, accessed 26 March 2023.

⁶³⁹ Chisinau Research Workshops 1–2 March 2023.

⁶⁴⁰ Centrum pro vyzkum verejneho mineni (2022). *Česká veřejnost ke konfliktu na Ukrajině – podzim 2022*, accessed 5 April 2023; Švec, M. (2022). *Czech Republic: Ukrainian refugees as a political topic*, Verdica, accessed 28 March 2023; GLOBSEC (2023). *Ukrainian refugees in Visegrad countries: Societal Attitudes and Challenges of Accommodating People Fleeing the War*, International Republican Institute (2023); *Hostile Narrative Brief War In Ukraine*, accessed 29 March 2023., page 88; Hargrave, K., Homel, K., Dražanová, L., ODI (2023). *Public narratives and attitudes towards refugees and other migrants: Poland country profile*, accessed 2 April 2023.; Balkan Insight (2022). *Refugee resentment on the rise as Poland’s poorest squeezed by cost-of-living crisis*, accessed 26 March 2023.

⁶⁴¹ Centrum pro vyzkum verejneho mineni (2022). *Česká veřejnost ke konfliktu na Ukrajině – podzim 2022*, accessed 5 April 2023; Švec, M. (2022). *Czech Republic: Ukrainian refugees as a political topic*, Verdica, accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶⁴² Chisinau research workshop 1–2 March 2023; Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁶⁴³ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁶⁴⁴ Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023.

incidents involving Ukrainians to portray all Ukrainians in a negative light.⁶⁴⁵ One participant cited issues of public safety (such as road safety) as potential triggers for worsening this tension—for example, if a car accident involved a Ukrainian refugee.⁶⁴⁶ Another participant highlighted the risks around Ukrainians working in jobs that involve physical danger and a workplace accident or health and safety issue that trigger conflict (particularly when there is a language barrier between employer and employee).⁶⁴⁷ Some participants in Poland expressed frustration about the media reporting the nationality of Ukrainians who commit crimes, for example: ‘A Ukrainian person stole a car.’⁶⁴⁸ Backlash against Ukrainians supposedly committing crimes has been noted on social media. For example, anonymous Internet users have disseminated rumours that the offender in one crime was Ukrainian, although the authorities had not determined whether foreigners were involved in the incident.⁶⁴⁹ It was noted that such singular incidents could have particular effects during sensitive periods such as election campaigns and be used for political gain to stoke tensions between communities.

Conceptions of Ukrainians as economic migrants (pre-February 2022) and stereotypes of Ukrainians as low-skilled: Before February 2022, significant numbers of Ukrainians worked in Poland and the Czech Republic, particularly in low-skilled manual labour sectors.⁶⁵⁰ While there is acknowledgement that low-skilled Ukrainian workers have contributed positively to GDP growth, in both Poland and the Czech Republic, stereotypes have also developed of Ukrainians as low-skilled. Ukrainians in the Warsaw research workshop noted that it felt demeaning to read advertisements looking for ‘Ukrainian cleaning ladies’ which implied that Ukrainians were only capable of performing such roles.⁶⁵¹ One participant shared how such prejudice was displayed by a Pole who knew of her multiple qualifications, including a PhD, and told her: ‘If I ever have children, I’ll hire you to be their nanny’.⁶⁵²

Due to previous host community engagement with low-skilled Ukrainian workers, an assumption might arise that Ukrainians are planning to remain in the host countries.

Xenophobia and discrimination: According to some indexes, the five countries in this study have relatively high levels of xenophobia.⁶⁵³ Still, Ukrainians have received a warm welcome in the region, and discrimination toward refugees is mitigated by the understanding of their situation as well as the relative cultural similarity of Ukrainians and host communities. Refugees International suggests that, as the war continues, empathy fatigue may engender some level of xenophobia, and continued vocal and visible support for Ukrainians will be important to counteract this risk.⁶⁵⁴ An Overseas Development Institute (ODI) report notes that ‘since 2015, the dominant narratives around refugees [in Poland] has been one of “us” versus “them,” however the refugees from Ukraine have been included as part of the “us”’.⁶⁵⁵ Participants in the Warsaw workshop commented that discrimination appeared in subtle ways—for example, Poles resenting the accents of Ukrainians who work in the service

⁶⁴⁵ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁶⁴⁶ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁶⁴⁷ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁶⁴⁸ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁶⁴⁹ Stefczyk (2022). “*Ukrainiec zabił Polaka*” na warszawskim Nowym Świecie? *Sprawdziliśmy*, accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶⁵⁰ Gosling, T. (2022). *Poland, Czech Republic struggle to replace the Ukrainian workers*, accessed 28 March 2023; Duszczuk, M., and Kaczmarczyk, P., *Intereconomics Review of European Economic Policy* (2022). *The war in Ukraine and migration to Poland: outlook and challenges*

⁶⁵¹ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁶⁵² Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁶⁵³ Mohsen, J. (2022). *A global index of anti-immigrant xenophobia: associations with cultural dimensions, national well-being, and economic indicators in 151 nations*, accessed 14 April 2023; *Migrant Integration Policy Index | MIPEX 2020*, accessed 14 April 2023.

⁶⁵⁴ Refugees International (2022). *Preparing for the Unpredictable: Ensuring the protection of refugees from Ukraine in Romania and Moldova*, accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶⁵⁵ Hargrave, K., Homel, K., and Dražanová, L. (2023). *Public narratives and attitudes towards refugees and other migrants: Poland country profile*, accessed 27 March 2023.

industry, saying ‘they can’t understand them’; or complaining that all care workers in certain places are Ukrainian and that discrimination was particularly noticeable in the rental market.⁶⁵⁶ At one extreme, xenophobic acts in Poland have included physical and psychological violence, which has also been documented anecdotally. For example, the Monitoring Centre on Racist and Xenophobic Behaviour reported that two Ukrainians were beaten in Łódź ‘for xenophobic reasons. The attackers did not take money from the victims, they shouted “We hate you! Go to Ukraine!” and kicked those lying down.’⁶⁵⁷ Specific minority groups among Ukrainian refugees, such as the Roma, TCNs from minority groups, and transgender refugees are particularly at risk of discrimination.⁶⁵⁸ Participants in the Slovakia workshop noted that discriminatory political discourses could increase in the run-up to the 2023 elections; this, in turn, could increase tensions between different parts of society.⁶⁵⁹

Country-specific historic grievances

Historic grievances related to the Volhynia massacre: At least 40,000 Polish people were killed by Ukrainian nationalists during the Volhynia massacre in German-occupied Poland in 1943,⁶⁶⁰ with estimates of up to 60,000 people killed between 1943 and 1945.⁶⁶¹ Despite the role of a variety of political actors (the Nazi government, the Soviet government) in encouraging the massacre, and efforts by individual Ukrainians to rescue Poles, historical grievances remain.⁶⁶² Marches take place in Poland in remembrance of those killed in the massacre,⁶⁶³ as do commemorative ceremonies for each anniversary, with the president of the country in attendance.⁶⁶⁴ On the 79th anniversary of the massacre in July 2022, Poland’s president called on Ukraine to admit what he called ‘the shameful truth about how Ukrainian nationalists had massacred over 100,000 Poles during World War II.’⁶⁶⁵ He added that, ‘Those who we know were murderers were also heroes for Ukraine, at other times and with a different enemy, and often died at the hands of the Soviets, fighting with deep faith for an independent, free Ukraine’, referring to resistance against the Soviet Union by some of the same militias that were involved in the massacre. Indeed, in 2021, 78 Ukrainian lawmakers proposed to Parliament to name Stepan Bandera⁶⁶⁶ and Roman Shukhevych, who fought for Ukrainian independence in the 1930s and 1940s but who also took part in the massacre, as ‘Heroes of Ukraine’.⁶⁶⁷ This matter was also raised in the UK’s House of Lords, where Lord Glasman said:

⁶⁵⁶ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁶⁵⁷ Monitoring Centre on Racist and Xenophobic Behaviour/Ośrodek Monitorowania Zachowań Rasistowskich i Ksenofobicznych, [Facebook page](#) (2023), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶⁵⁸ Council of Europe (2020). [Anti-racism commission: new reports on Czech Republic and Slovakia](#), accessed 5 April 2023; Amnesty International (n.d.). [Czech Republic 2022](#), accessed 5 April 2023; Avocatul Poporului, Ombudsman (2022). [Report No. 1 on the monitoring the observance of the rights of foreigners from Ukraine in the context of the state of emergency for the period from February 25 to April 30, 2022](#), Unofficial translation from Centrul de Drept al Avocatilor, pages 18–19, accessed 28 March 2023; Amnesty International (2022). [Slovakia 2022](#); IOL (2022). [African students cross into Romania despite allegations of racism at Ukrainian border](#); Harvard School of Public Health, [Calling out a double standard in treatment of refugees from Ukraine](#)

⁶⁵⁹ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

⁶⁶⁰ Snyder (1999). [“To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem Once and for All”: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ukrainians in Poland, 1943–1947](#), *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1999; 1 (2): 86–120, accessed 26 March 2023.

⁶⁶¹ Tymińska, A. (2022). [Granice nienawiści. Mowa nienawiści w kontekście kryzysów humanitarnych na granicy polskiej \(2021/2022\)](#), Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka.

⁶⁶² Snyder (1999). [“To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem Once and for All”: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ukrainians in Poland, 1943–1947](#), *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1999; 1 (2): 86–120, accessed 26 March 2023.

⁶⁶³ Polasik, K., Radio Poznań (2022). [Cichy marsz pamięci ofiar rzezi wołyńskiej przeszedł przez centrum Poznania](#), accessed 27 March 2023.

⁶⁶⁴ Prezydent.pl (2019). [Upamiętnienie ofiar rzezi wołyńskiej](#), accessed 27 March 2023.

⁶⁶⁵ Reuters (2022). [Poland asks Ukraine to confront dark past despite common front against Moscow](#), accessed 26 March 2023.

⁶⁶⁶ Bandera held the title between 2010 and 2011.

⁶⁶⁷ Euronews (2021). [Controversy as Ukraine mulls giving hero status to alleged war criminals](#), accessed 26 March 2023.

