Polish Economic Institute

Poles and Ukrainians – the challenges of integrating refugees

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Key numbers

1 million

Ukrainian refugees are currently in Poland (based on the number of PESELs issued)

74%

of refugees from Ukraine in Poland plan to return to Ukraine, according to a survey commissioned by the Centre for Economic Strategy in Ukraine

79.8%

of refugees from Ukraine in Poland believe that Polish society has a positive attitude towards them, according to a survey commissioned by the Centre for Economic Strategy in Ukraine

24.3%

of refugees from Ukraine in Poland believe that Polish society's attitude towards them has deteriorated since they arrived in Poland, according to a survey commissioned by the Centre for Economic Strategy in Ukraine

67.5%

of Poles have encountered unfavourable opinions about Ukrainian refugees, most often among their acquaintances of neighbours

68%

of Poles do not link the deterioration of their economic situation to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Poland

67%

of Poles disagree with the statement that the influx of refugees from Ukraine to Poland has made it more difficult for Poles to use public services, such as healthcare

41%

of Poles agree with the statement that Ukrainian refugees often have sense of entitlement and expect too much. **44%** of Poles hold the opposite view

20%

of respondents say they did not get involved in any form of assistance for refugees from Ukraine in 2022

44%

of Poles ceased to engage in assistance for refugees from Ukraine between spring and autumn 2022

36%

of Poles do not want to donate money to help refugees from Ukraine

from 84% to 50%

decrease in the percentage of Poles who believe that Ukrainian refugees are people who require assistance between spring and autumn 2022

Key findings

- The key condition for a successful integration policy for migrants and refugees in a state is acceptance by the host society. There are a series of tools that support this aim, which should be implemented as widely and rapidly as possible in Poland in connection with the arrival refugees from Ukraine in 2022.
- Refugees differ from other migrants in significant ways due to the exceptional circumstances that forced them to leave their countries (often in a hurry). For this reason, they require greater assistance in various spheres of life in the host country, including formal and legal affairs, or in terms of informing them about important regulations, rights, and the resources available for them.
- One of the key areas that should be taken into account in refugee integration policy is countering discrimination and the spread of anti-refugee attitudes and narratives in the host society.
- Most citizens in countries in the EU and the West, broadly understood, generally have a positive attitude to taking in refugees from Ukraine. The Ukrainian refugees themselves also feel that society's attitude towards them in the country where they currently live is generally positive.
- The refugees who have ended up in Poland received varied support in various European countries. Smaller fraction/percentage of them reported receiving financial that they received financial assistance, or help finding a place to live or dealing with the necessary documents.
- Poles largely continue to hold positive attitudes towards refugees from Ukraine. Most Poles are not worried about a deterioration in the economic situation in the country or their household, and have no problem living alongside refugees, with their presence in the public sphere, or their employment at Polish companies and public institutions.
- At the same time, most Poles have encountered unfavourable opinions about refugees from Ukraine. Most often, they have heard them among their acquaintances and in the workplace. These opinions mainly concerned refugees' abuse of their privileges and their sense of entitlement.

- However, certain changes in attitudes to refugees in 2022 can be seen: a lower percentage of respondents believe that the refugees will create value added on the Polish labour market, that foreigners enrich Polish culture, or ensuring safety and shelter for refugees should be a priority for the authorities. At the same time, the percentage of people who believe that refugees should receive social benefits such as the 500+ child benefit has increased. The percentage of people who encounter unfavourable opinions about Ukrainians has also increased.

- Fatigue with helping and the topic of the war and refugees is a well-known phenomenon in the literature. Some increases in anti-Ukrainian behaviour — which are still relatively rare in Polish society — are therefore unsurprising. Monitoring the development of these attitudes and preventing them using various tools will be crucial for conducting an effective refugee policy.

Introduction and research methodology

Over 4 million Ukrainian citizens came to Poland in 2022 (Border Guard, 2023); of these, 1 million of Ukrainian refugees are registered in PESEL system (www1, as of April 6, 2023). These war refugees joined the large Ukrainian community living in Poland. This situation – in which Poland has gone from a country of emigration to a country of immigration – is a continuation of a trend that has been going on for a decade and has no precedent in Poland's postwar history (Okólski, 2021). The positive migration balance in 2022 had a purely external cause: Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which neighbours Poland and where the border was open to Ukrainians.

It is worth examining the challenges linked to the sudden increase in the number of people in Poland from abroad. In this report, we analyse the problems associated with the integration of such a large number of refugees forced to flee the war. We outline the challenges and tools for their integration, as well as selected behavioural barriers that may hindexr this process. We also present the change in Poles' attitudes towards refugees and their integration between two points in time (spring and autumn 2022). Our analysis is conducted against a backdrop of data from international surveys, which also measured changes in attitudes towards refugees and the state's involvement in aid efforts.

We reviewed the literature and data and conducted our own surveys (CATI) on a representative group of 2200 Polish citizens aged 20 or more. The sample was selected in terms of a person's gender, age and the size of their place of residence (with an assumed minimum filling of the quotas of 80%). In addition, the answers were weighted in terms of significant demographic characteristics (gender, age, the size of the place of residence, education and voivodeship) to ensure representativeness.

To some extent, this study continues and refers to the PEI's research in spring 2022 on the scale of the assistance to refugees from Ukraine provided by Polish society during the first three months after the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022. This research also included threads on Polish society's attitude towards refugees (Baszczak et al., 2022a).

Above all, this report seeks to show Poles' attitudes towards refugees from Ukraine. To explore this, we asked respondents relatively simple questions about the different dimensions of their contact with Ukrainians in Poland. Some of the questions refer

to issues raised in the PEI's spring 2022 report, where we analysed the scale of assistance to refugees in Polish society, among other things. In addition, the report presents the results of research by others, in particular the Centre for Economic Strategy in Ukraine.

The first chapter presents the conclusions of a review of literature on the integration of refugee communities in different countries. The behavioural perspective, which reveals behavioural tools in migration policy, is particularly noteworthy.

The second chapter contains a brief overview of research from various countries on attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees. The aim is to present our analysis and, more broadly, Poles' attitudes towards Ukrainians, in a broader international context.

In the third chapter, we presented the key results of our own research; that is, the distribution of answers to selected questions (divided into thematic categories). It is worth paying attention to Polish society's relations with and assessment of refugees, as well as the various forms of assistance provided to them.

The report ends with a discussion and recommendations that will help maintain Poles' positive attitude towards Ukrainians, while enabling refugees to participate in a voluntary and friendly integration process in Poland.

Chapter 1. Refugees and integration

1.1. From reception to integration

It is important to distinguish between refugees and migrants. War refugees' situation is more complex; they have to face many challenges not only of an economic or organisational nature, but also a behavioural and, above all, existential nature. The status of refugees and migrants is also regulated by different legal regimes (www2).

