

Equality versus equity.

How complementary approaches are required to support vulnerable Ukrainian refugees.



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Owner: Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and
PCPM – Polish Center for International Aid

Approved by: NRC Country Director, Poland

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Norwegian Refugee Council

Prinsens gate 2
N-0152 Oslo
Norway
www.nrc.no

PCPM – Polish Center for International Aid

Solankowa 3
02-939 Warsaw
Poland
www.pcpm.org.pl

Cover photo: Ingrid Prestetun/NRC

NRC staff with the help of volunteers assists refugees arriving from Ukraine to Warsaw/Poland.

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Summary

This paper explores the social assistance from the Polish government extended to Ukrainian refugees who have arrived in Poland since the escalation of war in Ukraine in February 2022. It discusses the difference between the policy versus the implementation of that support and the needs of Ukrainians. This paper unpacks common misperceptions about the scale and scope of this support and sheds light on barriers and challenges faced by refugees from Ukraine in meeting their emergency needs and then medium-term integration needs. Despite Poland fully embracing Ukrainian refugees into its social protection system, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Polish Center for International Aid (PCPM) assert that the policy foundations, combined with design issues and challenges in implementation, make it challenging for Ukrainians to receive adequate support or become self-sufficient. These supply-side challenges are compounded by financial, physical, and social barriers to access support, which inhibit some of the most vulnerable Ukrainians from achieving an adequate standard of living in Poland. Both government and the international community need to take heed of this, particularly given current discussions about the future of humanitarian assistance to support the Ukraine crisis, the approaching winter, rising costs of living for Poles and Ukrainians, and the potential for a new influx of refugees¹ and migrants into Poland.

This desk review provides stakeholders supporting the humanitarian and recovery needs of Ukrainian refugees in Poland with additional information and analysis to use in reviewing existing support mechanisms or designing new forms of support. These stakeholders include local and national authorities and the national and international community.

In line with the EU Temporary Protection Directive activated on 2 March 2022, Poland's Special Act of 12 March 2022 provides access to a substantial range of entitlements to Ukrainians entering since the recent escalation of the conflict. This includes financial assistance and access to

¹ Poland's Special Act does not classify people fleeing war in Ukraine as refugees, however, some Polish researchers opt to use the term 'war refugees' (uchodźcy wojenni). NRC and PCPM follow the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of the Refugees and use the term refugees when referring to Ukrainians and TCSs fleeing war and conflict in their home countries.

key services. Poland has demonstrated how legal inclusion in a country's social protection system can enable refugees to access essential services relatively quickly. Thanks to this legislation, a special one-off benefit of 300 PLN was paid out to 1.06 million Ukrainians (with the total value of assistance amounting up to 320 million PLN). As well, over 400,000 Ukrainian children received child support benefits from Poland's regular welfare programme. NRC and PCPM see this as a commendable example of scaling up social protection in a fast-evolving refugee crisis. However, as the paper will show, the design and implementation of this policy needs revising to better meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable members of the Ukrainian refugees in Poland. Moreover, the EU directive is weak about its application to nationals from third countries fleeing Ukraine (an estimated 276,000)² and consequently, Poland excludes this group from its assistance.³

While we recognize the very considerable costs borne by the Polish government and society to receive, host and shelter refugees, it should be stressed that the value of government cash assistance is insufficient to meet the basic financial needs of refugees, which can be greater than those of Polish households as the refugees seldom can benefit from social housing schemes in Poland. While the financial burden on the national budget of the assistance to Ukrainian refugees and the political calculation to keep the levels of refugee assistance comparable to the social assistance received by Polish citizens is understood, the refugee support is neither comprehensive nor inclusive enough to meet the range of vulnerabilities of those refugee households who have recently arrived with little financial or social capital. Consequently, the generosity of the government approach is compromised by the inclusiveness, size, and mode of support, which by design does not include third country nationals that have fled Ukraine and by default makes it difficult for Ukrainians to access the full range of support they are entitled to under the new policy.

International organisations who provide parallel financial support, fail to fill these gaps adequately. As the initial injection of international funding wears off and subsequent financing is forecast on much lower levels, three vulnerable groups of refugees stand out to be in a high need for continued social assistance:

² IOM (2022) Migration Data Portal. https://www.migrationdataportal.org/ukraine/crisis-movements#_ftnref1

³ ILO (2022) *ILO Brief: The impact of the Ukraine crisis on the world of work: Initial assessments*, 11 May 2022 https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/europe/-/ro-geneva/documents/briefingnote/wcms_844295.pdf

- a) elderly refugees – the average pension in Ukraine is below 100 USD per month, which is insufficient to cover even the most basic costs of living in Poland;
- b) persons with disabilities – whose access to the Polish social assistance schemes is delayed by protracted medical check-ups;
- c) women with small children who are unable to access the labour market due to their primary caregiving duties.

In this paper we focus on social cash assistance, as well as employment because these are the specific provisions under the Special Act and because of the link with humanitarian cash provision. We do not explore access to social insurance, nor other public services such as education and healthcare.