‘I absolutely support Ukraine. I went to Ukraine to show my solidarity with its people against the invasion, but they created a national holiday for Bandera’s birthday only last week. I urge the Minister to please say that in this war, we absolutely support Ukraine, but we must also resolutely oppose any rehabilitation of the murderers and perpetrators of the Holocaust.’⁶⁶⁸

Workshop participants noted that the massacre features prominently in some media and TV series, particularly those watched by the older generations. One Ukrainian workshop participant shared that their son was asked about his views on the Volhynia massacre when applying for his national identity number in Poland.⁶⁶⁹

There is a general agreement that the Volhynia massacre has not directly affected support for Ukrainian refugees, but workshop participants noted that historical grievances have the potential to exacerbate tensions, particularly around annual remembrances of the massacre.⁶⁷⁰ There are fears that far right groups may exploit the 80th anniversary in July 2023.

Perception of worse treatment of Romanian communities in Ukraine than of Ukrainian communities in Romania: Approximately 150,000 people of Romanian origin (and approximately 300,000 of Moldovan origin) reside in Ukraine, primarily in border areas.⁶⁷¹ The treatment of the Romanian minority in Ukraine is a political issue, with Romanian President Klaus Iohannis reportedly having called for improvements in Ukraine’s recognition of rights for the Romanian community.⁶⁷² Issues include the provision of Romanian language education in Ukraine, with reports of education segregation and the closure of Romanian schools.⁶⁷³ Participants in the research workshop raised this as an issue that has gained attention since February 2022 and that risks reducing public support for Ukrainians in Romania.⁶⁷⁴

Protracted crisis in Transnistria: The situation in Transnistria is beyond the scope of this research project, and the differential services and treatment received by Ukrainians in Transnistria necessitate their own research. Nonetheless, the protracted crisis emerged as an area for concern among Moldovans and Ukrainians in the workshops in Chisinau. A recurring message among Moldovans was the perception that Ukrainian soldiers had supported Transnistria in its conflict against the Moldovan state in the 1990s. One participant suggested that questions were asked about why Moldovans should provide support to Ukrainians when the Ukrainian state was perceived to have fought against Moldovans’ interests historically.⁶⁷⁵ The protracted crisis has the potential to divide host communities within Moldova and stoke aggressive nationalistic or pro-Russian feelings.

⁶⁶⁸ UK Parliament Hansard (2023). [International Holocaust Memorial Day, Volume 826: debated on Thursday 19 January 2023](#), accessed 26 March 2023.

⁶⁶⁹ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁶⁷⁰ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁶⁷¹ European Centre for Minority Issues (2022). [Romanians and Moldovans in Ukraine and their kin state’s engagement before and after the war](#)

⁶⁷² Balkan Insight (2023). [Romania president pushes Ukraine on minority rights](#)

⁶⁷³ Balkan Insight (2022). [Ukraine seeks closer ties to Romania, vows to resolve minority issues](#)

⁶⁷⁴ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁶⁷⁵ Chisinau research workshop 2 March 2023.

Chapter 5: Programmatic Approach Recommendations

5.1. Overview

This report has focused on medium-term risks to community cohesion. While we present a range of overarching recommendations to facilitate the Ukrainian and host communities to get to know one another better and in turn develop strong relations and trust, other recommendations are more operational. In addition, our research demonstrates that many of the concerns that host communities expressed—and, with them, incendiary and misleading narratives shared by actors with malicious intent as well as some segments of the population—are rooted in longstanding issues such as a strained healthcare or housing system, which the arrival of Ukrainian refugees has highlighted. Indeed, their arrival could speed the resolution of some of these issues, which have become even more visible, and because in some cases different sources of funding might become available to address them, which could improve the situation for both Ukrainians and host communities.

The research team selected the potential approaches noted below based on desk-based research and a survey circulated to key experts. The survey focused on the key five tensions in each country, the potential effectiveness of the proposed mitigation approaches, and lessons learnt from existing programmatic interventions in each country.

5.2. Cross-cutting programmatic approaches

Some best practice programmatic approaches can be integrated across programme interventions and funding streams to better understand and reduce potential tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities.

Conduct conflict and context analysis: A cornerstone of cohesive and conflict sensitive programming is a solid conflict and context analysis.⁶⁷⁶ A conflict analysis can take a variety of forms and cover different elements, but at a minimum it should include: (1) a situation profile or an overview of the historic, economic, security, socio-cultural, and environmental contexts; (2) causal analysis of conflict factors, including the proximate causes and intermediate factors and potential triggers of conflict; (3) a mapping and analysis of stakeholders and their relationships that might directly or indirectly influence or be affected by the topic; and (4) conflict dynamics or drivers of change, including outlining the interactions between causes of conflict and the actors.⁶⁷⁷ To be effective, conflict and context analyses must examine various points of view, including those of women and marginalised groups. Analyses, which can be performed at various levels (from the intervention or project level to entire sectors), should outline current political, economic, and social factors, as well as historical contexts and conditions that may contribute to conflict. Some factors that should be taken into account in the context of refugee and local population community cohesion include: (1) the medium-term macroeconomic context, including volatility in housing prices and inflation rates; (2) the relative strength of public services, including the strength of the education system and the contrasting weakness of the health system; (3) analysis of who stands to gain or lose

⁶⁷⁶ Saferworld (n.d.). [Conflict Analysis, Chapter 2](#), accessed 28 March 2023; UN (2016). [UN Conflict Analysis Practice Note](#), accessed 28 March 2023; World Bank (n.d.). [Conflict Analysis](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶⁷⁷ UN (2016). [UN Conflict Analysis Practice Note](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

from various changes; (4) internal dynamics around social exclusion and the ways in which responses to refugees can affect existing excluded populations; and (5) political factors, including the prevalence of Russia-aligned rhetoric.

Share positive stories through social media: Social media is used as a tool to disseminate incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees, as discussed in Chapter 3.⁶⁷⁸ This use of social media corresponds with wider literature showing that it can be an effective conduit for misinformation and disinformation.⁶⁷⁹ In part to counter this tendency, sharing positive stories on social media would support the creation of a countermovement to mobilise communities to come together. There is evidence that counter-messaging can be effective, particularly when coupled with local in-person activities and activism.⁶⁸⁰ Dynamics around sharing stories, including which ones to share, by whom, and through what outlets, should be planned around the most effective ways to penetrate current information bubbles. Findings from business research show that sharing positive stories can improve morale;⁶⁸¹ there is also evidence that social cohesion or ‘glue’ can form around social media messages and stories.⁶⁸² Positive stories and messages can and should be developed both around the contributions of Ukrainians to the host economies and society, and the hospitality of host communities toward Ukrainians. For example, stories could build on findings such as those of a 2023 GLOBSEC survey which found that Slovaks are open to having Ukrainians as neighbours, close friends, and colleagues,⁶⁸³ along with positive individual stories. Positive messages should be developed within the context of a strong context analysis, including existing political attitudes and preconceptions. For example, a workshop participant in Poland pointed out that what was meant as a positive story about medical support for Ukrainian refugees received hundreds of negative comments within hours, suggesting that local citizens were suffering while Ukrainians received treatment.⁶⁸⁴ Building stories on a solid understanding of local sensitivities and testing messages to ensure the framing of the message is optimal can help minimise similar situations.

Implement strategic communications to reach target audiences and penetrate information bubbles: A range of tools is available to counteract misleading and incendiary discourses, including those that support proactive efforts to ‘pre-bunk’, or increase society’s resilience to misleading content. Tactics can include campaigns to raise awareness supporting resilience to disinformation and to build networks.⁶⁸⁵ Reactive efforts to ‘de-bunk’ could include counter-narratives, crisis communications, and policy responses.⁶⁸⁶ These should be tailored and targeted to specific audience groups and their interests, values, language, norms, and beliefs. While providing accurate information to audiences is important—for example, by engaging dedicated fact-checkers—the dissemination of facts is usually not sufficient to change attitudes and behaviours around sensitive issues.⁶⁸⁷ An ODI report on understanding public attitudes toward refugees and migrants suggests that communications should clarify that the situation is manageable and emphasise shared values.⁶⁸⁸ Fact-checking, while particularly important in the context of policy debates and strategy, should be accompanied by other strategies that may

⁶⁷⁸ See also, as an example, Walter, J. (2023). [Fact Check: How propaganda denigrates Ukrainian refugees](#), DW, accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶⁷⁹ Bunse, S. (2021). [Social media: A tool for peace or conflict?](#) accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶⁸⁰ Bunse, S. (2021). [Social media: A tool for peace or conflict?](#) accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶⁸¹ Cecchi-Dimeglio, P. (2020). [Why sharing good news matters](#), MIT Sloan Management Review, accessed 26 March 2023.

⁶⁸² Duffy, A. and Ling, R. (2020). [The Gift of News: Phatic News Sharing on Social Media for Social Cohesion](#), Journalism Studies, accessed 26 March 2023.

⁶⁸³ GLOBSEC (2023). [Ukrainian refugees in Visegrad countries: Societal Attitudes and Challenges of Accommodating People Fleeing the War](#)

⁶⁸⁴ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁶⁸⁵ Government Communication Service (2021). [Resist 2: Counter-disinformation toolkit](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶⁸⁶ Government Communication Service (2021). [Resist 2: Counter-disinformation toolkit](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶⁸⁷ Dempster, H., and Hargrave, K. (2017). [Understanding public attitudes towards refugees and migrants](#). London: ODI.