"Refugee" is legal term defined in the 1951 Refugee Convention. For the purposes of our analysis, a refugee is a person forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence (Refugee Convention, 1951). Refugees have a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group. They cannot go home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are the main reasons why people flee abroad. War refugees are often forced to leave all their lives and belongings behind, so they have very limited financial resources.

In contrast, a migrant who changes their place of residence and work of their own free will. In the academic literature, economic migration is defined as the spatial movement of economically active people to improve their or their family members' situation, or to obtain the financial resources needed to maintain their existing forms of life and farming, perceived as the condition for maintaining cultural identity (Stoczek, 1997).

To sum up, refugees differ from migrants in two ways. Firstly, they change their place of residence for a potentially short time. Secondly, people fleeing war or persecution are not making voluntary choices and decisions. Refugees therefore have to move from existential problems to logistical issues — that is, finding accommodation or securing their financial situation — in a very short time. There is therefore a rapid and forced change in refugees' hierarchy of needs, motivations and fears (Isański et al., 2022).

Refugees have specific concerns and needs. In a survey conducted among a group of Ukrainian war refugees in Poland, Germany and Ireland, respondents were asked about their most important needs and greatest fears. Their top ones included finding a job, material assistance (clothes, shoes and food), renting a flat long term, medical assistance, a language course, a kindergarten or nursery for the children, ensuring contact with relatives,

legal assistance, and psychological support, psychotherapy or rehabilitation. The most common fears included fear for relatives who remain in Ukraine, fear for the fate of their homeland, lack of money and means of subsistence, lack of knowledge about when it will be safe to return, anxiety caused by not speaking the language, not knowing whether it will be possible to get the necessary medical assistance, and anxiety about how they will be received by people (Isański et al., 2022).

Research conducted in Poland in spring 2022 sought to measure war trauma using the RHS-15 scale. It found that three in four refugees experience disorders caused by traumatic stress, and half the respondents were diagnosed with psychological distress (Długosz, Kryvachuk, Izdebska-Długosz, 2022).

In addition to the psychological baggage that refugees carry when fleeing war-torn areas, they also have to face challenges in their new place of residence. These include the following challenges::

- **cultural** – not speaking the local language, a different religion, differences in customs and cultural norms;
- **economic** – unemployment, a wage and skill gap in employment;
- **infrastructural** – the availability of flats and houses for rent, urban and regional problems, transport exclusion;
- **social** – the lack of a network, separation from their families, limited participation in social and political life, young people's more limited access to education and integration.

While this list is of the difficulties faced by refugees is not exhaustive, it illustrates the complexity of the situation in which Ukrainian refugees in Poland found themselves in, and the scale of challenges linked to their integration.

Questions about the possibility of this integration had already been raised before the influx of refugees caused by the invasion in 2022 (Kaczmarczyk et al., 2020). Initially, the focus was on the humanitarian aspect of integration: providing children with schooling and adults with jobs. However, many months into the war, which is unlikely to end soon, questions about the possibility of permanently integrating the large number of Ukrainians currently in Poland are arising.[1]

The literature also considers different research perspectives linked to integration. One of them is abandoning the concept of integration in favour of social anchoring. On the one hand, this approach accepts the refugees' preferences to treat their stay in the host country as temporary. On the other hand, it leaves them free to decide whether and to what extent (and how) they will engage in the integration process in the new society (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2016).

[1] It is worth noting that the concept of integration is not unambiguous and can be defined in different ways in the literature. The integration process and its final result depend not only on the efficiency of the host country's institutions, but also on migrants' and refugees' aspirations and capabilities (Kaczmarczyk et al., 2020).

Although integrating such a large number of refugees can be a complex and long-term process, it is worth reaching for actions with track record of supporting it. They include:

1. **Help learning the language.** Speaking the language is key to communicating effectively in the new society, making social contacts and sorting out matters at administrative offices, schools or the doctor's. It can reduce the feeling of alienation (Morrice et al., 2021).
2. **Help finding work.** Insofar as possible, refugees should be assisted throughout the entire process: writing a CV, searching for offers and preparing for job interviews (Ortlieb et al., 2020).
3. **Organising events and social initiatives.** A good solution is to organise — at the local level — opportunities and places to meet, such as concerts or sports events where refugees can get to know the local community better (Battisti, Peri, Romiti, 2018; Martén, Hainmueller, Hangartner, 2019).
4. **Providing psychological care.** Refugees often need help coping with the negative psychological consequences of trauma. Access to appropriate psychological and psychiatric assistance is crucial (Bogic, Njoku, Priebe, 2015; Ellis et al., 2019).
5. **Information about the resources available.** Refugees often do not know what opportunities they can take advantage of in their new place of residence. It is worth creating information points where, in a friendly and understandable setting, they can obtain information about accessing healthcare, education and public services, or participating in the culture sphere, broadly understood.
6. **Training support.** It is not always enough to help people find a new job or provide them with information about resources. Training or retraining opportunities that enable refugees to adapt to the labour market more easily are also an important step (Oduntan, Ruthven, 2019).
7. **Combating discrimination and unequal treatment.** Promoting a culture of equality and acceptance that ensures that refugees are treated fairly and equally on the labour market, in the social sphere, in education and in the healthcare system (Lutterbach, Beelmann, 2021; Wyszynski, Guerra, Bierwiaczonek, 2020).

Acceptance by the host society is a necessary condition for successful integration. It is impossible to implement the solutions above effectively without willingness to cooperate and openness on the part of the host society. It is important to remember that acceptance is not a constant and may change over time.

To sum up, war refugees are in a fundamentally situation from migrants. Specific solutions are that offer the possibility of integration, and which function and adapt in the long term, are therefore needed. The condition for long-term initiatives' and efforts' effectiveness is acceptance by the host society. This is a prerequisite for successful integration. For this reason, we want to examine the behavioural barriers to integration. This term, defined by negations, covers barriers, obstacles and difficulties that are difficult to classify as economic, structural or institutional.

1.2. The behavioural dimension of integration

In the previous section, we briefly described the differences between refugees and economic migrants, as well as solutions that can be implemented by state institutions to facilitate the refugees' integration with the host society. Before we analyse attitudes towards refugees in Polish society and assess selected aspects of their inclusion in particular sectors of social life in Poland, this section looks at the behavioural side of integration. These are aspects that are only just being discovery that affect refugees' decisions about the scope of integration that they wish to or can participate in. These barriers are only just being recognised in social research and require further, in-depth studies (Schuettler, 2021).

Integration also has an economic dimension. The willingness to work in a new place where a person is being forced to live is influenced by many factors that are easy to overlook: the time horizon of the decisions made by refugees, the scope and type of psychosocial initiatives, the sense of belonging to a group, and the extent of social bonds (Schuettler, 2021).