This paper firstly outlines the government policy and administrative approach for Ukrainians to access social cash assistance to meet immediate and then further needs (section 1). There is such a complex range of schemes and inconsistent implementation of assistance across localities that in reality, most Ukrainians are not aware of their rights to support.⁴ Moreover, these interventions are designed based on characteristics of and assumptions about Polish citizens, which are not necessarily relevant for many Ukrainian refugees. We suggest that while this approach will be sufficient for many, it cannot be successful for everyone.

We next explore, in section 2, the implications of the part of the policy which allows Ukrainians to work or run businesses so that they may be self-sufficient and the implications of this given the demographics of current Ukrainian refugees. In section 3, we look at informal social protection, and how Ukrainians have less social capital than Polish citizens which is a vital addition to the formal protection. Moreover, Ukrainians appear likely to be remitting a proportion of any cash assistance they receive back to Ukraine, further eroding the cash assistance they receive. Finally, in section 4, we suggest how these challenges may be overcome.

The conclusions from these findings, eight months into the escalation of conflict, suggest a shift in approach to support for Ukrainian refugees is needed by both the government of Poland and the national and

⁴ NRC (2022) *Economic Inclusion of Ukrainian Refugees in Poland*, July 2022. <https://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/economic-inclusion-of-ukrainian-refugees-in-poland/>

In NRC's research "all women expressed confusion about what types of social benefits they were eligible for. The majority had received some assistance but were unaware if they were entitled to additional assistance."

international community to ensure the most vulnerable Ukrainians in Poland are reached. This paper provides wider lessons for how the humanitarian community can engage with a government's social protection system and the pitfalls of relying on it too much in the first phases of a humanitarian crisis.

Key terms

Social protection: social protection systems are collections of government interventions that help individuals and families, especially the poor and vulnerable cope with crises and shocks, find jobs, invest in the health and education of their children, and protect the ageing population. They can be categorised as social assistance, social insurance, social services, and labour market interventions. Informal social protection are reciprocal arrangements within and between communities, such as remittances and rotating savings groups. It can provide vital support to vulnerable households, particularly in the absence of formal social protection, although it is not managed by the state. [NRC]

Social assistance: This is non-contributory direct and indirect government support in cash or kind to support poor households as part of their welfare system. This includes child grants, non-contributory old age pensions, subsidies, free school meals.

Cash transfers: The provision of assistance in the form of money - either physical currency or e-cash - to recipients (individuals, households, or communities). Cash transfers are by definition unrestricted in terms of use and distinct from restricted modalities including vouchers and in-kind assistance. [CaLP]

Minimum expenditure basket: A Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) requires the identification and quantification of basic needs items and services that can be monetised and are accessible in adequate quality through local markets and services. Items and services included in an MEB are those that households in each context are likely to prioritize, on a regular or seasonal basis. [CaLP]

Means-testing: This is a method to identify households that are eligible for support based on their financial means, such as income and capital.

Proxy Means-testing: A proxy means test is a method to identify individuals/households eligible for assistance based on certain observable criteria that are a 'proxy' for earnings and expenditure in the absence of wealth and income data (World Bank).

Universal benefits: Tax-financed benefits or transfers that are paid to all citizens or inhabitants falling into a specific category of the population (for example, families with children or people over a certain age. [ILO]

Summary findings

There are several obstacles for Ukrainian refugees in accessing social assistance in Poland, which in practice makes the scheme both less generous and leaves Ukrainians in a markedly more vulnerable position than anticipated by the policy.

- The intention of the government's policies is commendable, but equal treatment is not a suitable solution for a population with diverse needs. We must analyse this support considering the characteristics of Ukrainian refugees, their ability to use the support, the higher costs of their needs, or their barriers to entry. These differ compared to Polish citizens, for whom (most of) the interventions were designed.
- This approach is inequitable for all refugees from Ukraine. While some will have sought refuge in Poland because of the large pre-2022 Ukrainian diaspora, others will lack access to other forms of income and support, including a support network across family and community. Ukrainian refugees who arrive with few of their own resources depend entirely on the solidarity of volunteers and private individuals. Moreover, Ukrainian refugees are likely remitting a proportion of their cash back to Ukraine⁵.
- Ongoing external humanitarian support is vital to 'top up' government social assistance, and help Ukrainians meet their basic needs. NRC and PCPM find gaps in the way the international community have responded to the support from the Polish government, meaning Ukrainians lack sufficient means to cope which in turn prolongs the presence of humanitarian agencies.
- The lack of data inhibits accurate needs analysis. This makes it virtually impossible to identify those falling through the cracks, including refugees from third countries. Consequently, this affects the design and effectiveness of humanitarian programmes.

⁵ ACAPS, *POLAND Refugee influx from Ukraine*, Briefing Note 25 May 2022, p. 6. <https://www.acaps.org/special-report/poland-refugee-influx-ukraine>

Selection of recommendations⁶

For the Government of Poland

1. Improve the quality of the response by improving data collection and/or sharing on the numbers of Ukrainians who have accessed employment through official channels and who have applied for and received benefits, so that all actors can make better programming decisions.
2. Continue with the payments in support of host families, especially for those hosting Ukrainians with additional vulnerability criteria.
3. Improve the quality of access: allow third-country nationals who have fled Ukraine to remain in Poland; ensure that information and application forms are readily available in Ukrainian and Russian; allow vulnerable groups ineligible for ‘the Big 4’ social assistance schemes to support on a similar (i.e., not means-tested) basis; ensure humanitarian aid does not count towards income and remains tax free.
4. Ensure good collaboration and coordination around contingency planning for a new wave of refugees from Ukraine. This should include emergency support (in a multi-sector approach, coordinated between sectors and across actors), as well as planning medium-term programming for those that remain in Poland.

