



## UKRAINE SITUATION FLASH UPDATE #4

18 March 2022

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### UNHCR PUBLICATIONS

**18 Mar**

**Briefing Note:** UNHCR warns of rising needs in Ukraine and neighbouring countries, calls for cessation of hostilities

**18 Mar**

**Press Release:** Poland welcomes more than two million refugees from Ukraine

**16 Mar**

**Story:** Polish border town welcomes refugees from Ukraine, but will itself need help

**15 Mar**

**Story:** Refugees fleeing Ukraine to Moldova find onward passage to Romania

**15 Mar**

**Flash Update #3** available [here](#)

**11 Mar**

**Flash Update #2** available [here](#)

**8 Mar**

**Flash Update #1** available [here](#)

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## REFUGEES FLEEING UKRAINE

**3,270,662**

Data as of 18 March 2022

More details: [UNHCR Operational Data Portal](#)  
[Ukraine Refugee Situation](#)

### BACKGROUND

The Russian Federation launched a military offensive against Ukraine on 24 February 2022. In three weeks, more than 3.2 million refugees have been forced to flee Ukraine, while an additional 6.5 million people have been displaced internally within the country. Over 12 million people have been affected in the areas hardest hit by the war within Ukraine. Humanitarian needs are increasing exponentially.

Many people remain trapped in areas of escalating conflict and, with essential services disrupted, are unable to meet their basic needs including food, water and medicines.

UNHCR continues to call for the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, respect for international humanitarian law, and appealed to neighbouring countries to continue keeping their borders open to those fleeing.



Refugees from Ukraine on board a bus at the Palanca border crossing in Moldova ready to be transferred to Romania, March 2022. © UNHCR/Mihai von Eremia

## UKRAINE SITUATION UPDATE

- **The humanitarian needs in eastern Ukraine are becoming even more urgent.** More than 200,000 people are now without access to water across several localities in Donetsk oblast while the constant shelling in Luhansk region has destroyed 80% of some localities, **leaving almost 100,000 families without electricity.**
- **Targeted attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure and lack of safe passage are increasing protection risks and posing serious threats to the lives of thousands of civilians.** Vulnerable population groups such as women and children, people with disabilities or serious medical conditions, as well as older people and minority groups, are increasingly facing barriers in accessing critical services such as transportation, food, medicines, and emergency health care.
- Local authorities across Luhansk region are evacuating some 500 people per day. Overall, **some 11,000 people have been evacuated from Luhansk region** since 24 February.
- **The humanitarian situation in Mariupol and Sumy is extremely dire**, with residents facing a critical and potentially fatal shortage of food, water and medicines.
- On 15 March, the Mariupol City Council announced that some 2,000 private vehicles left the city and another 2,000 cars are awaiting the opportunity to leave. Local officials report that some **350,000 people are still trapped in the encircled city**, most of whom are living in dire conditions.
- On 16 March, there was an attack on a theatre where some 1,000 civilians, including children, were reportedly sheltering in the city of **Mariupol**. It is reported that 130 survivors have been rescued while hundreds more remain missing.
- The Government of Ukraine has adopted a new resolution to simplify registration for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the centralized IDP database. This will improve the understanding of the scope and needs of the IDP population.
- In **Odesa**, authorities have appealed for support for general food assistance to cover the needs of some 450,000 people in the city, as well as support for medicine.
- The UNHCR-led Shelter Cluster published its [first situation report](#) on 15 March.