Time matters. Refugees' situation is uncertain and changing rapidly. They do not know how long they will stay in their current location and whether, and how many times, they will have to change it. Depending on the time horizon, they may be more or less willing to invest in learning the language, developing or adapting their skills to the labour market, or seeking their target job. Research also shows that refugees who intend to stay in their place of residence for longer are more likely to invest in the human capital specific to the host country (Strang, Ager, 2010; Chin, Cortes, 2015).

Almost naturally, the question of the return on investment in human capital arises. Refugees who are certain that, if they want to stay in a given country, their legal situation will be regulated without any obstacles, and that they will have full access to the labour market, education, healthcare are social security system, will be more likely to invest in themselves, both in terms of human capital and hard assets.

Refugees' experiences have a significant impact on their general outlook on life and their tendency to make risky decisions. Depending on their personal experiences, refugees may be less prone to making risky decisions, more prone to self-discriminate, and their self-esteem may be below average. This combination of factors can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies, whereby refugees are less integrated into society, work in jobs below their skill level, earn less, and are less willing to take advantage of training or educational opportunities in the host country. The literature emphasises the effectiveness of initiatives in low-resource environments that aim to neutralise the effects of the vicious circle of low self-esteem and discrimination (Bertrand, Duflo, 2017).

Social networks are a safeguard against isolation and loneliness, and an effective source of information. Unlike economic migrants, people forced to change their place of residence cannot selected where they want (and can)

go to in advance. The presence of other migrants or refugees of the same nationality therefore helps them adapt to their living conditions more rapidly. Research shows that refugees in places where their national minority is already present find a job faster; **interestingly, though, they are less likely to invest in human capital (Battisti, Peri, Romiti, 2018).**

All these phenomena and their negative consequences may constitute the everyday reality of hundreds of thousands or millions of Ukrainian refugees, most of whom are women and children. The reality of this anxiety, fear and sometimes trauma should be taken into account when designing public policies aimed at helping refugees integrate in the new place where they have found themselves.

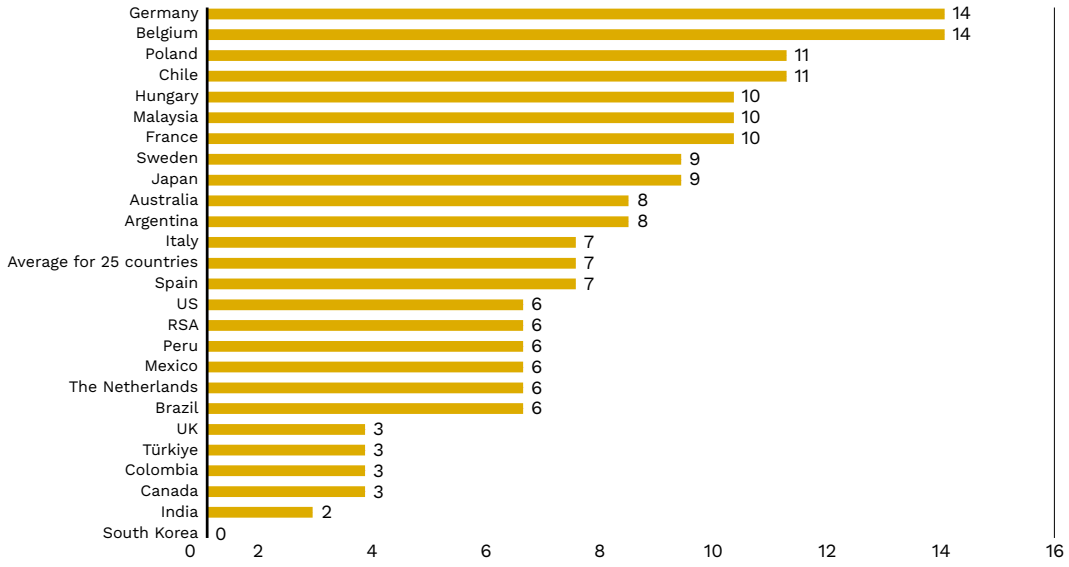
Behavioural barriers may hamper the integration of war refugees in Poland, both in terms of speed and effectiveness. This means that — in addition to measures improving access to education, the labour market, healthcare and social security — the most serious behavioural barriers should be identified and tools for mitigating them prepared.

Chapter 2. Studies on refugees in various countries

2.1. Global attitudes to refugees

Social acceptance for taking in and supporting refugees from Ukraine is still high in Poland and other countries in the region, but it is declining over time. Its decrease weakens societies' and countries' to take in Ukrainian refugees fleeing the war. Support for taking in refugees is still high (66% globally), but it fell by 7pp between April 2022 and December 2022, which points to a risk linked to the weakening determination to provide assistance and bear its cost.

Chart 1. Fall in support for taking in refugees in 03.04.2022-11.12.2022 (pp)



Source: prepared by PEI based on IPSOS (2023).

Comparing the results of surveys conducted right after the Russian invasion with those at the end of 2022 allows us to conclude that, in the countries surveyed, people are less willing to take in refugees. In Europe, the largest drop in support has been in Germany (-14 pp), Belgium (-14 pp), Poland (-11 pp), Hungary (-11 pp) and France (-10 pp). Although the average support for taking in refugees in the 28 countries surveyed is still high (66%), it is decreasing over time. Although these values may vary between different studies, the trend is clear and does not raise any doubts. Perhaps governments and NGOs will step up efforts towards social inclusion in the near future (www3).

At the same time, the number of respondents saying that the war in Ukraine is not a worry for them and that their countries should stay away from this conflict has increased significantly. In Hungary, 60% of respondents agree with this statement, 43% in Germany, 40% in the US, 36% each in Belgium and Italy, and 34% in France.

It is worth taking a closer look at the results of the survey on support for taking in refugees in countries in Central Europe. The wording of the questions differed from that in the above-mentioned IPSOS survey, so the answers differ, too. According to the September 2022 survey, almost 84% of Poles, 82% of Hungarians and 73% of Czechs assess the acceptance of war refugees from Ukraine in positive terms. Against this backdrop, Slovakia stands out: as many as 52% of respondents assessed the influx of refugees in negative terms.

A similar situation, though slightly more varied, can be seen in the case of support for helping refugees, and especially continuing to do so. As many as 88% of Poles, 87% of Hungarians and 81% of Czechs believe that refugees from Ukraine should continue to receive full or reduced support. Society in Slovakia is the most polarised: 42% oppose continuing aid, while 45% support it.