⁶⁸⁸ Dempster, H., and Hargrave, K. (2017). [Understanding public attitudes towards refugees and migrants](#). London: ODI.

resonate with diverse groups of people. These might include: (1) framing messaging to align with the target audiences' moral values (which has been proven to shift attitudes on highly sensitive and often politicised topics);⁶⁸⁹ (2) appealing to emotions, which are strong drivers of decisions and behaviours and result in content that is more likely to be accessed and remembered;⁶⁹⁰ and (3) shifting social norms or using normative messaging regarding the expectations of behaviour (or its frequency) to promote desired behaviours.⁶⁹¹

When factual information is used to counter specific falsehoods, it should be repeated multiple times in targeted fora. Repeated statements are shown to be easier to process and therefore are perceived as more truthful, even for those with prior knowledge of the facts.⁶⁹² Thus, repeating facts is crucial, because doing so can counter falsehoods that audiences have been exposed to multiple times. Research indicates that misinformation and disinformation can be promoted through specific media outlets that local and foreign actors use to influence public opinion.⁶⁹³ After information is disseminated, it can be taken up by individuals who do not actively question the information they receive, since there is a global bias toward believing 'fake news' is something that affects other people.⁶⁹⁴ Finally, it is crucial that the target audience consider the messenger credible; therefore as much care should be taken to select the messengers as the message.⁶⁹⁵ In the Czech Republic, for example, there are active efforts to counter disinformation and engage in positive strategic communications, such as the Czech Elves, a citizens' group that focuses on this topic.⁶⁹⁶

Organise joint activities that enable refugees and host populations to get to know each other: Due to daily pressures related to work, family life, and the broader challenges mentioned in Section 4.7, host country and refugee communities might not engage socially. All types of stakeholders—governments, municipalities, NGOs, or citizens' groups—could organise activities to bring the host and refugee communities together socially and build informal networks. Such activities have been observed to reduce prejudice.⁶⁹⁷ A workshop participant from the Czech Republic shared that a community held film screenings with short 'chat to your neighbour' intervals designed to help people who watch the movie get to know each other, with the movie providing a basis for conversation.⁶⁹⁸ In Slovakia, some NGOs noted that activities designed to bring Ukrainian and host community youth together were poorly attended. However, one NGO shared that their activities usually attract equal numbers of local and refugee children, but they do not advertise them as opportunities to meet Ukrainians but rather focus on the games or activities that the children enjoy. They also advertise to Ukrainian and Slovak youth separately, using posters in the two languages.⁶⁹⁹

Offer additional free or affordable after-school activities: Support for after-school activities—whether free or highly subsidised—has multiple benefits. First, they can help to bridge the gap between the school day and the workday, enabling mothers to work without seeking childcare and/or incurring additional costs. Second, they

⁶⁸⁹ Feinberg, M., and Willer, R. (2015). *From Gulf to Bridge: When Do Moral Arguments Facilitate Political Influence?* *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41(12), 1665–1681.

⁶⁹⁰ Brady, W., Gantman, A., and Van Bavel, J. (2020). *Attentional capture helps explain why moral and emotional content go viral.* *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 149, 746–756. 3.

⁶⁹¹ Petit, V., and Zalk, T. N. (2019). *Everybody Wants to Belong: A Practical Guide to Tackling and Leveraging Social Norms in Behaviour Change Programming.* UNICEF and PENN SoNG.

⁶⁹² Fazio, L. K., Brashier, N. M., Payne, B. K., and Marsh, E. J. (2015). *Knowledge does not protect against illusory truth.* *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 144(5), 993–1002.

⁶⁹³ Citizens' Association "Why Not" (2019). *Disinformation in the online sphere: The case of BiH*, accessed 26 March 2023.

⁶⁹⁴ Ipsos (2018). *Fake news, filter bubbles, post-truth and trust*, accessed 26 March 2023.

⁶⁹⁵ RAN C&N Academy (2019, 19 December). *Effective Narratives: Updating the GAMMMA+ model*

⁶⁹⁶ Centre for European Policy Analysis (2021). *Czech elves battle in the disinformation forest*

⁶⁹⁷ Pettigrew, T. F., and Tropp, L. R. *A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory.* *J Pers Soc Psychol*, accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶⁹⁸ Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023.

⁶⁹⁹ Bratislava research workshop 7–8 March 2023.

create opportunities for Ukrainian and host country students to meet, get to know each other, and build trust and mutual understanding. Third, they could include language classes, which Ukrainian students need. They can also facilitate organic language learning by bringing Ukrainian and host community children together for in joint activities. Fourth, after-school activities can be beneficial for young people's mental and physical health.⁷⁰⁰ Participants in project workshops in all five countries noted that teenagers were particularly vulnerable to social isolation and poor mental health; some noted potential risks of youth engaging in harmful behaviours if they do not have hobbies or take part in other activities.

Train search engines and generative artificial intelligence to recognise bias and potential abuse: Digital advances, including social media platforms, have enabled more rapid spread of messages and disinformation, facilitating the creation of echo chambers that can reinforce confirmation bias.⁷⁰¹ Research has shown that false information can spread more quickly than facts, potentially due to the novelty and emotional reactions the false stories can evoke.⁷⁰² On the other hand, some technological advances, such as ChatGPT, have built-in safeguards to limit the spread of negative rumours about refugees. When asked to generate negative headlines about Ukrainian refugees, ChatGPT instead provided recommendations for how to approach news stories about refugees 'with empathy and sensitivity, and to give a voice to those who are often marginalized and underrepresented in the media'.⁷⁰³ The programme also appears to use built-in mechanisms to recognise false assumptions, as demonstrated in the example below. Search engines, for example, could use similar notices to seek to minimise the spread of falsehoods about refugees.

Request: Why do Ukrainian refugees in Poland not want to integrate?

GPT-3: I'm sorry, but I cannot provide an answer to this question as it is based on a false assumption. The majority of Ukrainian refugees in Poland do want to integrate and establish a new life in their host country. Like any other refugees, they face significant challenges in terms of language, culture, and finding employment, which can make integration difficult. However, many Ukrainian refugees actively seek out language classes, job training, and other resources to help them integrate successfully.

5.3. Legal status, welfare, and benefits

Any changes to (re)registration processes and procedures should be simple and communicated clearly to refugees via a range of media. Digital literacy support could help vulnerable groups understand and use online services. Processes and procedures for Ukrainians that streamline the complexity and length of time required to

⁷⁰⁰ Nabors, et al. (2022). [A University and Community-Based Partnership: After-School Mentoring Activities to Support Positive Mental Health for Children Who Are Refugees](#)

⁷⁰¹ OECD (2022). [Disinformation and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine: Threats and governance responses](#), accessed 31 March 2023.

⁷⁰² Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., and Aral, S. (2018). [The spread of true and false news online](#), Science, accessed 31 March 2023.

⁷⁰³ General guidelines for how to do so were also provided:

1. Avoid sensationalism: Avoid using inflammatory language or sensational headlines that can stigmatize refugees or perpetuate stereotypes.
 2. Use person-centered language: When reporting on refugees, refer to them as individuals rather than as a monolithic group. Use person-centered language that acknowledges their humanity and individual experiences.
 3. Provide context: Provide context for why refugees are fleeing their home countries and the challenges they face in their host countries. This can help readers understand the complexities of the issue and challenge any misconceptions or misperceptions.
 4. Interview refugees and stakeholders: Seek out perspectives from refugees themselves as well as experts and stakeholders in the field. This can help humanize the issue and provide more nuanced and accurate reporting.
 5. Highlight stories of resilience and hope: Highlight stories of refugees who have overcome challenges and made positive contributions to their host communities. This can help counter negative stereotypes and give a more balanced perspective of refugees' experiences.
- Remember that every person has inherent dignity and deserves to be treated with respect and compassion.'

prove they qualify under the refugee definition could be provided to other refugees fleeing war and persecution who are eligible under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Phase programmes (focusing on the most vulnerable): Phasing programmes involves changing targeting approaches to support more vulnerable people, as would be done for longer-term conflicts. Phasing is an underlying principle of ‘nexus’ programming that brings together humanitarian, development, and peace actors and links relief, rehabilitation, and development programming. Shortcuts associated with quick assistance—notably, status-based targeting with little analysis of needs (for example, providing the same assistance to all people granted TP)—are likely to be used during the initial phases of a crisis. However, as time passes, it is possible to change the structure of support to ensure equitability and access. This might involve extending more support to those who are most vulnerable and need additional assistance (e.g., the disabled or unemployed), in line with national benefit systems. Across all countries, respondents have expressed concerns about the degree to which Ukrainians are in need. Adopting needs-based targeting criteria is likely to be an effective method of mitigating such tensions. Phasing programmes can help manage potential tensions associated with communities’ resentment of refugees who receive support while poor host populations continue to struggle.⁷⁰⁴ It helps to demonstrate that refugees who receive benefits are in need, and that determinations of their needs are in line with the evaluation of national citizens’ eligibility for benefits.

Link humanitarian cash to social protection: Concerns about inequity between Ukrainians and host country citizens can be mitigated in part by linking the humanitarian system to the national government benefits system.⁷⁰⁵ A range of tools have been developed to do just this in response to COVID-19.⁷⁰⁶ One key well-documented weakness in linking humanitarian cash and social protection, however, is coordination.⁷⁰⁷ In all host countries analysed in this report, several contributory benefit schemes are in place for both healthcare and housing. Humanitarian support that expands the system horizontally to include host country citizens and Ukrainian refugees helps alleviate concerns about inequity as all individuals are subject to the same type of means testing and will receive benefits through the same systems. Implementing this recommendation will require humanitarian actors and national governments to develop streamlined systems and for humanitarian assistance to be delivered through existing government social protection systems to support egalitarian distribution of support.

Utilise inclusive beneficiary accountability and feedback mechanisms: Beneficiary accountability and feedback mechanisms developed and implemented by INGOs, the UN system, and other stakeholders should focus on inclusivity to ensure that any complaints from both the host community and refugees are registered, for instance within the education systems. Such mechanisms could be linked with a wider effort to monitor tensions at the community level regularly.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁴ Analysed in more detail under Sections 3.2 and 4.6.

⁷⁰⁵ CALP Network (2020). [State of the World's Cash 2020](#), accessed 17 April 2023.

⁷⁰⁶ SPACE (2020). [Social Protection and Humanitarian Cash and Food Responses to COVID-19: Needs, Coverage, and Gaps](#), accessed 17 April 2023.

⁷⁰⁷ SPACE (2020). [Social Protection and Humanitarian Cash and Food Responses to COVID-19: Needs, Coverage, and Gaps](#), accessed 17 April 2023.

⁷⁰⁸ International Alert (2020). Donbas: [Taking stock of Peacebuilding](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

Safer World (2019). [Dip Beyond Box Ticking](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

5.4. Healthcare

Overarching recommendations to mitigate potential tensions related to healthcare revolve around addressing the operational challenges related to an overstretched healthcare system,⁷⁰⁹ which predated the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Europe. The inflow of Ukrainians could be seen as further stressing already weak healthcare systems. It may be possible to mitigate some of these tensions by channelling part of the funding for Ukrainian refugees to broader, existing efforts to reform or improve the health system.⁷¹⁰ In the short term, this report makes the recommendations below.

Streamline staffing processes to involve skilled Ukrainians in the health sector: Programmes that identify Ukrainians with appropriate health sector qualifications and skills, support them with language or other needed training, and place them in local health systems could be beneficial. Such programmes would likely involve outreach to identify qualified Ukrainians, processes to speed recognition of skills and qualifications, tailored language training, and placements in national hospitals and clinics. In the Czech Republic, UNICEF is conducting similar programming with the Institute for Post Graduate Medical Education in Prague and the Centre for Nursing and Other Healthcare Professionals in Brno to support Ukrainian healthcare professionals to obtain required accreditations.⁷¹¹

Increase the number of interpreters: Evidence shows that poor health outcomes, including low vaccination rates, are driven in part by a lack of interpreters in healthcare settings.⁷¹² Indeed, the presence of interpreters is a best practice for provision of healthcare to refugees, supporting cultural sensitivity and helping to ensure that refugees understand both their health issues and the procedures and systems they engage with. Investment in interpreters could reduce the strain on doctors who are already stretched and by making it easier for them to communicate with their patients.