## UNHCR RESPONSE IN UKRAINE

### In Central and Western Ukraine

- As part of the humanitarian response in Ukraine, and in close coordination with local authorities and other humanitarian agencies, UNHCR continues supporting the establishment of reception centres, delivering core relief items and emergency shelter materials and strengthening support at border crossing points inside Ukraine.
- UNHCR and its partners have assessed 54 registration and transit centre buildings for refurbishment and support in Lviv, Uzhhorod and Vinnytsia. Nine premises are currently prioritized for immediate refurbishment, where an additional 3,500 people can be accommodated.
- In total, almost 24,400 people have received support in the form of food or lifesaving core relief items inside Ukraine.
- In **Lviv**, UNHCR is launching a large-scale multi-purpose cash program to help IDPs who left their homes and belongings behind when fleeing, to cover basic needs such as rent, food and hygiene items. Cash assistance will allow people to make their own choices while also boosting local providers. UNHCR started enrolling IDPs for its programme in Lviv on 17 March and will progressively expand to other cities and regions. An initial team of 80 enrolment support staff have been recruited by UNHCR partners R2P and CrimeaSOS. UNHCR is aiming to reach some 360,000 people with multipurpose cash assistance in the first round of enrolments.
- In **Chernivtsi**, UNHCR received a list of collective centres hosting IDPs and the identified urgent needs to for which assistance is required. Support will be provided based on the needs.
- In **Vinnytsia**, UNHCR met with the authorities to discuss enhancing the capacity of reception centres, complementing authorities' efforts in establishing collective centres, and identifying cases eligible for cash assistance. UNHCR already provided a small number of displaced vulnerable people, identified jointly by UNHCR and partner staff, with one-off cash assistance for specific protection needs.

### In Eastern Ukraine

- Four UNHCR trucks with core relief items to respond to the urgent needs of some 2,000 people successfully delivered aid from People in Need, WFP and WHO to Sumy city on 18 March. This is the first UN convoy for humanitarian assistance to reach the besieged city where tens of thousands people remain trapped without access to basic assistance.
- In Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine, to-date, almost 5,000 people have received emergency shelter support.
- On 14 March, UNHCR delivered 16,000 meters of tarpaulin and 2,000 blankets, as well as mattresses and jerry cans, to 5,400 people affected by the shelling and fighting in Luhansk Oblast. In addition, UNHCR provided 4,500 square meters of transparent film for shelter rehabilitation to more than 3,000 people in Rubizhne.

### In Southern Ukraine

- In **Odesa**, as of 17 March, UNHCR is supporting a permanent consultation point for protection, legal, and social matters at the railway station. UNHCR is assisting between 600 to 800 people transiting daily from Mykolaiv to the western oblasts of Ukraine.
- A UNHCR partner facilitated the state administration's delivery of food and hygiene supplies to the conflict-affected city of **Mykolaiv** to be distributed to its residents in need.

## REGIONAL REFUGEE RESPONSE

### RESPONSE UPDATE

UNHCR staff in neighbouring countries carry out regular protection monitoring at border crossing points, transit centres and reception centres and other locations where refugees pass or gather – to assess protection risks and assist the authorities in addressing them.

As women and children constitute some 90 per cent of those who have fled Ukraine, UNHCR and other agencies have warned of increased risks of trafficking and exploitation. Given the very high protection risks, UNHCR and partners are disseminating key information and awareness raising messages to alert refugees of the risks of trafficking, exploitation and abuse.

UNHCR has also deployed Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) coordinators, as well as gender and child protection experts to Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Hungary, and Romania and have set up protection coordination structures with other partners and national authorities to ensure an efficient and coherent approach. In order to reduce risks of sexual exploitation and abuse, including trafficking, UNHCR has initiated a 'Stay Safe campaign' across the countries neighbouring Ukraine, to raise awareness among persons fleeing Ukraine about the risks and practical measures to mitigate these.

UNHCR and UNICEF have agreed to jointly roll out the Blue Dots in 6 countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, the Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia). Some 25 Blue Dot hubs will be established across the 6 countries. Several hubs are already operational. Other countries may be added as the situation evolves and depending on the needs on the ground.

The Blue Dots are one-stop-shops, and safe spaces which provide a minimum set of protection services for children, families and others with specific needs, in support of existing services and government efforts.

They aim to improve accessibility and standardization of services provided by different partners, as well as predictability through a recognizable label – the 'Blue Dot'. They have become a recognizable component of emergency assistance where all service providers are welcomed to operate, provided the services meet relevant protection standards.