For donors & the international community:

5. Shift from multi-purpose cash to a more specific approach which identifies and fills gaps in government assistance, such as topping up government assistance for highly vulnerable groups.
6. Improve coordination between national civil society and international humanitarian actors with the Ministry of Family and Social Policy to link cash transfers, referrals, accommodation, and services at national and local levels.
7. Provide space in financial and coordination mechanisms such as through working groups and access to funding and technical support, for the local NGO sector to assess, advocate and monitor social assistance to hold the government to account in the long term. With government, plan financial contingencies for another influx of Ukrainians and the coordination between humanitarian and government cash support, at least in the short term.
8. Cash assistance is necessary to address gaps in assistance for the most vulnerable groups of refugees who cannot rely on the social assistance schemes in Poland. Targeted assistance to these groups should never be perceived as a pull factor regarding movement of refugees from Ukraine to Poland.

⁶ For detailed recommendations please see section 4 on page 33

NRC and PCPM are particularly concerned for the welfare of the significant minority of people who have fled from Ukraine to Poland since February 2022 but who are stateless, undocumented, or are non-Ukrainians.

We also recognise that as the global economic situation continues to deteriorate, the government social assistance budget will also have to accommodate growing needs within vulnerable Polish households.

What does this mean for humanitarians linking with social protection in crises?

The problems outlined in this paper cannot all be resolved by state assistance. Social assistance inevitably focuses on broad rather than tailored programmes. The international and local NGO community has a strong role to provide targeted support to meet diverse needs and vulnerabilities, rather than focusing on multi-purpose cash transfers. While we advocate for state provided universal access to scalable social protection, our own interventions must continue to plug where government assistance falls short for vulnerable households.

Introduction

Since the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine on 24 February 2022, over 7.2 million⁷ people entered Poland from Ukraine. For many, Poland was only a transit country before moving to other countries of the EU or beyond and others have returned but around 60% propose to stay⁸. The speed of government response was generous and the scale of its support, impressive. As of 12 September 2022, 1.4 million people had registered for Temporary Protection in Poland, the highest number in the European Union⁹. More than 92% of those crossing identify as female. Over half (58%) are with one or more children, 15% with at least one person aged 60 or more and over one fifth (22%) of people are travelling with a person with a disability.¹⁰

On 12 March 2022, the Polish Parliament passed the Special Act to assist Ukrainian nationals entering Poland due to the armed conflict. This entitles, every citizen of Ukraine and their spouse, who entered Poland after the 23 February 2022 **to asylum in Poland for a period of 18 months, until 24 August 2023** plus a package of support, including temporary one-off support to help with immediate needs, accommodation support for a few months, the right to work plus access to some social benefits and services, for those with more chronic needs.

On the surface, this is a generous policy which has been rapidly and effectively implemented, with a practical balance between immediate support and access to employment to enable self-sufficiency. Two standards for such a policy must be protection and non-discrimination¹¹. We explore here how the policy excludes many at risk and how its design and implementation make it insufficient for the specific characteristics and vulnerabilities of Ukrainian refugees.

Poland's Special Act falls under the EU Temporary Protection Directive from 2 March 2022 (which was on hold since 2010). The EU Directive is weak regarding refugee

⁷ UNHCR data portal, update 01 November 2022. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

⁸ REACH & UNHCR (2022) *Refugees from Ukraine: Profiling Update*, September 2022 (July data) <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/95735>

⁹ REACH & UNHCR data portal, update 20 September 2022. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10781>

¹⁰ REACH & UNHCR (2022) *Refugees from Ukraine: Profiling Update*, September 2022 (July data) <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/95735>

¹¹ Carrera, S., M. Ineli, Ciger, L. Vosyliute, L. Brumat (2022) *The Eu Grants Temporary Protection For People Fleeing War In Ukraine: Time to rethink unequal solidarity in EU asylum policy*. CEPS Policy Insights No 2022-09/ March 2022. https://www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CEPS-PI2022-09_ASILE_EU-grants-temporary-protection-for-people-fleeing-war-in-Ukraine-1.pdf

status¹², giving EU Member States choice over whether to grant refugee status to those fleeing Ukraine. Poland has chosen not to grant this¹³ so is not beholden to the rights of refugees within the framework of the 1951 Geneva Convention. Around 4%¹⁴ of the total fleeing Ukraine are Third Country Nationals, accounting for over 319,000¹⁵ people; while the vast majority of them left the Polish territory either to other EU countries or back home, those who remain lack adequate assistance. Consequently, people previously living legally as refugees or seeking asylum in Ukraine do not qualify for assistance and are not allowed to remain in Poland. **This is a fundamental policy gap underpinning this report.**

Under the Special Act, the government is implementing a three-pronged approach to support the incomes of Ukrainian refugees in Poland. Firstly, to offer one-off cash assistance and temporary shelter support, secondly, to provide access to employment so that Ukrainians can be financially self-sufficient and finally, to extend Polish social assistance to Ukrainians. This paper explores what this approach means in practice and suggests improvements that could deliver the right to social protection for displaced Ukrainians. Ukrainians also have access to public services (health, education, psychosocial support), which we do not discuss here.