5.5. Housing

Tensions around housing often relate directly to a stretched rental market and public rental housing infrastructure. At an overarching level, addressing the operational challenges of the lack of affordable housing, including social housing,⁷¹³ would help mitigate tensions related to housing and could benefit both Ukrainians and host communities. National governments are making efforts to invest in housing; to the degree possible, housing aid to Ukrainians should be harmonised with these programmes and efforts.⁷¹⁴ In addition, this report specifically recommends the programmatic approaches below.

⁷⁰⁹ Discussed in Section 4.3 of this report.

⁷¹⁰ Channeling international support to health care through national systems can help to alleviate pressure on the social services system in a way that also mitigates tensions between host communities and refugees. In the Czech Republic, the international community is providing support for healthcare; the European Investment Bank is providing 200 million EUR to the Czech government. Similar on-budget support could be considered in different countries. Such an approach would be targeted at the systemic improvement of the healthcare system and could support an integrated approach that improves outcomes both for Ukrainian refugees and for host country citizens. European Investment Bank (6 February 2023). [EIB and Czech Republic take steps to mitigate the impact of the Ukraine war](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

⁷¹¹ UNICEF (2023). [UNICEF Refugee Response in the Czech Republic: Initial Results and Priorities](#), accessed 10 March 2023.

⁷¹² Ganczak, M., Kalinowski P., Pasek, O., Duda-Duma, Ł., Sobieraj, E., Gołowski, J., Biesiada, D., Jansen, D., Vervoort, J.P.M., Edelstein, M., Kowalska, M. (2022). [Health System Barriers to Child Mandatory and Optional Vaccination among Ukrainian Migrants in Poland in the Context of MMR and HPV Vaccines-A Qualitative Study](#). Int J Environ Res Public Health.

⁷¹³ OECD (2020). [Social housing: A key part of past and future housing policy](#), Employment, Labour and Social Affairs policy briefs, accessed 26 March 2023.

⁷¹⁴ International actors can support housing availability and system resilience by (1) providing funding dedicated to supporting national actors to coordinate; (2) channelling housing and rent support through the government housing allowance and subsidies

Provide viable opportunities for people to live, work, and go to school outside of major cities: Choosing whether to live in large or smaller cities or in rural areas often poses a dilemma for refugees. Larger cities have more employment opportunities, more options for education, and often greater proximity to healthcare facilities, but smaller cities have more affordable housing options. One workshop participant in Poland cited a pilot project offering relocation to smaller villages or towns, with both housing and employment offers and funding to renovate old homes.⁷¹⁵ This kind of scheme could be expanded across countries to ease housing pressures in cities. Good practice also exists around companies (including in the private sector) providing well-rounded support to refugees. For example, PepsiCo provided support to 900 Ukrainian PepsiCo associates and their families to relocate to Romania, arranged for the employees to continue working for PepsiCo after relocation (in addition to recruiting other Ukrainian refugees), arranged housing, and established the PepsiCo learning centre—a Ukrainian school for refugee children, employing Ukrainian teachers.⁷¹⁶ Such holistic multi-sectoral models that enable Ukrainians to participate meaningfully in work could be explored, and policies could help address the barriers that companies might face in moving operations from Ukraine to host countries.

Support social intermediaries in rental processes: A social rental agency model could be piloted. In this model, a non-profit intermediary would negotiate between property owners and people in need of housing.⁷¹⁷ The intermediary would guarantee rent payments and minimum tenancy standards to owners, who, in turn, would discount rents and guarantee stable, affordable, and quality accommodation to the tenant. The intermediary could help mitigate challenges and issues associated with discrimination against Ukrainian tenants and could support the management of concerns and issues related to Ukrainian refugees' short-term housing needs. Habitat for Humanity founded the Social Rental Agency in Poland, which provides such housing and employment services.⁷¹⁸ The approach could be leveraged to support the provision of housing to refugee groups, particularly those who are more likely to experience discrimination and stigma, such as Roma. Social intermediaries can act as interlocutors between Ukrainian tenants and landlords to mitigate stigma; they may also be able to act as guarantors to protect against risks associated with short-term tenancies.

5.6. Education

Education can be a source of tensions if places, particularly in kindergartens, are scarce, and some families are turned away. On the other hand, joint classes for local and refugee children can help build relationships between different communities and therefore increase trust and cohesion. Investment in kindergartens and early childhood education may be useful in the five countries of research, as it would support parents to find jobs and work standard hours and encourage contact between host communities and Ukrainian children and their parents. This would lay a foundation for longer-term positive perceptions. To enable this, this report recommends:

Provide language support for Ukrainian children: Language classes were the most significant need identified by Ukrainians looking to engage with the national education system across several multi-sectoral needs

systems (i.e., using mechanisms associated with linking cash and social protection and adapting them to the housing market); and (3) supporting and investing in new housing developments. All activities should take place in line with, and ideally directly through, existing government mechanisms to enhance housing infrastructure and access to housing. See OECD (2021). [Housing Affordability in the Czech Republic: Chapter 2](#) Housing 2030 (2023). [Slovak State Housing Policy](#); and Spirkova, D. (2018). [Housing Policy in the Slovak Republic](#).

⁷¹⁵ Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁷¹⁶ PepsiCo (2022). [The story behind PepsiCo's school for displaced Ukrainian children](#), accessed 27 March 2023.

⁷¹⁷ Habitat for Humanity (n.d.). [Introducing Social Rental Agencies in Poland](#), accessed 27 March 2023.

⁷¹⁸ Habitat for Humanity (n.d.). [Introducing Social Rental Agencies in Poland](#), accessed 27 March 2023.

assessments.⁷¹⁹ Language classes have not been identified as a key need for students enrolled in the Ukrainian online system—but lack of language skills could create challenges with integration in the medium to long term.

Embed mental health support in the education system: Mental health issues are prevalent and likely to be undertreated among Ukrainian refugees, with studies demonstrating the high incidence of mental health issues in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Romania. Integration of more mental health services into the school system could provide mental health support to children and identify parents who need support (and it could be possible to provide support to parents at school). As the amount of time spent in displacement extends, and given that children’s mental health situation is particularly fragile, embedding mental health in schools is highly promising.

Train teachers and educational staff to better support Ukrainian students: Training teachers in how to support Ukrainian refugees would be useful across the different contexts examined in this research. Specifically, training could address mitigating conflict, managing and providing support for psychosocial issues, and tailoring pedagogical methods to language learners. There are some indications, primarily from a project conducted by International Alert in Lebanon, focusing on Syrian refugees, that training for social services workers (teachers, health workers, and others) can generate positive community cohesion benefits.⁷²⁰ Trainings include analysis of the context with social services workers, development and implementation of tailored capacity development programmes, accompanying service providers in their work, and raising awareness around the impacts of psychosocial issues and health requirements of refugees.⁷²¹ The results of this programme were demonstrable: shorter waiting times, more willingness on the part of refugees to discuss issues and problems, and the return of host community members to service centres that they had left.⁷²² In several countries hosting Ukrainian refugees—notably Romania and Slovakia—programmes should respond to the fact that teachers receive low pay and have little institutional support; these programmes should use a relatively light touch.

Provide spaces in schools, libraries, and community centres for refugee children to follow the Ukrainian curriculum online in a social setting: Continuing education in a Ukrainian online school is the preferred option for many children, although it carries risks of social isolation. Making spaces available in schools, libraries, or community centres could facilitate social interaction and the building of social bonds among both Ukrainian and local students. This approach could also enable parents to work more easily. The Moldova Inter-agency Refugee Education working group found that 48 percent of parents polled named making opportunities to socialise among their top priorities, demonstrating demand for these services.⁷²³ Individual and pilot programmes of this sort already exist, as well as resources that could be easily adapted; for example, UNICEF, in collaboration with municipalities and local civil society organisations, opened six ‘Spilno Hubs’ around Poland ‘to provide comprehensive and longer term support on integration, mental health, legal assistance, protection and educational and social activities to the most vulnerable refugee children and families who have fled war in Ukraine’

⁷¹⁹ REACH (2022). [Romania: Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment 2022](#)

⁷²⁰ International Alert (2020). [Model on integrating conflict sensitivity and social stability into services provision](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷²¹ International Alert (2020). [Model on integrating conflict sensitivity and social stability into services provision](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷²² International Alert (2020). [Model on integrating conflict sensitivity and social stability into services provision](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷²³ UNICEF and the Government of Moldova (2022). Education Rapid Needs Assessment: Moldova Inter-Agency Refugee Education Working Group.

and 'to provide a safe space to connect with the local community'.⁷²⁴ UNICEF launched similar 'Blue Dot' hubs in Romania.⁷²⁵

5.7. Employment and income

While potential tensions related to high inflation and the cost of living were significant in all countries, respondents noted a range of other possible tensions associated with employment and income. Approaches to alleviate these tensions would be broad-ranging: higher-level macro-economic approaches and further engagement with multilateral organisations for macroeconomic support on imports and exports, approaches to ensure and communicate equity in the distribution of resources among the Ukrainian and local populations that are in need, and boosting labour market participation and entrepreneurship. Shorter-term recommendations are explored in more detail below.

Establish employment creation programmes with flexible work structures: Several efforts have been made to establish employment creation programmes to support peacebuilding and conflict mitigation initiatives.⁷²⁶ Such programmes could address areas with labour shortfalls, such as healthcare and construction. Flexible work structures could include work-from-home arrangements and flexible work hours so, for instance, mothers can pick up their children from school. It will be critical to tailor employment opportunities to the skills of the target populations.⁷²⁷ One programme in the Czech Republic, for example, integrated language courses into employment placement programs.⁷²⁸ A good practice could also be taken from Turkey and Jordan, where employment creation programmes systematically included host and refugee communities, with host community beneficiaries often representing 50 percent of those supported.⁷²⁹

Increase day care provision, possibly by employers: Provision of day care could support refugees' engagement in the labour market. Possibilities include (1) subsidising childcare for refugee children; (2) supporting the start-up of daycare centres by Ukrainian refugees, which would support both businesses and day care needs; and (3) encouraging businesses to provide daycare, together with conflict sensitivity training.