### Hungary

- **Protection:** UNHCR continues monitoring Hungary's border crossing points with Ukraine and Romania, identifying protection gaps and issues for follow up. UNHCR also continues monitoring conditions at reception centres and in temporary shelters, and flagging specific protection concerns for follow-up with authorities.
- UNHCR is working with partners and local organizations on the ground to reinforce vulnerability screenings and referrals for people with specific needs, including older people and those with disabilities, while improving monitoring of unaccompanied and separated children, and referral to specialized services.
- UNHCR in coordination with UNICEF is preparing to establish Blue Dots near border crossing points to provide information, two-way communication, counselling, protection case management and referrals (among other services).

### The Republic of Moldova

- **Protection:** UNHCR has now activated internet connectivity hotspots in 'Blue Dot' hubs at the Otaci and Palanca border crossing points. A third internet hotspot has been set up in Palanca where humanitarian services are provided by local aid organizations. Internet connectivity was also activated in the joint UNHCR-Government registration centre, enabling access to the cash programme for refugees.
- UNHCR has provided five containers at the Palanca bus station to serve as safe spaces, and a Blue Dot hub. At the Palanca border crossing point, UNHCR and partners have increased the availability of information and counselling for refugees, created more comfortable conditions through provision of blankets and benches, and supported faster processing and screening of documents.
- The European Union (EU) 'Solidarity Platform' was established to support EU Member States with responsibility sharing for the reception of arrivals from Ukraine in the context of application of the Temporary Protection Directive. The proposed transfer of vulnerable refugees from countries neighbouring Ukraine to EU Member States will ease the pressure on the neighbouring states and offer protection,



There are now an estimated 6.5 million people internally displaced inside Ukraine



25 'Blue Dot' hubs will be established in 6 countries receiving refugees from Ukraine to respond to the protection needs of children and vulnerable individuals



UNHCR currently has 117 staff on the ground in Ukraine with more on the way when the security situation allows. In neighbouring countries, UNHCR has 157 staff on the ground with more being urgently deployed.

adequate reception conditions and a solution for refugees from Ukraine. In this context, some five EU Member States have so far made concrete pledges to transfer refugees from Moldova to their territory. The first transfers are due to begin in the coming days.

- UNHCR will support with the identification of vulnerable persons in Moldova, and the development of tools to facilitate the transfers, as well as providing any technical advice required by receiving and sending states, based on UNHCR's operational experience with such transfers in Europe and beyond.
- **Multipurpose cash assistance:** UNHCR, with the Ministry of Social Protection and local partners CRS Moldova / Caritas and Diakonia, started its cash-based assistance programme with a first pilot group of 38 families. The mechanism for larger scale cash assistance will be rolled out next week. UNHCR plans to support 200,000 people, including refugees and the host community, over the next four months through the cash assistance programme.

## Poland

- **Protection:** As of 18 March, 2 million refugees have crossed from Ukraine in Poland. UNHCR continues conducting protection monitoring visits to reception centres to identify areas of need and intervention. Needs in the areas of protection including protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) are being assessed and response mechanisms being established.
- UNHCR is also distributing information materials for refugees in reception centres and exploring entry points for in-person presence and additional material support.
- The authorities in Warsaw have indicated a need for support from UNHCR in the area of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). UNHCR has already deployed an MHPSS expert to Poland to support joint efforts with WHO to scale up MHPSS activities. UNHCR and WHO also agreed to co-chair a MHPSS Task Force in Poland.
- UNHCR is monitoring the entry of people with disabilities as well as unaccompanied and separated children without parental care to better understand the measures in place and provide the required support.
- The Blue Dot hubs are expected to commence in Warsaw this week, in collaboration with UNICEF and other partners, with expansion to other Polish cities next week.
- **Multipurpose Cash Assistance:** The Multi-purpose cash assistance programme was launched in Warsaw on 11 March and is now being extended to additional cities in Poland.