To access state support in Poland, Ukrainians must register in the Universal Electronic System for Registration of the Population (PESEL) to receive an identification number. This is a mandatory registration system for anyone to apply for government services or assistance, obtain a driving license, or start a business in Poland.

Pillar 1: This comprises two types of cash transfers, designed specifically for Ukrainian refugees. A one-off cash transfer of PLN 300 (USD 65) per person to meet the immediate needs of each Ukrainian who has entered Poland due to the war and is not planning to transit elsewhere¹⁶. It is administered by local government but financed by the national budget, at an estimated PLN 320m (USD 65m)¹⁷.

Secondly, Ukrainians can benefit from a medium-term indirect cash transfer to contribute to accommodation costs for those hosted in Polish households, paid to the Polish host. This is a compensation of PLN 40 per day (USD 9) for up to 120 days, paid to households hosting refugees. In April this was extended for a further two months.

¹² Carrera, S., M. Ineli, Ciger, L. Vosyliute, L.Brumat (2022) *The EU Grants Temporary Protection For People Fleeing War In Ukraine: Time to rethink unequal solidarity in EU asylum policy*. CEPS Policy Insights No 2022-09/ March 2022. https://www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CEPS-PI2022-09_ASILE_EU-grants-temporary-protection-for-people-fleeing-war-in-Ukraine-1.pdf

¹³ Carrera, S., M. Ineli, Ciger, L. Vosyliute, L.Brumat (2022) *The Eu Grants Temporary Protection For People Fleeing War In Ukraine: Time to rethink unequal solidarity in EU asylum policy*. CEPS Policy Insights No 2022-09/ March 2022. https://www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CEPS-PI2022-09_ASILE_EU-grants-temporary-protection-for-people-fleeing-war-in-Ukraine-1.pdf

¹⁴ NRC's calculations are based on UNHCR/REACH data of 7,405,590 refugees from Ukraine since February 2022. (UNHCR & REACH Profiling Update, June 2022)

¹⁵ IOM (2022) Migration Data Portal, 22 September 2022. https://www.migrationdataportal.org/ukraine/crisis-movements#_ftnref1

¹⁶ Different from 'Dobry Start - 300+' described below.

¹⁷ Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, September 2022 <https://serwis.gazetaprawna.pl/samorzad/artykuly/8527589.wyplaty-500-plus-dla-ukraincow-swiadczenia-zasilki-rodzinne.html>

Since June, this contribution has been considerably and drastically reduced and limited only to specific vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and unaccompanied children¹⁸¹⁹. According to Government data, almost 1.4 million refugees benefited from this assistance and the overall cost exceeds 2.5 billion PLN as of September 2022. Over 1.25 million refugees transited through Government-funded reception centres. Over 400,000 refugees were hosted at mass accommodation centres, at an estimated cost of over 1.5 billion PLN.

To receive the one-off assistance, applicants require:

- ✓ a PESEL UKR number
- ✓ a Polish bank account (although some municipalities give the option of cash payments as cash-over-the counter)
- ✓ an application form submitted online or to the municipal social welfare office (MOPS, Miejski Ośrodek Pomocy Społecznej) where the applicant is resident.²⁰
- ✓ Applications for minors must be signed and submitted in person by a parent/legal guardian. In the absence of any identity documents, the PESEL number is granted based on a declaration of identity.

Our analysis finds that the main challenges embedded in the policy design of this pillar are the low value of the one-off Assistance, the exclusion of third country nationals, plus the short duration of the accommodation financial support.

Pillar 2: The government's main strategy is to fast-track Ukrainians into the Polish labour market, so they become economically self-sufficient²¹. "The high qualification levels of Ukrainian refugees are good prerequisites for making this process successful²²". NRC's research has identified the challenges of successful access to employment, including gender constraints, skills mismatch, and structural barriers.²³

Pillar 3: The final government income support for Ukrainians under the Special Act entitles them to existing cash social assistance designed for poor and vulnerable Polish citizens. Ukrainian vulnerable groups face a triple disadvantage when they try to apply for other assistance: it is difficult to find out about these schemes; they are mostly means-tested; and the income threshold is very close to the monthly humanitarian cash transfer value. **This means Ukrainians may be ineligible for government means-tested social assistance if they have received humanitarian assistance.**

18 Krakow: Official City Website <https://www.krakow.pl/komunikat/258278,26.komunikat.mpi.html>

¹⁹ PCPM's quiet advocacy with the Government contributed to this decision as the Government planned to stop the host family support program altogether in June 2022.