To assess the data above properly, we also need to consider how many refugees each country took in, as a percentage of the population. Depending on estimates, it can be said that there are over 1.5 million refugees in Poland (4% of the total population), around in the Czech Republic (4.3%), around 103,000 in Slovakia (1.9%) and around 33,000 in Hungary (0.3%). The large and rapid influx of refugees made it necessary for civil society to get involved. In Poland, as many as 67% of respondents said they provided assistance themselves, 54% in the Czech Republic, 46% in Slovakia and 34% in Hungary (www4).

In the European Commission survey conducted in EU countries published in February 2023, support in the EU is still high, although, as in the case of other surveys, a slight decrease has been observed since spring 2022.

91% of respondents (a decrease of 1 pp since summer 2022) agree that people affected by war need to be provided with humanitarian aid. In this poll, respondents were asked about taking in refugees (not only continuing assistance). On average, 88% (-2 pp) support the EU taking in refugees, with more than half (55%) saying that they “completely agree”. Only 9% of people oppose taking in refugees, an increase of just 1 pp. Poland is twelfth in this ranking.

Romania (24%), the Czech Republic (24%), Austria (19%), Slovakia (15%), Hungary (12%) and Germany (11%) are the most opposed to the EU taking in refugees.

2.2. Surveys among refugees by Ukrainian institutions

Survey conducted from Ukrainian refugees' perspective also shows a clearly positive attitude towards them in the countries where they found themselves after the Russian invasion (Михайлишина, Самойлюк, Томіліна, 2023). A report published by the Centre for Economic Strategy in Ukraine in February 2023 shows that — although they generally feel well received and many have received various forms of humanitarian aid and material support — refugees are also noticing deteriorating attitudes towards them and are mostly planning to return to Ukraine quick.

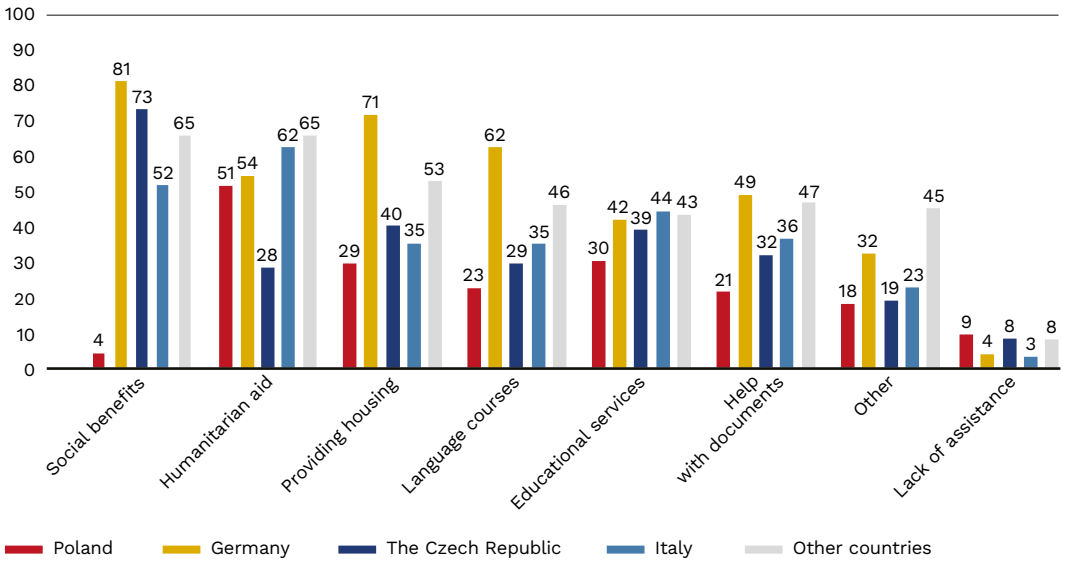
According to this survey, Poland took in the largest percentage of refugees: 38.4% Compared to other countries, as well as the total age cross-section of refugees, fewer young adults (18-24 years old) arrived in Poland, but also fewer older ones (50-65 and 65+). This means that middle-aged Ukrainians arrived in the biggest numbers. Refugees in Poland currently live in towns of various sizes; there are no major differences in the percentage of refugees living in large, medium and small towns and villages.

Compared to other countries, a lower percentage of the refugees who arrived in Poland received support in almost every category of assistance (Chart 2). This is partly due to the scale of the influx of Ukrainians to Poland, as well as the fact that not all refugees had the opportunity to receive, say, humanitarian or housing assistance, because some used their own means of transport and stayed with friends or family who were already in Poland. It can be presumed that these situations were more frequent in Poland (where there was already a large Ukrainian minority) than, say, the Czech Republic or Italy. In some categories, the discrepancy between the countries compared is very visible, especially if we take into account that, according to the report we published last spring, a significant share of Polish society was involved in various forms of assistance.

It can be seen that the disproportions between Poland and other countries in terms of the percentage of refugees who received a given type of support are primarily for more "systemic" or "top-down" forms of assistance, such as social benefits, accommodation, or assistance with formalities and documents. In areas where citizens could take responsibility for a significant part of aid in a bottom-up way, such as humanitarian matters, refugees arriving in Poland did not feel much less assistance than in other countries. In this context, it is also worth mentioning the question "Do you pay for your current apartment?". 62% of Ukrainian refugees in Poland pay the full amount for their accommodation (mainly rent), nearly 14% receive some kind of assistance from the authorities or pay less than

the market price, and 20% do not pay for their accommodation at all (this group does not include people living with their family or friends). In Germany, the proportions are almost the opposite: 69% of refugees do not pay for their current housing and 9% pay the full price. The situation is similar in Italy, while the Czech Republic is somewhere in between: 40% of Ukrainians do not pay for their housing there and nearly 23% pay the market price.

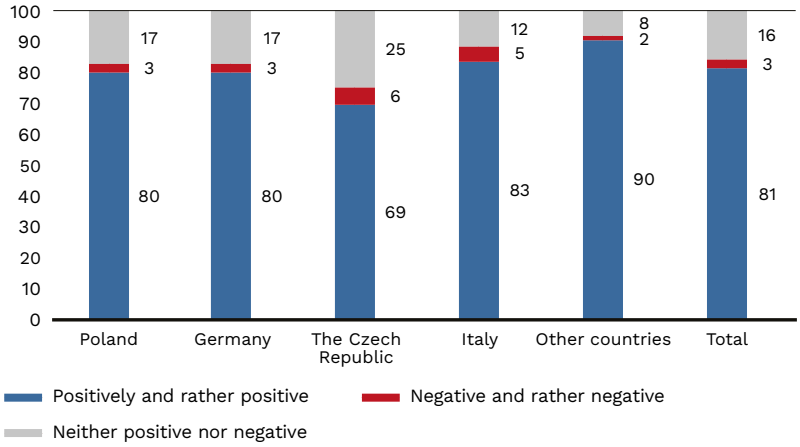
Chart 2. Percentage of refugees from who confirm that they have received various forms of assistance in the country where they are staying, by country (%)



Source: prepared by PEI based on Info Sapiens survey commissioned by the Centre for Economic Strategy in Ukraine (Михайлишина, Самойлюк, Томіліна, 2023, p. 18).