## Romania

- **Protection** of unaccompanied and separated children who continue to arrive remains a priority to national authorities and UN Agencies. Blue Dot hubs

have been set up at Sighet and Siret border crossing points. UNHCR is working with UNICEF to expand upon this and operationalize additional Blue Dots and to increase the visibility of the Blue Dot system.

- Eleven new locations, including the Bucharest train station, have been identified for the establishment of additional Blue Dots. Efforts to map available services and partners are also underway.
- In an agreement with the administrators of the national, government-led information platform [dopomoha.ro](http://dopomoha.ro), PSEA (protection against sexual exploitation and abuse) information material and messaging from the UNHCR 'Stay Safe' campaign will be included on the platform.
- UNHCR, through an NGO partner, is supporting authorities with the identification and referral of persons with specific needs at transit centres and will scale up this support. Within the framework of the child protection working group, UNHCR and partners will work with the authorities for strengthening of referrals and assistance.
- UNHCR and partners are providing in-person counselling on access to financial aid, school enrollment, employment, social assistance and long-term accommodation to refugees who intend to stay in Romania. Further counselling is being provided through established hotlines.
- Approx. 2300 people arrived in Romania from Palanca border crossing as part of the assisted fast track transfers on specially arranged busses jointly organized by Romanian and Moldovan authorities with support of UNHCR and IOM (out of over 4,000 people transferred in total).
- With the arrivals of additional staff, the operation has set up its first two permanent offices in Suceava (northern border) and Galati (south-east). On 17 March, a third office should be established in Iasi (border with Moldova).

## Slovakia

- **Protection:** UNHCR is undertaking needs assessments with UNICEF and partners for the establishment of Blue Dots at border crossing points and Košice train station, to provide information on asylum, temporary protection and specific available services for those arriving from Ukraine.
- UNHCR is assisting with the identification of persons with vulnerabilities, coordinating with Government counterparts to reinforce access to information and referral to specific services.
- On 18 March, UNHCR attended a meeting with government counterparts (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Finance, and others) to discuss the possibility to launch cash-based assistance for refugees arriving to Slovakia from Ukraine, noting that certain technical elements require review. The meeting was also attended by IOM, UNICEF, WFP, and IFRC.

## COORDINATION

### Ukraine

UNHCR leads the Protection and Shelter Clusters. As of 1 March 2022, the Camp Coordination Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster was activated in Ukraine. In addition, as co-lead of the Logistics Working Group in Ukraine, UNHCR is facilitating the movement of humanitarian convoys in coordination with OCHA.

### Regional Refugee Response

UNHCR has facilitated the establishment of coordination structures in line with the Refugee Coordination Model, in order to support the overall coordination of the relevant governments. A Regional Refugee Response Plan has been developed and is currently under adjustment; some 100 organizations will contribute for an initial period of 6 months.

Inter-agency Refugee Coordination Forums (RCF), led by UNHCR, have been established at country level in Hungary, the Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, to support the efforts of the concerned governments. The structures are meant to be agile and shall be adjusted as the situation evolves.

Within the RCFs in Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, inter-agency partners are now discussing the establishment of sector-specific Working Groups.

In Moldova, an Inter-Agency Coordination Group has been established with more than 100 participating members. Separate sectoral Working Group meetings have also begun. The Government of Moldova has established a Single Emergency Management Centre under the Prime Minister's Office, where UNHCR represents the Inter-Agency Coordination Group, ensuring coordination between the two.

In Poland, UNHCR has established a RCF that includes local and international actors across eight sectors and working groups. Specifically, UNHCR is currently leading the Protection Sector, GBV Sub-Sector, Technical Cash Working Group, Basic Needs Sector and the Logistics Sector. UNHCR has also established direct engagements and focal points with the government of Poland for coordination.