²⁰ ZUS (2022) <https://www.zus.pl/-/500-dla-obywateli-ukrainy>

²¹ Humanitarian coordination meeting for Polish NGOs, organised by the Prime Minister's Chancellery (KPRM)

²² Hofmann, Martin (2022), *Getting Ukrainian refugees into work: The importance of early competence checks*, ICMPD, International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 28 March 2022

https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/57235/file/ICMPD_Commentary_Getting_Ukrainian_refugees_into_work.pdf

²³ NRC (2022), *Economic Inclusion of Ukrainian Refugees*, June 2022. <https://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/economic-inclusion-of-ukrainian-refugees-in-poland>

Poland's social protection system comprises over thirty social assistance (non-contributory) and social insurance (contributory) schemes. At the foundation, is a typical social protection 'floor' – the basic provision of universal and targeted interventions supporting people along the life cycle when incomes are typically low, for example income support for children, older persons and those living with disability, plus universal access to health care (including maternity support). These are described in Annex 1 and are documented in more detail in *Blin, 2022*.

- ✓ Universal social assistance refers to support that everyone, within the specific demographic category – e.g., children under 18 years, adult women, elderly over 70 years, can receive regardless of income, i.e., these programmes are not means-tested.
- ✓ Targeted social assistance is only available to those that meet specific indicators that measure a household's poverty or vulnerability. Eligibility could be based on an income that is less than a certain threshold (means-testing) or on criteria that are indicators of (or proxies for) an individuals' vulnerability.

There is an intricate range of assistance programmes. In practice, those most accessible to Ukrainians are the main universal schemes which target parents and children. They support parents with child, nursery and school costs and are referred to as the 'Big 4'. This will be useful to many Ukrainians. Unemployment benefits are paid only to those who have been in formal contracted work. Social benefits for the elderly, people living with disability and care support are all means tested and therefore are much less readily available, or known about, particular for those who do not speak Polish.

Process to receive entitlements as a Ukrainian refugee in Poland

- ✓ All Ukrainian citizens without a previous PESEL number, who entered Poland since 24 February and intend to stay, must obtain a PESEL number to receive One-off Assistance or other social benefits.
- ✓ Paper or electronic applications for benefits can be submitted at any municipality or city office in Poland.
- ✓ Ukrainians are required to have a Polish bank account (although some municipalities give the option of 'over the counter' cash payments).
- ✓ Most social assistance is paid through one of the ZUS' 43 local branches.
- ✓ Other information that may be required are birth certificates, official acknowledgement from an educational establishment that the applicant is continuing studies, a disability certificate, official divorce, separation or death documents, or a declaration of family income. If lacking required documentation, the decision for assistance might be at the discretion of the public official.²⁴

²⁴ Government of Poland (2022) <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/rodzaje-i-wysokosc-swadczen-rodzinych-kryteria-uzyskania>

Social Protection is the responsibility of the Ministry of Family & Social Policy. Its national social security institute, the Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych (ZUS), is the (operationally autonomous) agency responsible for administering social assistance and social insurance. The payment of most social assistance is decentralised to the 43 ZUS district branches, and 280 field offices with some autonomy retained by elected officials in the provinces and paid out through Social Work Centres and Labour offices. Meanwhile, social services are predominantly run at municipal level, for example, Family Support Centres for family and protection needs. More recently, the Centre for Social Services was established as a ‘one stop shop’ between national and third-party contractors.

According to the official government data, as of September 2022, 1.4 million Ukrainian refugees filed applications for the PESEL number²⁵. The PESEL application process is generally accepted to be smooth and rapid compared to the early months of the crisis. Similarly, it has been straightforward for Ukrainians to open a bank account, a second requirement to receive social benefits or a salary²⁶. Many banks have quickly responded to the needs of refugees, including preparation of a Ukrainian-language versions of their websites and documents, or simplifying procedures and the costs of setting up a Polish bank account²⁷. PESEL UKR can be used as a proxy indicator for the actual number of refugees in Poland as starting from October 2022 refugees will need to provide their PESEL UKR number to access social services, including school enrolment. Also, those Ukrainian nationals who returned to Ukraine for a period exceeding 30 days, have their PESEL UKR registration suspended. This may explain the relatively low level of 500 PLN child benefit being paid out to Ukrainian refugees. Of the Ukrainian refugee children registered in the PESEL system, and eligible to receive the child benefit automatically, only 70% was paid out. It is assumed that the remaining families either returned to Ukraine or migrated onwards.

As for applying for other social benefits, although the application procedure is smooth, the number of documents to be provided is challenging, delaying Ukrainian refugees’ access to the benefits²⁸. Moreover, in the absence of documentation, the decision for accepting an application is at the discretion of local officials – which due to lack of information and knowledge about the programmes is then applied inconsistently.²⁹

The implications of these entitlements under this Special Act, are analysed in subsequent sections.