European societies generally have a very positive attitude towards Ukrainians. Overall, Ukrainians feel a positive attitude towards themselves in the countries that came to — over 80% of the refugees hold this view. In Poland, the percentage of refugees who believe that Poles have a negative attitude towards them does not exceed 3% (Chart 3).

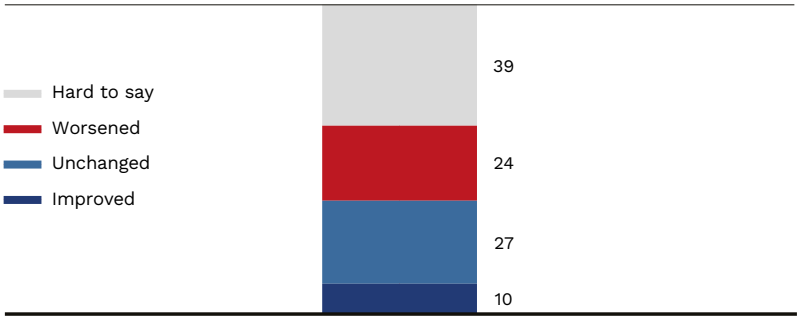
Chart 3. Attitude to Ukrainian refugees in different countries that they came to (%)



Source: prepared by PEI based Info Sapiens survey commissioned by the Centre for Economic Strategy in Ukraine (Михайлишина, Самойлюк, Томіліна, 2023, p. 59).

Refugees were also asked whether they thought that attitudes towards them had changed last year. Most refugees in each of the countries analysed think that these attitudes have not changed or that it is difficult to assess. In addition, more refugees believe that attitudes towards them have deteriorated (19%) than improved (12.9%). 9.7% of the Ukrainians who came to Poland believe that attitudes towards them in Polish society have improved, while as many as 24.3% feel that they have deteriorated (Chart 4). In some countries, these proportions are reversed: in Italy, nearly 20% of Ukrainians feel that Italians' attitude to refugees has improved (8% say it has deteriorated). In, Germany these two percentages are: very similar (13.5% improved, 14.7% deteriorated).

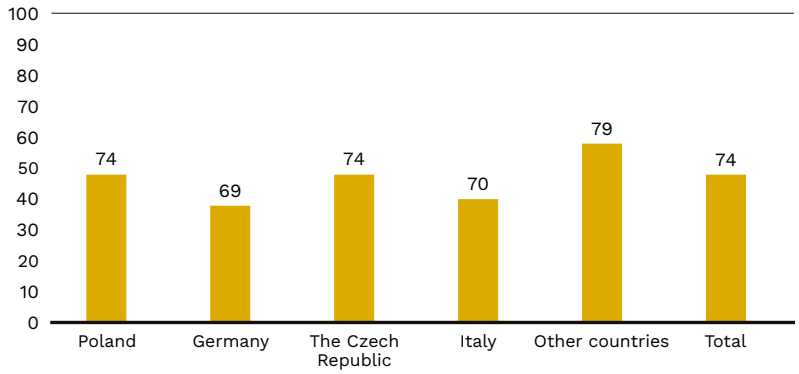
Chart 4. Responses by refugees in Poland to the question "Has local residents' attitude to Ukrainians in the country where you are staying changed since you arrived?" (%)



Source: prepared by PEI based on Info Sapiens survey commissioned by the Centre for Economic Strategy in Ukraine (2023, p. 59).

A significant share of Ukrainians plan to return to their country as quickly as possible. Overall, 50% of refugees are convinced that they want to return to Ukraine, and another 24% rather want to. The distribution of responses among refugees in Poland is almost identical (Chart 5).

Chart 5. Percentage of Ukrainian refugees who say they want to return to Ukraine, by current country of residence (%)



Source: prepared by PEI based on Info Sapiens survey commissioned by the Centre for Economic Strategy in Ukraine (Михайлишина, Самойлюк, Томіліна, 2023, p. 37).

Chapter 3. Poles and refugees from Ukraine

3.1. Contact with Ukrainians — where we meet and what we say about them

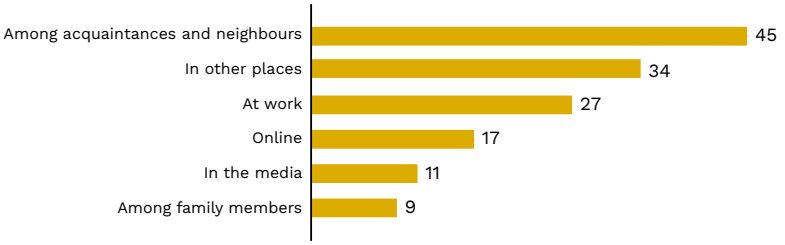
Before the war, 40% of respondents did not meet Ukrainians in their everyday life. In 2022, this percentage fell significantly and is now 6%. Respondents most often meet Ukrainians at shops, shopping centres and these kinds of places, as well as near their homes, in the neighbourhood. One in four Poles meets Ukrainians in their place of work (Chart 6).

Chart 6. Responses to the question "Where do you regularly meet refugees from Ukraine?" (%)

Note: the percentages do not add up to 100% – multiple choice questions.
Source: prepared by PEI based on the survey.

Offensive stereotypes and opinions about Ukrainians are a fundamental problem in current and future relations between the nationalities that make up Polish society. Over two-thirds of Poles (67.5%) encounter unfavourable comments about refugees from Ukraine. We also asked respondents where they encounter these opinions. Almost half say among friends or neighbours (this is the most frequent response), but only 9% say among family members. The second-most frequent response was at respondents' place of work (27%). The relative rarity of negative comments encountered online may come as a surprise; this response was chosen by 17% of respondents (Chart 7).

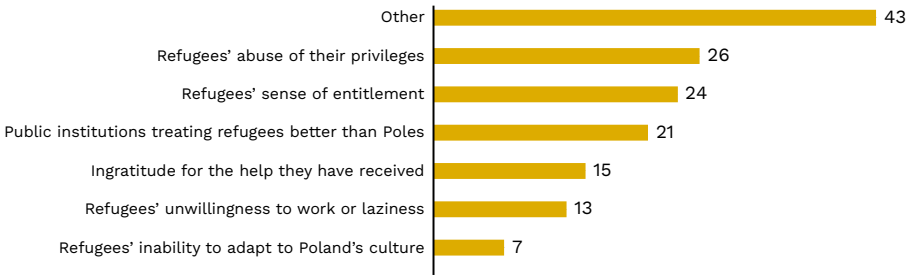
Chart 7. Responses to the question "Where do you encounter unfavourable opinions about refugees from Ukraine?" (%)



Note: the percentages do not add up to 100% – multiple choice questions.
Source: prepared by PEI based on the survey.