Offer community facilitators and peer support groups for parents: It can be challenging for refugee parents arriving in a host country to engage in the labour market. The provision of community facilitators could ease entry into the labour market. One option, through group work, is for facilitators to meet with groups of refugees to discuss common issues and solutions or provide individual coaching and mentorship. Groups could be set up for parents to discuss challenges associated with leaving children at home. Lessons could be learnt from current programmes. For example, the WHO has recruited and deployed cultural mediators who raise awareness of health systems among refugee communities,⁷³⁰ building on the recognised profession of cultural mediation, which has a base in Romania. The programme could offer lessons and possibilities for greater effectiveness for other countries and sectors, including employment.

⁷²⁴ UNICEF (2023). [UNICEF launches six Spilno Hubs in five months to support Ukrainian refugees and integration of local communities](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷²⁵ UNICEF Romania (n.d.). [Blue Dot – providing critical support to refugees from Ukraine](#), accessed 3 April 2023.

⁷²⁶ Cramer, C., Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. (2016). [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷²⁷ International Alert (2019). [Consolidating peace through inclusive access to livelihoods in Nepal](#), accessed 28 March 2023; International Alert (n.d.). [Practice note 2: Integrating conflict analysis into peace-conducive economic development programming](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷²⁸ Deutsche Welle (2023). [Well integrated: Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic](#)

⁷²⁹ Meraki Labs (2022). [Gender Analysis of Programming in Jordan for Caritas](#).

⁷³⁰ WHO (2023). [The crucial role of cultural mediators in Romania's Ukrainian refugee response](#).

Increase job advertising in Ukrainian, or offer language and job counselling support programmes to enable refugees to respond to advertisements and interview for jobs: Participants in workshops repeatedly commented that they did not know where to look for jobs that were suitable for Ukrainians⁷³¹ despite efforts by governments to support Ukrainian engagement in the labour market⁷³² and entrepreneurial activities. Other support is provided by multilateral organisations, such as the European Bank of Development and Reconstruction online platform and business guide ([ghidul afacerii](#)) to facilitate the establishment of start-ups.⁷³³ Support to Ukrainian refugees to access job advertisements could help them enter the labour market. However, advertising and recruitment processes should be tailored. Information should be available in both Ukrainian and the host country language, and websites should be widely promoted among Ukrainian refugee communities. In addition, linkages with employers are needed to ensure that there are sufficient jobs to support long-term credibility. In one context, over 9,000 refugees registered on an online platform to seek work, but only 2,200 employers were on the platform.⁷³⁴ Tailoring the platform and outreach to different segments (e.g., employers) could support the effectiveness of job advertisement programmes.⁷³⁵ Counselling support programmes for Ukrainians looking to respond to job advertisements could also be useful. Some services have been established, including on [Layboard](#) and [JobAidUkraine](#); and, in some contexts, such as in Romania, the private sector has taken an active part in setting up independent job boards. Programmes to make job boards available could also include coaching. One workshop participant shared the example of their employer, a private sector company, hosting workshops with Ukrainian refugees to help find job opportunities and subsequently supporting them with interviewing, which can be daunting in an unfamiliar language.⁷³⁶

Develop codes of conduct for organisations that work in politics, data, and media: Developing and disseminating a code of conduct could limit the effects of disinformation in Central European countries. Signatories of the code are likely to include academics and civil society organisations; but they could also include media outlets, trade associations, fact checkers, and politicians. Such an initiative would clearly spell out obligations and minimum standards. A code of conduct would be particularly timely in Moldova, where the prohibition of Russian television stations in summer 2022 and some Moldovan stations in December 2022 provoked protest and accusations of political bias and censorship⁷³⁷ pointing to regulations that were intended to curb disinformation.⁷³⁸ Given the highly political nature of these decisions, public and private sector interest in implementing a code of conduct on disinformation would be valuable to drive broad-base support for such an initiative.

Train business leaders and managers in conflict sensitivity: A small but promising amount of work has been conducted on the linkage between business and conflict. International Alert studied business and conflict in East Africa and Nepal.⁷³⁹ While the findings are context-specific, some lessons can be generalised. For example, the

⁷³¹ Chisinau Research Workshops 1–2 March 2023.

⁷³² See Section 2.6 of this report for details of online platforms established.

⁷³³ European bank of Reconstruction and Development (2023). [EBRD Business Guide](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

⁷³⁴ Romania Insider (2023). [Jobs for Ukraine: 9,000 users active on recruitment platform launched in Romania for Ukrainian refugees](#)

⁷³⁵ Romania Insider (2023). [Jobs for Ukraine: 9,000 users active on recruitment platform launched in Romania for Ukrainian refugees](#)

⁷³⁶ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023. Lack of employment options or knowledge of employment options, as well as language barriers, were also identified as two of the top reasons for livelihood challenges by REACH/UNHCR survey respondents. UNHCR REACH (2022). [Multi-sector needs assessment Romania December 2022](#)

⁷³⁷ Reuters (2022). [Russia denounced Moldova's ban of TV channels as 'Political Censorship'](#), accessed 28 March 2023

⁷³⁸ Veridica (2023). [FAKE NEWS: The government in Chisinau bans Russian press at the behest of the West](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

⁷³⁹ International Alert (2020). [Business and peace Dossier: It takes two to tango](#), accessed 29 March 2023; International Alert (2019). [Consolidating peace through inclusive access to livelihoods in Nepal](#), accessed 28 March 2023; International Alert (2022).

studies pointed to the need for businesses to be engaged in and conduct conflict analyses themselves; the findings also suggested that job opportunities need to be matched to both the skills and the constraints of the conflict-affected and host communities.⁷⁴⁰ The importance of fair recruitment practices, peace-sensitive investments, and good business practices was also highlighted. In Central Europe, conducting conflict sensitivity training for business leaders and managers may be important to support businesses in adapting employment practices to Ukrainian refugees and identifying investments for which Ukrainian refugees may provide value.

Introduce and publicise incentives to start businesses: A more favourable environment to start businesses could reduce potential challenges associated with unemployment and contribute to economic growth. Literature on best practices for supporting small business start-ups suggests focusing funding on innovation labs rather than investing directly in small businesses.⁷⁴¹ Multilateral organisations' learnings recommend (1) profiling migrants' and refugees' skills, their complementary to host community skills, and associated entrepreneurship possibilities; (2) clarifying and simplifying the regulatory environment for refugee businesses, including by removing restrictions on ownership of property, access to finance, and right to work; (3) strengthening synergies amongst education initiatives (e.g., vocational training) and entrepreneurship opportunities; and (4) developing digital 'bazaars' to support the export of products and exchange of information.⁷⁴² To date, initiatives to support Ukrainians in host countries have focused on job search platforms, but there are indications from other countries that providing support for new businesses could be profitable and support integration.⁷⁴³

Engage with businesses and organisations to make the most of a more diverse workforce: For decades, business research has suggested that a diverse workforce boosts creativity and innovation, enhances problem-solving and understanding of consumers' diverse needs, leads to better decisions, and can have reputational benefits and reduce prejudice.⁷⁴⁴ These benefits in turn can boost the economy.⁷⁴⁵ The Ukrainian population, and particularly Ukrainian professionals, can help catalyse such benefits for national businesses. To take full advantage of the benefits of a more diverse workforce or candidate pool, it would be useful to train businesses on working in diverse environments and identifying and addressing potential bias in recruitment processes. This might also include working to reduce challenges that skilled Ukrainians face in accessing employment, such as through language training and workplace activities that engage both Ukrainian and national staff.

Streamline procedures to recognise qualifications: Ukrainians have skills that could be useful in the host country labour market; in particular, staff with health qualifications would be greatly valued. Ukrainians with other

[Mobilising the Private Sector for Peace: The role of private sector actors in peace and conflict dynamics in Kenya and Somalia A peace and conflict analysis](#), accessed 29 March 2023; and International Alert (n.d.). [Practice note 2: Integrating conflict analysis into peace-conducive economic development programming](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷⁴⁰ International Alert (2020). [Business and peace Dossier: It takes two to tango](#), accessed 29 March 2023; International Alert (2019). [Consolidating peace through inclusive access to livelihoods in Nepal](#), accessed 28 March 2023; International Alert (2022). [Mobilising the Private Sector for Peace: The role of private sector actors in peace and conflict dynamics in Kenya and Somalia A peace and conflict analysis](#), accessed 29 March 2023; and International Alert (n.d.). [Practice note 2: Integrating conflict analysis into peace-conducive economic development programming](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷⁴¹ E.g., Newman and Christensen (2021). [Doing it Right, but Getting it Wrong](#); Bizri, R. (2017). [Refugee Entrepreneurship: A Social Capital Perspective](#); Meister & Mauer (2019). [Understanding refugee entrepreneurship incubation – an embeddedness perspective](#). Fong et al. (2007). [Pathways to self-sufficiency: Successful entrepreneurship for refugees](#)

⁷⁴² European Commission (2018). [Policy Guide on Entrepreneurship for Migrants and Refugees](#), accessed 2 April 2023.

⁷⁴³ CzechInvest (2022). [CzechInvest and partners launch the Jobs4ua.cz platform for employing Ukrainian workers](#), accessed 5 April 2023; SylversFollow, E., and Papachristou, L. (2022). [From Pizzerias to Tech Startups, Ukrainian Refugees Trickle Into Europe's Labor Market](#)

⁷⁴⁴ E.g., Brodock and Massam (2016). [How and Why to Hire a Diverse Workforce: What You Need to Know](#); Rosenzweig, P. (1998). [Managing the New Global Workforce: Fostering Diversity, Forging Consistency](#); Ely, R.J., and Thomas, D.A. (2020). [Getting Serious About Diversity](#). Moon, K.K., and Christensen, R.K. (2020). [Realizing the performance benefits of workforce diversity in the US federal government: The moderating role of diversity climate](#)

⁷⁴⁵ E.g., Brunow, S. and Brenzel, H. (2012). [The effect of a culturally diverse labour supply on regional income in the EU](#). Shaban, A., and Khan, S. (2022). [Cultural diversity, human capital, and regional economic growth in India](#).

high-level qualifications could contribute to the labour market, thus supporting both economic growth and the wellbeing of refugees. Many Ukrainians work in jobs below their qualification level, largely due to the complexities of recognising qualifications. Streamlined and fast-tracked procedures to enable refugees and other immigrants with in-demand skills to enter the host country labour market more quickly would be beneficial. Some programmes to support qualification recognition, with the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees are being piloted in Romania.⁷⁴⁶ The degree of success of these interventions is not clear, but additional resources and focus could be beneficial.