²⁵ Polskie Radio (2022) <https://www.polskieradio.pl/395/7784/Artykul/2979124,Around-15-million-Ukrainians-in-Poland-govt-official>

²⁶ Rzeczpospolita, 21 April 2022 <https://pieniadze.rp.pl/konta-bankowe/art36118761-uchodzcom-coraz-latwiej-zalozyc-rachunek-w-banku-akceptuja-wiecej-dokumentow>

²⁷ The Polish Bank Association (ZBP), <https://zbp.pl/>

²⁸ <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/wzory-wnioskow-o-swadczenia-rodzinne-dla-obywateli-ukrainy>

²⁹ Storzyszyszenie Interwencji Prawnej (2022) Legal Portal for people fleeing Ukraine. *Are the fleeing Ukrainian citizens entitled to family benefits and when, according to the special act? What conditions must be met? What kind of help can you count on?* March. <https://ukraina.interwencjaprawna.pl/are-the-fleeing-ukrainian-citizens-entitled-to-family-benefits-and-when-according-to-the-special-act-what-conditions-must-be-met-what-kind-of-help-can-you-count-on%E2%BF%BC>

1. The gap between Government cash assistance for Ukrainian refugees and their needs

Under the Special Act, the government of Poland provides two types of immediate financial assistance to Ukrainians. Firstly, the *jednorazowe świadczenie*, a one-off cash payment (henceforth referred to as 'one-off cash assistance') to help Ukrainians meet their immediate needs as they settle in Poland and secondly, indirect cash support for accommodation, paid to the host family. In addition, Ukrainians are entitled to apply for the regular social assistance that poor and vulnerable Polish residents can access, through the government's main social protection system.

We find that **support for Ukrainians is timely**. Once applications are processed, the cash assistance is paid regularly and on schedule, starting from May 2022³⁰. However, it is the adequacy (value) and appropriateness (type) of social cash assistance, that shows flaws in relying on the Polish social protection system to meet the main needs of Ukrainian refugees. There is not enough data officially disseminated on the numbers of Ukrainian refugees that have accessed any social assistance³¹ of all kinds, but it is considered to be relatively low.³² So, despite a decent social protection floor structure in Poland and willingness to embrace Ukrainians into this, the reality of accessing this support is limited and some vulnerable individuals are not adequately protected. Some of the issues with Poland's social protection systems are structural, hence Polish citizens are also at risk.

³⁰ <https://notesfrompoland.com/2022/05/23/poland-paying-child-benefit-to-hundreds-of-thousands-of-ukrainian-refugees/>

³¹ Szybkie A., 'The Social Protection Response for Ukrainian Refugees Poland's Big4 Social Protection, Programming Presentation'. Ppt presentation. 2022 <https://socialprotection.org/social-protection-response-ukrainian-refugees-poland%E2%80%99s-big4-social-protection-programming>

³² Blin, S. (2022)

Policy gaps to access cash assistance

The Special Act is somewhat exclusive and does not cover equally all those who escaped the conflict. On the one hand, undocumented Ukrainians such as Roma or those from eastern Ukraine (NGCA) may be granted a PESEL number (and therefore support). However, as discussed in the

Introduction, some of the most vulnerable - and likely poorest – people, may be nationals from third countries (TCNs), refugees and asylum seekers legally residing in Ukraine who have escaped the conflict but are not covered in Poland by the same level of protection. There are understandable design challenges in incorporating TCNs, although the overall numbers are estimated to be about 4%³³ of the total number of border crossings since 24th February³⁴, they must be protected from violence and destitution.

Design gaps to access social assistance

One-off cash assistance

The value of the one-off cash transfer is inadequate. The one-off cash assistance (jednorazowe świadczenie) is specifically for Ukrainian refugees who entered Poland due to the conflict since 24th February and are not planning to transit to another country. This provides PLN 300 (USD70) per person, to meet the most immediate needs during the initial settling-in phase in Poland. The value is not based on the government's Basic Subsistence Allowance or a realistic estimate of the needs of Ukrainians who have arrived since February, especially those who arrived during the second wave, with only a single piece of luggage and no social support network. Moreover, this amount has not been adjusted for the high rate of inflation that currently affects Poland and erodes purchasing power³⁵. There is not yet a gap analysis between the costs of Ukrainians' needs and size of social assistance. This requires that the government:

- base the one-off assistance on a calculation of the minimum basket of goods that Ukrainians consume to cover their real needs;
- share data on which Ukrainians have received government support, to better inform decision making and programming;
- update the amount in line with inflation to prevent increased vulnerability amongst households receiving the transfer.

Social assistance

Social assistance transfers are inadequate. The value of social assistance payments in Poland is generally low and not designed to raise recipients' income to the poverty line. Recent research suggests that support through the package of child benefits amounts to only 1/6 of the minimum wage and is unlikely to meet

³³ IOM 22 September 2022. https://www.migrationdataportal.org/ukraine/crisis-movements#_ftnref1

³⁴ Straż Graniczna, https://twitter.com/Straż_Graniczna/status/1579753513147846656?t=m4BPAmJlRgllloguEtWDEgg&s=19

³⁵ Ptak A., Inflation unexpectedly rises further in Poland to a new 25-year high of 16.1%, Notes from Poland, <https://notesfrompoland.com/2022/08/31/inflation-unexpectedly-rises-further-in-poland-to-new-25-year-high-of-16-1/>

subsistence needs.³⁶ While some transfer values have increased (e.g. the Rodzina 500+), the overall expenditure on the poorest decreased,³⁷ and 20% of the poorest in Poland do not access any social assistance at all.³⁸ Transfer values are not linked to inflation, eroding the real value of the transfer for both Poles and Ukrainians.