To some extent, unfavourable opinions about refugees focused on a specific topic. The most common responses were: refugees' sense of entitlement (24%), their abuse of their privileges (26%), and public institutions treating refugees better than Poles (21%) (Chart 8). All these answers can be interpreted as a sense of unfairly competing for resources — respondents' own or public ones — with Ukrainians.

Chart 8. Responses to the question "What did the unfavourable opinions about refugees from Ukraine that you encountered concern?" (%)



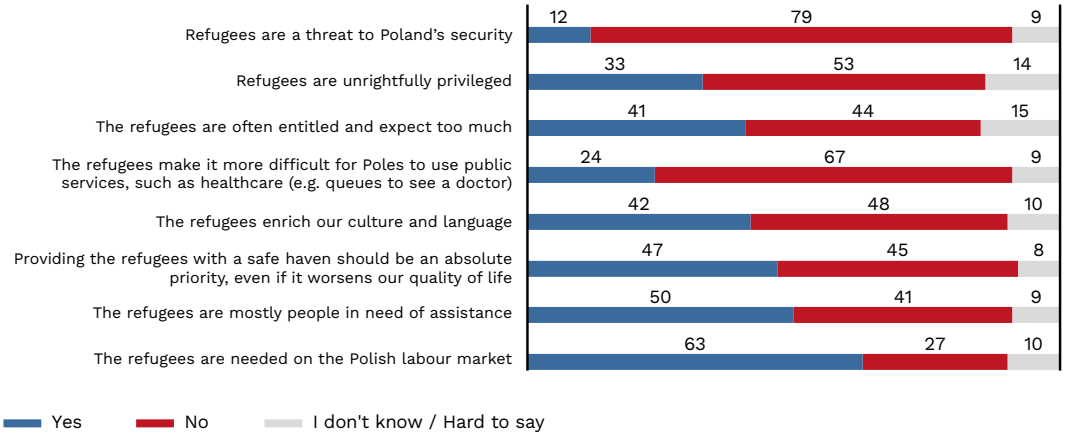
Note: multiple choice question — the values do not add up to 100%.
Source: prepared by PEI based on the survey.

What was the respondents' opinion about refugees from Ukraine? We asked them two questions: one about their assessment of the impact of the refugees' arrival on their own life, and another about their very general view on refugees from Ukraine in Poland. In both cases, some of the responses suggested by us had a positive connotation, while others had a negative one (respondents could also answer the questions in their own words).

Often, respondents did not see the refugees' presence as having a negative impact on their private lives. 68% of respondents do not associate the Ukrainians' arrival in Poland with the deterioration of their own economic situation (20% do). 73% of Poles do not think that they have problems seeing a doctor due to the refugees. Only slightly more than 3% of the respondents believe that, due to the influx of refugees from Ukraine, the education of their children at Polish schools has deteriorated or there have been problems with enrolling their children at a nursery or kindergarten. 84% disagree that the arrival of refugees has made them feel that the neighbourhood they live in has become more dangerous.

Instead, respondents tend to agree that people who have come from Ukraine need to be helped and that they are useful on the labour market (Chart 9). On some issues, such as whether Polish culture has been enriched by the Ukrainians, respondents were more divided. However, there is a visible lack of agreement with popular stereotypes about refugees, such as their negative impact on various public services or privileged status. Only the rather vague and more emotional category of entitlement and Ukrainians' overly high expectations towards Poles seems to be a disturbing signal, as 41% of respondents hold this view (although 44% still do not).

Chart 9. Responses to question on opinions on the presence of refugees from Ukraine in Poland



Source: prepared by PEI based on the survey.

The prospect of direct contact with Ukrainians does not seem negative to Poles, either. Just 11% of respondents would not be willing to see a refugee doctor. 6% of respondents said they would be reluctant to work with a refugee, and 4% to have one as their neighbour. We are aware that, usually, few people are prejudiced enough to reveal their prejudices in these types of questions, which only examine respondents' declared attitude towards life with others, but it is worth showing the scale of this overt reluctance.

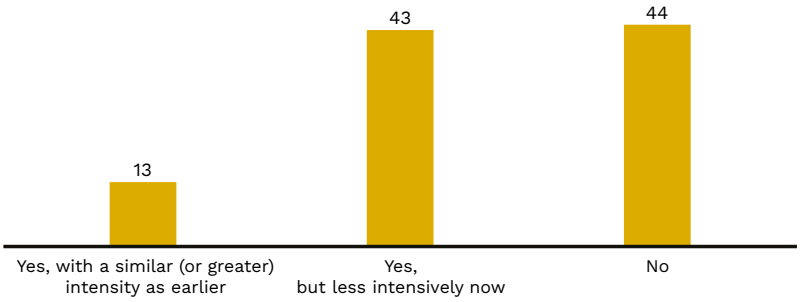
Poles still generally have a very positive attitude towards the Ukrainians in Poland, or at least this was the case when our data was collected. More significant splits are only visible in the sphere of the discourse about refugees. Some Poles are slightly irritated by the feeling that Ukrainians are privileged in some vague sense. However, asked about specifics — access to a doctor, the situation at schools, competition on the labour market, and so one — respondents tended to avoid making negative judgements about the impact of the refugees' arrival in Poland. Therefore, according to our assessment, **clearly anti-Ukrainian sentiment is present among a minority of Poles**; these kinds of views may be held by around 20-25% of society, or even less.

3.2. What kind of assistance for Ukrainians?

The relatively low occurrence of anti-Ukrainian sentiment in Polish society is also shown by Poles' continued assistance for refugees. In our report describing the scale of this assistance during the first three months after the war began in 2022, we provided an in-depth analysis of it and estimated its scale (around 0.4% of GDP; that is, PLN 9-10 billion).

Poles are still involved in assistance, but on a smaller scale. Somewhat over 13% of respondents say that their involvement in helping refugees at the time when the survey was conducted is as intense as before (closer to the start of the invasion). 43% claim that they are still helping, but less intensively. This means that that over half of the Poles who helped refugees at all are still doing so (around 8 months after the Russian invasion). 44% of Poles have ceased to be involved in helping Ukrainians (Chart 10).