### FINANCIAL NEEDS

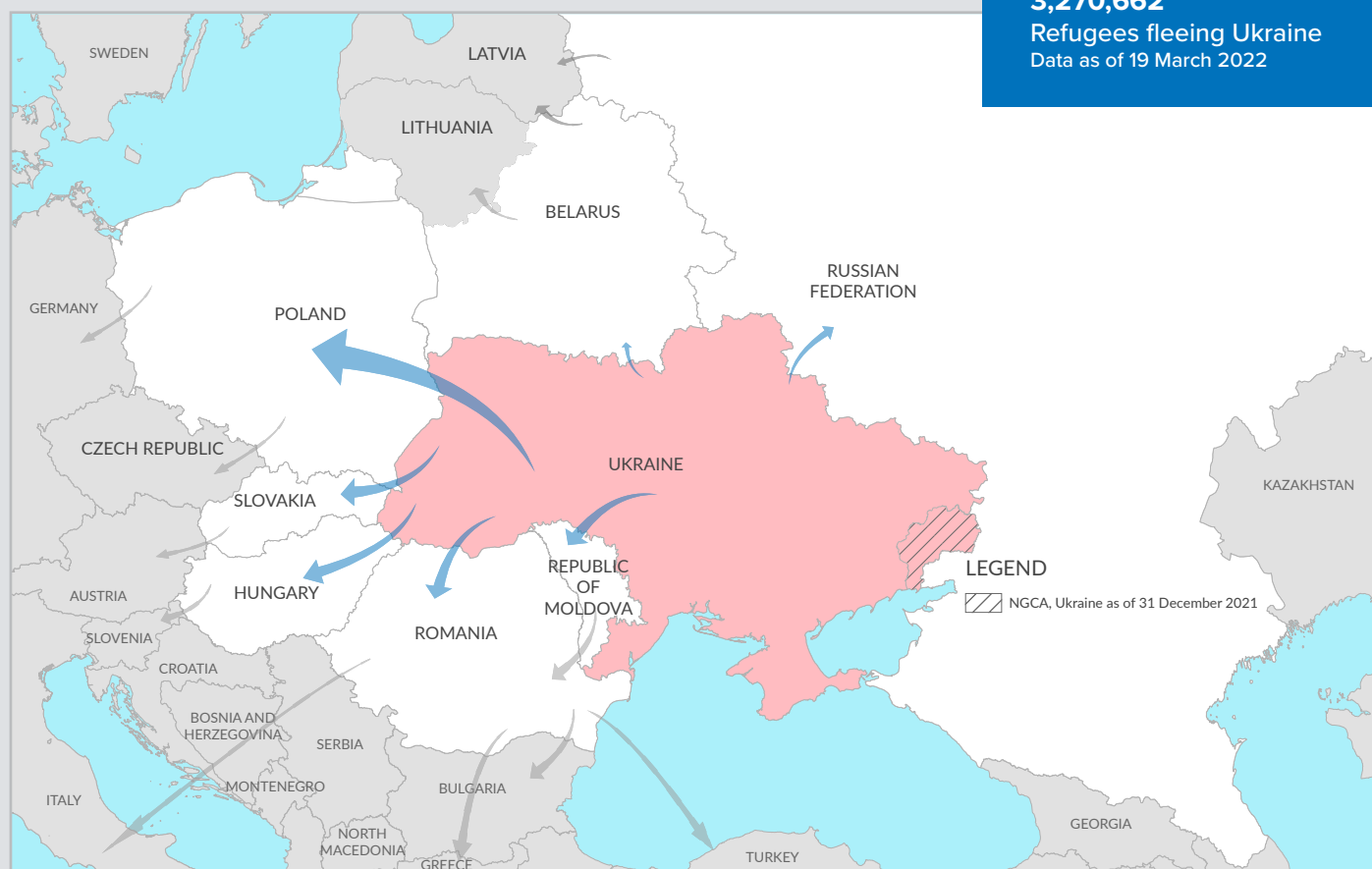
Links:

Ukraine Situation: [Regional Refugee Response Plan](#)

UN: [Ukraine Flash Appeal](#)

UNCHR: [Supplementary Appeal](#)

## ► UKRAINE REFUGEE SITUATION



Disclaimer: The boundaries and names used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.