Engage with multilateral organisations (such as the World Bank) for macroeconomic support on imports and exports: The World Bank is committed to supporting forcibly displaced populations, including governments in central European countries that struggle with inflows. The EU Investment Bank developed a programme with the Czech government that targets health care specifically.⁷⁴⁷ The European Council's recent decision to grant European Union Candidate Country status to Moldova is expected to facilitate greater economic investment, which will be supported by the 2023–27 World Bank Country Partnership Framework's investment in regulatory reform, human capital development, and the energy sector.⁷⁴⁸ Similar programmes could be developed to support the expansion of economic growth, imports, and exports, and to manage inflation.

Provide education about decent labour conditions, including agency contract risks: International Alert's studies on business and conflict in East Africa and Nepal⁷⁴⁹ point out the importance of appropriate use of outcome-based contracts⁷⁵⁰ to minimise exploitation and of analysing the effect of investments on different communities before making final business decisions. Pre-investment considerations (e.g., a factory is built) should include a conflict analysis, considering matters such as how the investment will affect host and refugee communities and who the suppliers will be. In multiple workshops, participants noted that Ukrainian refugees have been exposed to risks associated with output-based contracts and that they felt pressured to accept these opportunities to avoid financial insecurity.⁷⁵¹ Education for business leaders and refugees about decent labour conditions and contract types, risks, and mitigation could reduce vulnerabilities.

5.8. Community, social, and political life

Potential tensions in community, social, and political life are diverse, as discussed in Section 4.7. A range of tensions could escalate if appropriate mitigation measures and prevention measures are not put in place. The approaches below, in addition to the cross-cutting measures suggested at the start of this chapter, could be particularly useful.

⁷⁴⁶ Council of Europe (2022). [European Qualifications Passport for Refugees \(EQPR\) supports Ukrainian refugees' access to job market in Europe](#)

⁷⁴⁷ European Investment Bank (2023). [EIB and Czech Republic take steps to mitigate the impact of the Ukraine war](#), accessed 5 April 2023.

⁷⁴⁸ World Bank (2022). [The World Bank in Moldova](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷⁴⁹ International Alert (2020). [Business and peace Dossier: It takes two to tango](#), accessed 29 March 2023.; International Alert (2019). [Consolidating peace through inclusive access to livelihoods in Nepal](#), accessed 28 March 2023; International Alert (2022). [Mobilising the Private Sector for Peace: The role of private sector actors in peace and conflict dynamics in Kenya and Somalia A peace and conflict analysis](#), accessed 29 March 2023.; and International Alert (n.d.). [Practice note 2: Integrating conflict analysis into peace-conducive economic development programming](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷⁵⁰ Where an individual is paid a certain amount for a job done but the wages per hour or day might be very low, often below minimum wage, if the contracts are drawn up in an exploitative manner and the refugees are not aware of how long a task is likely to take.

⁷⁵¹ Chisinau research workshop 1 March 2023; Prague research workshop 1–2 February 2023; Bratislava workshop 7–8 March 2023.

Establish an infrastructure to support refugees’ dialogue with local and national governments: A significant amount of literature discusses infrastructures for peace; these can take place in a bottom-up fashion⁷⁵² or through top-down mechanisms. Such infrastructure could allow for clearer and more open discussion amongst representatives of disadvantaged local groups, such as the Roma and rural communities, and refugees. Top-down mechanisms are those in which formal structures for discussion and engagement are built between a host country government and a displaced community, often involving local and national institutions. The advantages of a top-down approach are that a government agency has a clear mandate for conflict resolution, accountability mechanisms can be established, and media coverage and strategic communications can take place around established peacebuilding efforts. The disadvantages include reliance on the willingness of the national government and the possibility that the process might become excessively bureaucratic.⁷⁵³

Foster community dialogues: Community dialogue programming refers to targeted efforts to bring different elements of a community together to exchange information, experiences, and stories around specific topics.⁷⁵⁴ These dialogues may be organised around sources of tension such as fear of insecurity and war, Ukrainian history and culture, distribution of resources between disadvantaged host community populations and refugees, and the realities of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The goal would be the development of mutual understanding and mitigation of emerging issues. Community dialogue programmes have been used across geographies including the Balkans, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia.⁷⁵⁵ Benefits include the ability to scale up over time, leverage local resources, and put forward practical small-scale solutions; cost-effectiveness and relevance to local contexts. Challenges include the possibility of sabotage, lack of sustained funding, and reliance on volunteers.⁷⁵⁶ The literature indicates a slight but positive relationship between the presence of community dialogues and mitigation of local tensions.⁷⁵⁷ Dialogues can be accompanied by community efforts to develop and engage in longer-term activities that encourage interaction between Ukrainians and local populations.

Address tensions through radio and TV programming: Radio and TV dramas have been used as peacebuilding tools over decades and in many contexts. In general, there is evidence that such dramas can affect attitudes and counteract negative messages,⁷⁵⁸ although they do not significantly affect deep-seated beliefs. Challenges associated with setting up radio and TV drama programmes relate to the willingness and interests of media owners; lack of audiences for peace stories compared to those on violence and conflict; resource constraints; legal and regulatory restrictions; and lack of media outreach.⁷⁵⁹ Stabilisation funding might be used to be used to overcome some of these hurdles. Radio and TV dramas and mass campaigns can be aired in collaboration with governments, academic institutions, and civil society. This joint engagement can focus on reconciliation around historical tensions.

⁷⁵² For example, through community dialogues, as discussed below.

⁷⁵³ Cramer, C., Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. (2016). [Evidence Synthesis: What interventions have been effective in preventing or mitigating armed violence in developing and middle-income countries?](#) London: Department for International Development, accessed 29 March 2023.

⁷⁵⁴ Cramer, C., Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. (2016). [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷⁵⁵ Bolton, L. (2020). [Lessons from conflict resolution interventions](#), accessed 29 March 2023.; Cramer, C., Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. (2016). [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷⁵⁶ Bolton, L. (2020). [Lessons from conflict resolution interventions](#), accessed 29 March 2023.; Cramer, C., Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. (2016). [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷⁵⁷ Bolton, L. (2020). [Lessons from conflict resolution interventions](#), accessed 29 March 2023.; Cramer, C., Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. (2016). [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷⁵⁸ Cramer, C., Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. (2016). [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷⁵⁹ Cramer, C., Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. (2016). [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

Work with the media to avoid spreading incendiary messages: Quality journalism that does not contribute to the spread of incendiary discourses should be supported, including by providing journalists evidence of what works and what does not to debunk misinformation, as this is not always obvious. For example, directly countering ‘fake news’ by repeating it brings it to the attention of audiences again—and can therefore reinforce acceptance.⁷⁶⁰ Countering disinformation also requires strong collaboration between multiple actors and a variety of actions—mapping and tracking disinformation actors, providing intelligence reports, and conducting information literacy activities. It is possible to build or leverage coalitions among media, civil society, and government entities that would allow access to disinformation tracking mechanisms and promote information sharing amongst different types of actors (specifically, mapping and analysis by civil society, academia, and government actors that influence policy).

Review school curricula, including in history and digital literacy: Various organisations have recognised the role of history education in helping students to better understand the past, approach information critically, and reduce risks of prejudice and discrimination.⁷⁶¹ During the research workshops, participants discussed the need for longer-term engagement of young people in critical analysis—including through mainstream education curricula—to proactively prevent polarisation, misinformation, and prejudice.⁷⁶² Apart from the curricula themselves, history and/or social sciences education can be used effectively to improve critical thinking and source analysis. A 2021 publication by the OECD that examined digital literacy among young people found that only 54 percent of students reported receiving training at school on identifying bias in information sources.⁷⁶³ However, the European Commission has recognised the role of education, particularly in source literacy, in combatting misinformation.⁷⁶⁴

Increase opportunities for Ukrainians and host community members to meet and help each other learn languages: ‘Conversation cafes’ are amongst many approaches to support host communities and refugees to interact. Such initiatives for Ukrainian and host communities could support further engagement.

⁷⁶⁰ Pennycook, G., Cannon, T. D., and Rand, D.G. (2018). [Prior exposure increases perceived accuracy of fake news](#). *Journal of Experimental Psychology*.

⁷⁶¹ UNESCO (2020). [A future we can all live with: how education can address and eradicate racism](#); Brookings Institute (2022). [Learning to live together: how education can help fight systemic racism](#)

⁷⁶² Warsaw research workshop 9 February 2023.

⁷⁶³ OECD (2021). [Twenty-first century readers: developing literacy skills in a digital world](#)

⁷⁶⁴ European Commission (2022). [Commission steps up action to tackle disinformation and promote digital literacy among young people](#)

Annex 1: Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Meaning
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CZK	Czech Koruna
DMDS	Disinformation, Misinformation, and Dangerous Speech
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EDMO	European Digital Media Observatory
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
GBP	British Pound Sterling
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRI	International Republican Institute
IT	Information Technology
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Plus
MDL	Moldovan Leu
MMR	Combination of vaccines against measles, rubella, and mumps
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PLN	Polish Złoty
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
RAC	Refugee Accommodation Centre
RON	Romanian Leu
TCN	Third-Country National

TP	Temporary Protection
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar
V4	Visegrád Group
WHO	World Health Organization

Annex 2: Statistics, Surveys, and Research Reports

The sources below can be used to source up-to-date statistics and also provides materials for deeper dives into specific subject matter areas.