Chart 10. Involvement in helping refugees in November 2022 – among those who have previously provided assistance (%)

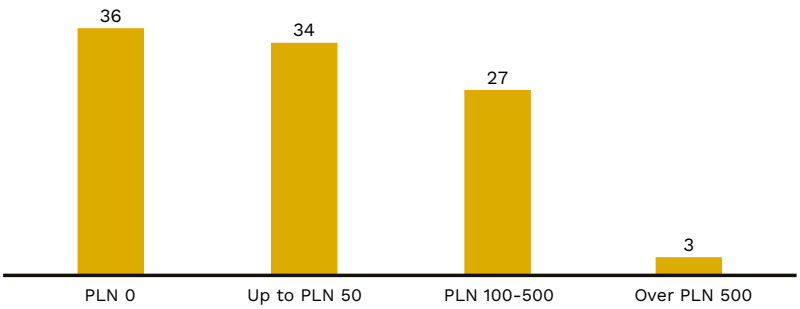


Source: prepared by PEI based on the survey.

The main cause of the change in intensity is the deterioration in the material situation of the respondent's household (36%). Another 15% of respondents are less involved in assistance than earlier due to general concern about the worsening economic situation in Poland. Around 18% of respondents feel war fatigue.

We also asked respondents what amount they would be able to donate to helping refugees in the coming month. The most common response (36% of respondents) was PLN 0. Meanwhile, 34% would be ready to donate up to PLN 50, 27% PLN 100-500, and just 3% of respondents over PLN 500 (Chart 11).

Chart 11. Responses to the question "What amount would be inclined to spend to helping refugees in the coming month?" (%)



Source: prepared by PEI based on the survey.

This data is in stark contrast to the scale of Poles' assistance for Ukrainian refugees during the first three months after the invasion, which we examined last year (Baszczak et al., 2022a). This is not surprising. Firstly, the social effort put into helping Ukrainians then was truly huge. Secondly, a kind of fatigue with the subject of the war in general, which reduces willingness to help the people affected by it, is a typical phenomenon. However, as of autumn 2022, there was still a large group of Poles willing to get involved in some way, and the public sector has taken over the responsibility to a greater extent, in terms of financing various forms of assistance.

3.3. Change in attitudes between spring and autumn 2022

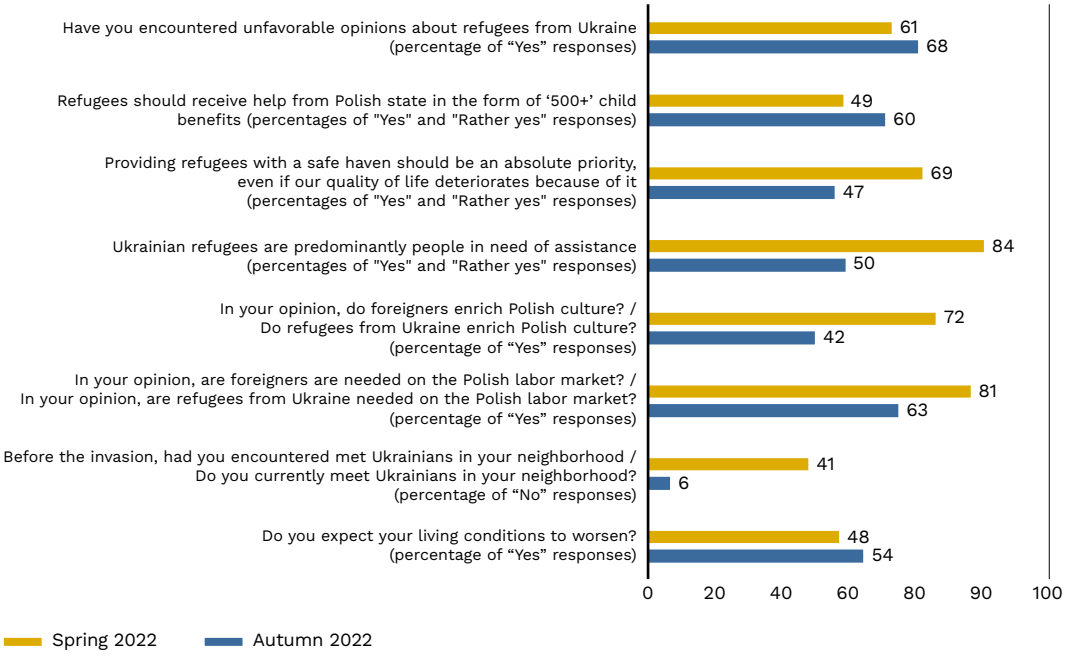
In this part of the report, we present the changes in Poles' attitudes towards refugees between spring and autumn 2022. Poles continue to strongly support refugees from Ukraine, although their determination is beginning to weaken. Already, certain problems linked to war fatigue and migration-related challenges can be observed. In our spring 2022

survey (Baszczak et al., 2022a), 81% of respondents agreed that Ukrainians are needed on the labour market; in the autumn survey, this was 63% (18 pp less). Asked whether foreigners make Polish culture more diverse, 72% of people said yes in the first survey. In the autumn, this was 42% (30 pp less).

Poles are less and less convinced that Ukrainian refugees are people who need help. In the spring 2022 survey, 84% said "yes" or "rather yes". A few months later, only around 50% did (a decrease of 34 pp). With this moderate change in attitudes, priorities are also changing. In spring 2022, 69% of respondents agreed ("yes" and "probably yes") that providing refugees with a safe haven should be an absolute priority, even if it reduces our quality of life. In the autumn survey, 47% held this view (a decrease of 22 pp). There was also a slight increase in the number of people who said that they had encountered unfavourable opinions about the refugees (an increase from 61% to around 67%).

Nevertheless, attitudes that suggest an increased willingness to help refugees in narrow areas (e.g. the 500+ benefit) can also be observed. In this case, the percentage of respondents who agreed that refugees should use this benefit increased from 49% to around 59%.

Chart 12. Comparison of the answers to selected questions in the spring and autumn 2022 surveys (%)



Source: prepared by PEI based on survey research.

Chapter 4. Discussion

Our analysis of earlier research and the results of our own research conducted in the spring and autumn of 2022 indicates that, although support for Ukraine and the willingness to provide refugees with assistance remain high, they vary depending on the country surveyed and change over time.

The first months after the invasion and the images of the approaching Russian troops had a strong impact on societies' and states' reactions. However, over time, with the recurring news from the Ukrainian front, people's willingness to help begins to decrease, albeit slightly.

The academic literature includes attempts to identify the phenomenon known as "compassion fatigue". During long-term crises such as war, accompanied by the sharing of information about the conflict and refugees' difficult situation, there may be — in the absence of information about the potential end of the conflict — a sense of fatigue with providing assistance and therefore less willingness to support people in need (Sorenson et al., 2016). Although this effect has mainly been studied in the area of healthcare, where staff have long-term contact with people who are suffering, there are also studies that aim to determine whether this also applies to migration crises caused by armed conflicts (Aldamen, 2023).