The approach to different poor and vulnerable groups is inequitable, which will leave some Ukrainians unprotected. Broadly, the main social assistance schemes aimed at children and their parents are universal, whereas social assistance for other categories (e.g., support to people with disabilities) is means-tested. Ukrainians with children can take easier advantage of (child-related) assistance. It is harder for other poor or vulnerable Ukrainians who face greater functional limitations to work such as the elderly, the sick and people with a disability, to access support, especially given the issues around the impact of humanitarian cash assistance on means-testing.

Humanitarian support inhibits access to social assistance. Poland is not the first context where humanitarian cash transfers have counted towards a household's income when being assessed for government support. Short term assistance from international humanitarian actors (which is typically for three months), will cause Ukrainians to meet or exceed the minimum income threshold, making them ineligible for most government means-tested social assistance. So many vulnerable Ukrainian refugees are hit twice: the one-off assistance that does not meet their immediate needs and humanitarian cash assistance which may prevent them from accessing other government support simultaneously.

All actors providing cash – government and humanitarian – need to improve how they link Ukrainians with other services

The appropriateness of support for Ukrainians is lacking as it inhibits access to some services. Apart from access to employment, refugees expressed the following priority needs: long-term accommodation or housing solutions; access to medical services, followed by support with information; educational services for children; language courses, as well as food, clothes, and shoes.³⁹ This indicates that cash transfers to meet only basic food consumption for Ukrainians are not appropriate. Accommodation is likely to become a larger problem (i.e., a greater part of household expenditure for Ukrainians) as prices are rising with the demand, while government-funded accommodation centers may start charging token fees from February 2023

³⁶ Blin, S. (2022)

³⁷ Frączek, P. and M Kaczmarek (2021) The social assistance system in Poland and its financing in 2015- 2018 as a factor of the stabilization of the socio-economic policy of the state in turbulent conditions. VUZF review, 6(2)

³⁸ World Bank (2015) *Poland can do more to help the Poor*, 8 December 2022 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2015/12/08/poland-can-do-more-to-support-poor>

³⁹ NRC/PCPM, *Post distribution Monitoring report*. June 2022 Phone survey on a representative population size of 1736 households; confidence level 95% and margin of error 5%

onwards. It is clear that all actors providing cash – government and humanitarian – need to improve how they link Ukrainians with other services.

Administrative issues affecting access to social assistance

Lack of application information: Apart from ‘the Big 4’, access to benefits for other vulnerable groups is complicated and cumbersome. There is no clarity on the social assistance schemes available for Ukrainians to apply for, information about benefits is not easily available, are predominantly in Polish and must be applied for in Polish, which makes access to these support measures challenging.

Inconsistency in administration: There can be inconsistency in implementation between local authorities, who are frequently responsible for deciding who receives support: some banks do not require PESEL numbers, some municipalities pay cash in hand, or differ in the time taken to approve benefits.

	% of beneficiaries who stated those needs were at least partially covered	% of beneficiaries who stated their current needs are as follows
Food	80%	14%
Clothing	41%	n/a
Medical purposes	27%	22%
Hygiene	15%	n/a
Accommodation/rent	11%	31%
Education	7%	
Job	n/a	20%

Figure 1 Preferences of Ukrainian recipients of NRC’s MPCA, June 2022

To sum up, we conclude that the government’s one-off assistance and humanitarian support are still inadequate to meet Ukrainians’ needs during their early months in Poland. Despite a wide range of social assistance in Poland that can be applied for subsequently, many of the schemes beyond the ‘Big 4’ are means-tested, rather than universal, making it much harder for vulnerable Ukrainians without children to access assistance. There is a lack of administrative consistency in awarding benefits across local officials, meaning access to support varies across the country. For Ukrainians, not only are their living costs higher but they are less likely to be in work and therefore the cash assistance represents a greater part of their total income, rendering them less well off. The lack of data compounds the uncertainty about the adequacy of and access to cash transfers.

Where does international humanitarian response fill the gaps?

There has been a large response from both the national and international community in Poland. The international response is led by UNHCR who also coordinates the cash response, under the Cash Working Group (CWG).

Humanitarian support is neither predictable nor sustainable. The CWG has agreed to provide emergency rather than medium term support, in the form of three months of cash assistance. The duration of the assistance itself is not problematic: humanitarian assistance *should* only be short term. **The assumption therefore is that thereafter Ukrainians will be supported by the Polish state, under the provisions of the Special Act.**

Basic Subsistence Allowance (BSA)⁴⁰⁴¹

The Basic Subsistence Allowance is an estimate by the Statistical Central Office of the minimum consumption needs of a Polish household. It was adopted by the CWG to respond to the immediate needs of Ukrainian refugees reaching Poland since the February 2022 escalation. The CWG *“recommends setting the initial grant amount at 710 zloty per person per month in Poland in line with basic subsistence estimates provided by the Polish Department of Statistics as of 2020 but adjusted to reflect inflation estimates since then. This amount is set based on secondary information and the CWG co-chairs have updated the tables below to reflect the changes in line with what was agreed and expected since the initial CWG meeting.”*

An inadequate transfer value is not just a problem of the government social assistance. Humanitarian support also fails to meet the needs of Ukrainians.