Subject area	Source	Type ⁷⁶⁵	Language	Notes
Statistics				
Number of Ukrainian refugees	UNHCR (2023). Operational Data Portal	MLR	ENG	Data for Poland, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Republic of Moldova, Romania.
	UNHCR (2022). Ukraine situation: Regional protection profiling and monitoring factsheet	MLR	ENG	Source type is multilateral, but the report's original data source is data aggregated from national governments.
Demographics of Ukrainians under TP	UNHCR (2022). Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine, Regional protection analysis	MLR	ENG	Data for Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.
	IOM (2022). Ukraine Returns Report October 2022	MLR	ENG	
	IOM (2022). Ukraine Internal Displacement Report October 2022	MLR	ENG	
Support for Ukrainians under TP	OECD (2022). Rights and support for Ukrainian refugees in receiving countries	MLR	ENG	
	EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (2022). Online survey on persons displaced from Ukraine	MLR	ENG	
Access to social services		MLR	ENG	

⁷⁶⁵ AR = Academic research; DR = Donor report; ENG = English; MLR = Multilateral report; MR = Media report; NG = National government; PD = Polling data; PL = Polish; SM = Social media; NGO = NGO report

Accommodation for Ukrainians under TP	EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). Fleeing Ukraine: Displaced people's experiences in the EU			Results to be published in early 2023.
Public attitude polling	Bne.Intellinews (2022). Poll shows Moldovans' pro-EU sentiment remains fragile ; article based on a poll conducted by IDIS Viitorul (The Future) think tank	MR	ENG	Data for Moldova.
	European Parliament (2023). Public opinion on the war in Ukraine	MLR	ENG	Shows a variety of studies and polls on how citizens view Russia's conflict with Ukraine and its consequences in EU nations.
Donor support	UNHCR (2023). Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter	MLR	ENG	Data for Romania: Documentation focussed on the issues that children who must study outside of their home nation experience, and shares solutions.
	UNHCR Help Slovakia (2023). Cash Assistance	MLR	ENG	Data for Slovakia.
	European Commission (2022). The Blue Line and the Czech Red Cross Prague— Czech Republic: Social assistance helpline for citizens of Ukraine	MLR	ENG	Data for the Czech Republic.
	UNHCR (2023). Ukraine Situation: Moldova— Cash Assistance for Refugees (March 2023)	MLR	ENG	Data for Moldova.
	UNHCR Operational Data Portal Poland Refugee Response Plan 2022	MLR	ENG	Data for Poland.
Deeper dives				
Ukrainian refugees' needs; analyses of vulnerabilities	UNHCR (2022). Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine, Regional protection analysis	MLR	ENG	Data for Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.

	EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). Fleeing Ukraine: Displaced people's experiences in the EU	PD	ENG	
Examples of discrimination	Amnesty International (2022). Czech Republic 2022	NGO	ENG	Discusses discrimination in its broadest sense and target groups in the Czech Republic.
	Let's preserve solidarity with refugees. Discrimination report (2022)	NGO	PL	Data for Poland: examples of discrimination.
	Amnesty International (2022/23). Slovakia. Amnesty International Report 2022/23	NGO	ENG	Data for Slovakia.
Pressures on social services	UNHCR (2023). Ukraine Situation - Moldova: REACH - The impact of cost-of-living changes on Moldovan and refugee populations	MLR	ENG	Data for Moldova.
	International Monetary Fund (2022). Romania: selected issues	MLR	ENG	Data for Romania.
Profile of host communities	Centre for Public Opinion Research (Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej, CBOS)	PD	PL	Data for Poland: research on public opinion, including attitudes regarding the reception of Ukrainian refugees, policy on the Russian war against Ukraine, etc.
	GLOBSEC (2022). Voices of Central and Eastern Europe Czech Republic Fact Sheet	NGO	ENG	Data for the Czech Republic: data on conspiracy theories that Czechs tend to believe.
	GLOBSEC (2022). Globsec 2022 Trends Slovakia	NGO	ENG	Data for Slovakia.
Public Attitudes	Association of Ukrainians in Poland (2018). Report on discrimination of Ukrainians, discourse analysis	NGO	PL	Discourse analysis by the Association of Ukrainians in Poland, showing anti-Ukrainian sentiments in the Polish public sphere.

	GLOBSEC (2020). Perceptions of democracy and conspiracies in Romania	NGO	ENG	Data for Romania.
	Karen Hargrave, Kseniya Homel, Lenka Dražanová, ODI (2023). Public narratives and attitudes towards refugees and other migrants: Poland country profile	NGO/AR	ENG	Data for Moldova.
	European Union (2022). EP Autumn 2022 Survey: Parlemeter	MLR	ENG	
	Aneta Zachová, Euractiv (2022). Czech's divided over support for Ukraine	MR	ENG	Data for the Czech Republic.
Tensions between host communities and refugees	World Vision (2022). WARM WELCOMES, LURKING TENSIONS, Vital lessons from the global south for countries hosting refugees from Ukraine	NGO	ENG	
	Krytyka Polityczna (2022). Poles for Ukraine, but Against Ukrainians, Sociological Study Report	AR/NGO	PL	Research on attitudes of Poles about Ukrainian refugees and narratives around their reception and stay in Poland, based on qualitative interviews.
Disinformation discourses	Repell, L. and Shein, E., IFES (2019). Disinformation Campaigns and Hate Speech: Exploring the Relationship and Programming Interventions	NGO	ENG	Documentation of good practice.
	International Republican Institute (2023). Hostile Narrative Brief: War in Ukraine. A Year of Aggression.	NGO	ENG	
	OECD (2022). Disinformation and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine: Threats and governance responses	MLR	ENG	
Good practice examples	Michael Wodzicki, Irena Pichola, Julia Patorska, Monitor Deloitte (2022). Refugees from Ukraine in Poland Challenges and potential for integration	Private Sector Report	ENG	Data for Poland but good for general practice.
	Bunse, S. (2021). Social media: A tool for peace or conflict?	NGO/AR	ENG	Explains the potential of social media and how it can be used to better comprehend

			conflict dynamics and fight extremism.
Government Communication Service (2021). Resist 2: Counter Disinformation Toolkit	NGO	ENG	
International Alert (2020). Model on integrating conflict sensitivity and social stability into services provision	NGO	ENG	
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Addressing Anti-Semitism, Intolerance and Discrimination through Education: Workshop for Policymakers, Teacher Trainers and Educators in Romania	MLR	ENG	Data for Romania but good for general practice.
Government Communication Service (2021). Resist 2: Counter-disinformation toolkit	NG	ENG	It addresses the topic of disinformation and how to recognise it, address it, and prevent its spread.

Annex 3: Key Statistics—Regional Overview

Type	Characteristic	Poland	Slovakia	Czech Republic	Romania	Moldova
Economic factors	GDP/per capita purchasing power parity in USD for 2021 (in thousands) ⁷⁶⁶	38.1	33.4	45.7	36.1	15.4
	Harmonized index of consumer prices in Jan. 2023 ⁷⁶⁷	15.9%	15.1%	19.1%	13.4%	27.3% ⁷⁶⁸
	ODA eligible? ⁷⁶⁹	No	No	No	No	Yes
	Regional Refugee Response Plan funding requested for 2022 (USD million) ⁷⁷⁰	777.8	87.5	42.6	226.6	391.5
	Regional Refugee Response Plan funding requested for 2023 (USD million) ⁷⁷¹	709.4	80.1	81.6	153.6	427.0
Political factors	Next election—presidential ⁷⁷²	2025	2024	2028	2024	2024
	Next election—parliamentary ⁷⁷³	Autumn 2023	2023	2025	2024	2025

⁷⁶⁶ World Bank (2023). [GDP per capita, PPP \(current international \\$\)](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

⁷⁶⁷ Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Romania: EU countries: Statista (2023). [Harmonized index of consumer prices \(HICP\) inflation rate of the European Union in January 2023, by country](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Moldova: Reuters (2023). [Moldova's y/y consumer price inflation slows to 27.31% in January](#), accessed 28 March 2023.

⁷⁶⁸ Moldova does not calculate inflation according to EU HCIP, so the figure given is not directly comparable.

⁷⁶⁹ OECD (2023). [DAC List of ODA Recipients](#) (2022), accessed 24 March 2023.

⁷⁷⁰ UNHCR (2022). [Ukraine Situation: Recalibration—Regional Refugee Response Plan \(March–December 2022\)](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

⁷⁷¹ UNHCR (2023). [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan \(January–December 2023\)](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

⁷⁷² Poland: Rzeczpospolita, [Sondaż: Prezydentem po Dudzie Morawiecki lub Trzaskowski](#), accessed 24 March 2023; Slovakia: Muller, R., Hovet, J. (2022). [Slovak parliament dumps centre-right cabinet, early election an option](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Czech Republic: Musil, P., Lizec, J. (2023). [Kdy budou prezidentské, parlamentní, komunální, krajské či evropské volby? Přehled termínů](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Romania: Roushkova, B., Nakova, V. (2022). [Romanians Already Mulling Names of Future President Two Years before Elections](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Moldova: Official page of Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova, (2023). [Elections and Referendums](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

⁷⁷³ Poland: OSCE (2022). [Elections](#), accessed 24 March 2023; Slovakia: Politico (2023). [Slovakia — National parliament voting intention](#), accessed 12 April 2023; Czech Republic: Penize.CZ, (2021). [Kdy budou další volby? Tady jsou termíny](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Romania: PolitPro, [Romania elections](#) (2023), accessed 29 March 2023.; Moldova: Official page of Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova, [Elections and Referendums](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

	Next election—local ⁷⁷⁴	2024	2026	2026	2024	2023
	Total population (million) ⁷⁷⁵	37.8	5.5	10.7	19.02	2,6
	Poverty rates ⁷⁷⁶	14.8%	14.8%	8.6%	30.4%	28.6%
Country demography	Unemployment rate in Dec. 2022 ⁷⁷⁷	Eurostat estimate (Dec. 2022): 2.9% Statistics Poland: (Dec. 2022) 5.2% ⁷⁷⁸	5.8%	2.3%	5.6%	4.6%
	Size of Russian minority or citizens living in country before 2022 ⁷⁷⁹	37,030 (2019)	3,245 (2021)	38,033 (2018)	23,487 (2011)	111,726 (2014) (does not include Transnistria)
	Size of Ukrainian minority/ Ukrainians living in country before 2022 ⁷⁸⁰	Ukrainian minority (Polish citizens of Ukrainian descent)— 38,797 (2011)	9,451 (2021)	131,302 (2018)	50,920 (2011)	181,035 (2014) (does not include Transnistria)

⁷⁷⁴ Poland: INFOR (2022). [Wybory samorządowe w 2024 r.](#), accessed 24 March 2023; Slovakia: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, Elections and Referenda, [The elections to the bodies of communal self-government 2022–2026](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Czech Republic: Lubomír Popovič, Novinky.cz (2023). [Volby v ČR: Kdy budou ty příští a jaké nás v dalších letech čekají](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Romania: dBpedia 2023, [Next Romanian legislative election](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Moldova: Official page of Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova, [Elections and Referendums](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

⁷⁷⁵ Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Romania: World Bank (2022). [Population—total, European Union](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Moldova: Statistica Moldovei, [Population](#) (2023), accessed 29 March 2023.