In addition, long-term exposure to violence (especially in social media available 24 hours a day) makes people get used to those kinds of content and situations. Violence ceases to provoke violent reactions of opposition, and its motivational power is weakened. Gradually, people can become insensitive to the suffering of others (Bushman & Anderson, 2009).

Another factor that may — but does not have to — reduce people's willingness to help is their difficulty understanding large numbers. Large numbers (such as the number of migrants, refugees, soldiers who have been killed, or people affected by an earthquake) are not always properly understood by people due to their abstract nature and therefore have less influence on decisions and attitudes than they should. In addition, there are problems with properly comparing several large numbers, even if they differ by orders of magnitude (for example, spending on aid for refugees and the size of the state budget). This is called psychic numbing (Slovic, 2007).

Compassion fatigue, psychic numbness and the associated failure to understand large numbers, as well as frequent exposure to violence, are factors that should be taken into account when analysing the decrease, albeit slight, in people's willingness to help refugees. If we include external circumstances that make everyday life more difficult, such as inflation, there is a mix of causes and effects that must be monitored carefully and counteracted at the earliest stage possible.

In the case of matters as delicate as relations with refugee communities, especially with the war still underway so close, it is better to tread carefully. Although our study has found many positive signals that Poles have a very positive attitude towards Ukrainians after almost ten months of living together (not to mention years of living in a country with a large minority of Ukrainian immigrants before the war), it is worth paying attention to the group with anti-Ukrainian views. So far, it seems quite small, but we do not know how its size will be affected by the changing economic and social conditions in Poland (such as inflation, wage growth, various parties election campaigns, and so on), as well as factors as difficult to determine as changes on the frontlines. On the one hand, the potential worsening of the war-related situation in Ukraine could result another wave of thousands of people fleeing to Poland; on the other hand, it could increase the feeling that helping Ukraine is pointless. For the time being, however, we have not observed extensive organisational consolidation of these groups in Poland or the protests against helping Ukraine that occur in some neighbouring countries (such as the Czech Republic). Monitoring this phenomenon, and potentially counteracting it, is in the state's vital interest.

The situation in Poland could also turn out to be so exceptional that the experience of other countries, from other periods when migration policy was conducted, may be of little use. As we wrote in our report on state interventionism (Baszczak et al., 2022b), the times we live in are unprecedented in that we are dealing with three great crises at once: the war (and waves of refugees), the pandemic, and climate change. Each of these is a huge political, social and, of course, economic challenge, and their simultaneous occurrence requires the creation and implementation of unique ideas, academic concepts, state programmes and tools, work by the public, private and non-governmental sectors, and funding. The uniqueness of the current situation means that coping solutions that work in other places and circumstances may be difficult or pointless.

Finally, we wish to point out that our study is not conclusive. The data we have published is one of the voices in the ongoing and much-needed debate on Poles' attitude to refugees from Ukraine. We wanted to show the change in attitudes between spring and autumn 2022. We have found it to be limited, but clear. In our study, we only hypothesised, but did not determine, what factors may be behind this change and how it might develop in the future.

Recommendations

Ukrainian refugees in Poland have access to the labour market, healthcare, the real estate market and education system. The next step is to undertake initiatives that remove the obstacles and barriers to using the opportunities that are institutionally available.

A fundamental condition of successful integration is the host society's acceptance and jointly facing challenged in one's shared home, so particular attention should be paid to changes in social attitudes towards the refugees.

1. Monitoring discriminatory attitudes and behaviour

Although refugees are still welcome in Poland, the scale of discriminatory attitudes and behaviour should be monitored on an ongoing basis. This will enable actions and initiatives that hamper or mitigate changes in social attitudes unfavourable from the refugees' point of view to be identified and prepared early on. However, it is not just a matter of regularly probing social sentiment in this area and analysing cases of individual discrimination, for example, by companies on the labour market or individual citizens in various areas of life. It is also about monitoring existing anti-Ukrainian circles. Their consolidation and organisation, the creation and dissemination of anti-Ukrainian narratives and fake news, and showing this message in public (for example, at demonstrations) could contribute significantly to changing attitudes towards refugees in the medium and long term (it can be assumed that Ukrainians will constitute an important minority in Poland for many years to come). Anti-Ukrainian attitudes could be part of the political game, especially during an election year. In addition, attention should be paid to organisations already suspected of ties to Russia.

2. Affirmative action

If discriminatory incidents take place, it will be too late. The same applies to the consolidation and organisation of anti-Ukrainian circles. To reduce the risk of anti-Ukrainian attitudes and strengthen communities, various campaigns, events and initiatives could be organised at the local level (district, municipality, and so on) to establish and develop contacts between the local refugee community and Poles, as a kind of prevention. Days of Ukrainian culture, bilingual concerts and festivities, joint celebrations of holidays from both countries: these kinds of events could contribute to more frequent contact between Poles and Ukrainians, a better understanding of the challenges and problems faced by refugees, and help people who have arrived from abroad learn about the nuances of local affairs and residents' daily life. These kinds of activities are already taking place in Poland, but it is also a matter of support from the central authorities for local governments and NGOs.

3. From access to the labour market to available work

Refugees require not only access to the labour market and the same forms of support as Polish citizens, but also — because of their experience of war and violence, and because Polish language skills vary among refugees — they require more specific support when looking for a job appropriate to their education, knowledge and qualifications.

Finding a job in line with refugees' qualifications is often a problem: not all entities in Poland accept various Ukrainian diplomas, certificates and similar documents proving a person's skills and education. In wartime, refugees may have problems ensuring that all the procedures necessary for these documents to be recognised are completed on the Ukrainian side. Facilitations would help highly skilled refugees — those with a high level of human capital — not to feel discriminated against on the labour market.

4. Open schools and universities

Making it possible for refugees to continue their education is an important part of successful integration. Efforts to overcome the catalogue of interconnected challenges in the education system should therefore be continuing: not speaking Polish, psychological support for Ukrainian children and young people, discrepancies in educational programmes at all stages of education, and ensuring the coordination of joint efforts by schools, local governments and the central government.

5. Ensuring security and support in the long term

Refugees will be more likely to integrate if they are provided with greater security and psychological support. These are the foundation for long-term thinking, investment in human capital or making riskier decisions when it comes to education or work.

6. Social research among refugees

It is impossible to meet the challenges relating to the reception or integration of refugees without knowing the problems they face. Systematic, long-term research into refugees' concerns, needs and plans is therefore very important. This knowledge will be the first step towards more targeted public interventions aimed at providing refugees with the right living, work and education conditions.

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List of charts

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The Polish Economic Institute

The Polish Economic Institute is a public economic think tank dating back to 1928. Its research primarily spans macroeconomics, energy and climate, foreign trade, economic foresight, the digital economy and behavioural economics. The Institute provides reports, analyses and recommendations for key areas of the economy and social life in Poland, taking into account the international situation.

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