⁷⁷⁶ Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Romania: World Bank (2022). [Multidimensional poverty headcount ratio—European Union](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Moldova: The World Bank [Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines \(% of population\)—Moldova \(2020\)](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

⁷⁷⁷ Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Romania: Eurostat I Euroindicators (2023). [December 2022 Euro area unemployment at 6.6%, EU at 6.1%](#), accessed 30 March 2023. Moldova: Statistica Moldovei, [Labour Force in the Republic of Moldova: Employment and unemployment in the fourth quarter 2022](#) (2023), accessed 29 March 2023. Eurostat explains: 'Methods and definitions Eurostat publishes harmonized unemployment rates for individual EU Member States, the euro area and the EU. These unemployment rates are based on the definition recommended by the International Labour Organisation. The measurement is based on a harmonized data source, the European Union Labour Force Survey. Based on the International Labour Organisation definition, Eurostat defines unemployed persons as persons aged 15 to 74 who: are without work; are available to start work within the next two weeks; and have actively sought employment at some time during the previous four weeks. The unemployment rate is the number of people unemployed as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people employed plus unemployed. In this news release unemployment rates are based on employment and unemployment data covering persons aged 15 to 74.'

⁷⁷⁸ Statistics Poland (2023). [Unemployment rate 1990-2023](#), accessed 26 March 2023. 'The registered unemployment rate is calculated with the use of data on employed in the national economy including i.a. persons working on private farms (comprising a part of economically active civilian population) estimated on the basis of the results of Censuses'.

⁷⁷⁹ Poland: GUS (2020). [Populacja cudzoziemców w Polsce w czasie COVID-19](#), accessed 23 March 2023; Slovakia: Population statistics of Eastern Europe & former USSR, [Slovakia](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Czech Republic: Directorate of the Alien Police Service (2018). [Foreigners, total by citizenship as at 31 December 2018](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Romania: Minority Rights Group International, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples (2020). [Minorities and indigenous peoples in Romania](#), accessed 29 March 2023.; Moldova: Statistica Moldovei, [Population and Housing Census in the Republic of Moldova, May 12-25, 2014 \(2022\)](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

⁷⁸⁰ Poland: Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, [Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne](#), accessed 5 January 2023; Slovakia: Population statistics of Eastern Europe & former USSR, [Slovakia](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Czech Republic: Directorate of the Alien Police Service (2018). [Foreigners, total by citizenship as at 31 December 2018](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Romania: Minority Rights Group International, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples (2020). [Minorities and indigenous peoples in Romania](#), accessed 29 March 2023.; Moldova: Statistica Moldovei, [Population and Housing Census in the Republic of Moldova, May 12-25, 2014 \(2022\)](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

		Migrant population 1,351,418 (2019)				
	Refugees from Ukraine recorded in country as of March 2023 (UNHCR) ⁷⁸¹	1,583,563	113,702	504,107	104,823	106,485
	Ukrainian refugees hosted as a % of total population ⁷⁸²	4.2%	2.1%	4.5%	0.5%	4.1%
Number of refugees hosted	Total refugees hosted in 2022 ⁷⁸³	1,210,582	84,885	388,274	88,137	79 477
	Total refugees hosted in 2021 ⁷⁸⁴	4,875	1,046	1909	4200	349
	Total refugees hosted in 2020 ⁷⁸⁵	2,771	1,006	1919	3581	405
	Total refugees hosted in 2019 ⁷⁸⁶	12,658	965	2054	3860	417
	% women and children ⁷⁸⁷	86%	84%	80%	53% women, 22% children (Mar. 2023)	63% women, 26% children
Ukrainian refugee demographics	% refugee households with at least 1 member with disability ⁷⁸⁸	18%	12%	44%	12%	12%
	% refugee households with at least 1 elderly member ⁷⁸⁹	14%	11%	9%	9%	9%

⁷⁸¹ UNHCR (2023). [Refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe](#), accessed 17 April 2023. Figures accurate as of 11 April 2023.

⁷⁸² Authors' calculation taking total population and refugee population figures provided in the table.

⁷⁸³ UNHCR (2022). [Refugee Data Finder](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

⁷⁸⁴ UNHCR (2022). [Refugee Data Finder](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

⁷⁸⁵ UNHCR (2022). [Refugee Data Finder](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

⁷⁸⁶ UNHCR (2022). [Refugee Data Finder](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

⁷⁸⁷ Poland: UNHCR (2022). [Ukraine Refugee Situation - Operational Data Portal](#), accessed 24 March 2023; Slovakia: UNHCR, Operational data portal, Refugee situation (2022). [Slovakia: Factsheet September 2022](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Czech Republic: UNHCR (2022). [Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Ukraine Situation - Inter-Agency Operational Update: Czech Republic, July - October 2022](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Romania: UNHCR, Operational data portal, [Ukraine Refugee Situation, Romania \(2023\)](#), accessed 29 March 2023; Moldova: UNHCR (2023). [Refugee Coordination Forum – Republic of Moldova](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

⁷⁸⁸ Poland: UNHCR, REACH (2022). [Refugees from Ukraine in Poland: Profiling Update \(September 2022\)](#), accessed 23 March 2023; Slovakia: UNHCR, Operational data portal, Refugee situation (2022). [Ukraine Situation: Slovakia - Protection Profiling and Monitoring Factsheet - October 2022](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Czech Republic: IOM UN Migration (2022). [CZECH REPUBLIC REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE AND TCNs](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Romania: UNHCR, [Regional Protection Profiling & Monitoring \(2023\)](#), accessed 29 March 2023.; Moldova: UNHCR, [Regional Protection Profiling & Monitoring \(2023\)](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

⁷⁸⁹ Poland: UNHCR, REACH (2022). [Refugees from Ukraine in Poland: Profiling Update \(September 2022\)](#), accessed 23 March 2023; Slovakia: UNHCR, Operational data portal, Refugee situation (2022). [Ukraine Situation: Slovakia - Protection Profiling and Monitoring Factsheet - October 2022](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Czech Republic: UNHCR (2022). [CZECH REPUBLIC: INTENTION SURVEY AUGUST 2022](#), accessed 5 April 2023; Romania: UNHCR, [Regional Protection Profiling & Monitoring \(2023\)](#), accessed 29 March 2023.; Moldova: UNHCR, [Regional Protection Profiling & Monitoring \(2023\)](#), accessed 29 March 2023.

	# of refugees employed ⁷⁹⁰	740,000 (Mar. 2023)	32,000 individuals (Nov. 2022)	98,000 individuals (Nov. 2022)	5,067	800-850 individuals (Sept.–Nov. 2022)
Access to services	Number of total Ukrainian children in country enrolled in school ⁷⁹¹	187,405 as of 13 January 2023	9,000	57,366	<4,000 (Dec. 2022)	1,800
Attitudes of Host Communities	% of host population believing that Russia is not responsible for starting the war (it's NATO/Ukraine) ⁷⁹²	4%	46%	18%	Ukraine (4.5%), NATO (3.9%) West provoked Russia 26%	22%
	% of host population positive toward Ukrainian refugees (in winter 2022) ⁷⁹³	80% are positive towards Ukrainian refugees	42%	73%	45%	51.4%

⁷⁹⁰ Poland: Notes from Poland (2023). [Half of Polish businesses employ Ukrainians](#), accessed 16 April 2023; Slovakia: Trend.sk (2022). [Cudzincov pracujúcich na Slovensku pribudlo, najpočetnejšou skupinou sú Ukrajinci](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Czech Republic: iROZHLAS.cz (2022). [V Česku pracuje 98 tisíc uprchlíků z Ukrajiny. Zaměstnaných přibývá, počet vyplácených dávek klesá](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Romania: Moody's Analytics [Economic Indicators, Romania - Total Employment \(2023\)](#), accessed 29 March 2023.; Moldova: trm.md (2022). [About 850 Ukrainian refugees have started working in the Republic of Moldova](#), accessed 30 March 2023; UNHCR Help Moldova, [Asistentă pe timp de iarnă \(2022\)](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

⁷⁹¹ Poland: UNHCR (2022). [Ukraine Refugee Situation - Operational Data Portal](#), accessed 24 March 2023; Slovakia: UNICEF (2022). [Europe and Central Asia Region \(ECAR\) Ukraine Refugee Response in Neighboring Countries Humanitarian Situation Report No. 18 – 2022](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Czech Republic: Ondřej Plevák, EURACTIV.cz (2022). [Ukrainian children sign up for Czech schools](#), accessed 30 March 2023; Romania: CANCELARIA PRIM-MINISTRULUI, CONSILIER DE STAT MARIA MĂDĂLINA TURZA (2022). [ROMANIA'S RESPONSE TO THE UKRAINIAN REFUGEE CRISIS. 13 JANUARY 2023](#), accessed 29 March 2023; Moldova: Ministerul Educației și Cercetării Al Republicii Moldova (2022). [Numărul copiilor refugiați din Ucraina încadrați în instituțiile de învățământ general din Republica Moldova este în creștere](#), accessed 30 March 2023.

⁷⁹² Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic: GLOBSEC (2022). [Perception of Ukrainian refugees in the V4](#), accessed 24 March 2023; Romania: Inscop.ro, INSCOP Research (2022). [2 June 2022 – NINE O'CLOCK: INSCOP poll: 71.2 pct of Romanians deem Russia responsible for war in Ukraine](#), accessed 29 March 2023; Moldova: [GLOBSEC TRENDS 2022. CEE amid the war in Ukraine](#), (2022), accessed 29 March 2023.

⁷⁹³ Poland: Staniszewski R. (2023). University of Warsaw, [Społeczna percepcja uchodźców z Ukrainy, migrantów oraz działań podejmowanych przez polskie państwo](#), accessed 24 March 2023; Unia Metropolii Polskich (2022). [3,4 mln Ukraińców w Polsce. Nowy raport Unmii Metropolii Polskich](#), accessed 24 March 2023; Slovakia, Czech Republic: GLOBSEC (2022). Szicherle, P., Kazaz, J., Centre for Democracy & Resilience, [Perception of Ukrainian refugees in the V4](#), accessed 1 March 2023; Romania: Reveal Marketing Research (2022). [Studiu Reveal Marketing Research: Preocupările românilor cu privire la războiul din Ucraina se diminuează](#), accessed 29 March 2023.; Moldova: diez.md (2022). (sondaj) [Care este atitudinea moldovenilor față de persoanele refugiate din Ucraina](#), accessed 30 March 2023; quoting iData research, accessed 30 March 2023.



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