⁴⁰ UN (2022) *Poland Cash Working Group Briefing Notes*

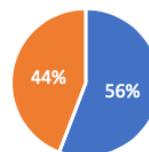
<https://pah.sharepoint.com/:f:/r/sites/PolandCWG/Shared%20Documents/CWG%20Briefing%20Notes?csf=1&web=1&e=ncFimB>

⁴¹ See Annex 2 for detailed information on BSA

The value of the money transfer by most humanitarian actors is adjusted to the Basic Subsistence Allowance (BSA), designed by the Departments of Social Statistics of the Statistics Central Office, GUS⁴². Vulnerable or poor Polish people may differ from Ukrainian refugees in their needs and consumption patterns.

The CWG recommended a common transfer value for cash transfers ('multi-purpose cash assistance' MPCA), which was based on the last available "minimum of existence" expenditure levels from 2020, with the inflation rates for 2021 and first half of 2022 added to it. The decision to set this humanitarian transfer rate at PLN 710 per month is still inadequate to meet all the needs of Ukrainians in their first few months but is based on 100% of minimum of existence expenditure levels vs. 60% as used by cash working groups in other emergencies. This decision was based on the fact, that the Polish minimum of existence expenditure rate does not include apartment rental but only running costs, assuming that a person receiving social assistance also benefits from the social housing scheme. In a recent survey⁴³, 44% of respondents said that they could not meet 75% of their basic needs in the fortnight after receiving the transfer. NRC/PCPM's Post-Distribution Monitoring⁴⁴ after disbursing the cash transfer to Ukrainians showed that the cash value is only sufficient to meet costs for food and medicine. This finding regarding the adequacy of the value of the Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) is validated in several recent surveys and reports^{45,46,47}.

Basic needs met in the last two weeks (N=371)



■ More than 75% ■ Less than 75%

Figure 2: Proportion of respondents who could and could not meet their basic needs in the 2 weeks following receiving a cash transfer

The following examples provide a sense of the variety in scale and scope of humanitarian cash and in-kind transfers from non-governmental actors. Although this is by no means comprehensive, **it is an indication of a seeming lack of consistency or alignment with government support.**

- UNHCR began delivering cash assistance in Lublin with PCPM on 12 March and in Warsaw on 21 March and concluded a large-scale cash assistance programme on 23 September⁴⁸, after having reached almost 300,000 refugees across Poland. A new strategy for more targeted

⁴² Główny Urząd Statystyczny (GUS), Wartość minimum egzystencji.

⁴³ https://pah.sharepoint.com/:b/r/sites/PolandCWG/Shared%20Documents/Post%20Distributions%20Monitoring/220519_NRC_PCPM_MPCA_PD_M_Report.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=tEI8OR

⁴⁴ https://pah.sharepoint.com/:b/r/sites/PolandCWG/Shared%20Documents/Post%20Distributions%20Monitoring/220519_NRC_PCPM_MPCA_PD_M_Report.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=tEI8OR

⁴⁵ International Rescue Committee's 'Rapid Needs Assessment Report', <https://reliefweb.int/report/poland/rapid-needs-assessment-report-refugees-ukraine-poland>

⁴⁶ International Organisation for Migration's 'Poland - Ukraine Response 2022 - Needs Assessment', <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/poland-%E2%80%93-ukraine-response-2022-%E2%80%93-needs-assessment-12-april-%E2%80%93-04-may-2022>

⁴⁷ VOICE (2022) Waiting for the Sky to Close: The unprecedented crisis facing women and girls fleeing Ukraine. Poland Assessment Report, https://voiceamplified.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/POLAND_ASSESSMENT_REPORT.pdf

⁴⁸ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/96337>

- assistance is to be implemented from October. As recommended by the Cash Working Group, it will provide PLN 710 (USD 155) per month per individual for three months, plus PLN 610 (USD 140) for each additional household member, to a maximum amount per household of PLN 3,150 (USD 700) per month.⁴⁹
- NRC has distributed the same recommended humanitarian cash transfer amount per person to 2,100 people through bank transfer or an unrestricted pre-paid card to be used in Poland. The later can be used internationally without any withdrawal fees. Over 90% of recipients are women.
- As an example of locally organised cash support, PCPM has provided cash to over 10,000 Ukrainian refugee families in Poland.
- The IFRC together with Polish Red Cross is following the same CWG recommendations for cash assistance value, disbursing the cash through MoneyGram⁵⁰. It operates across its 220 branches of the Red Cross in Poland, staffed by nearly 6,000 employees and 1000 volunteers.⁵¹

International assistance is poorly coordinated within itself, or with the government. There is a lack of consistency across actors in the quality of delivery and targeting criteria, which is particularly concerning given that it is providing only three months of support and relies on an assumption that state support can take on the caseload from then. There is a lack of linking up either with services provided by humanitarians or more importantly with the network of government social service and employment provision that could help Ukrainian recipients of humanitarian assistance benefit from government skills training for employment and psychosocial support, to give two examples. However, as the new Refugee Response Plan for 2023 is being prepared, there have been positive steps to bring about coordination between the Polish Government and UNHCR-led Refugee Response Plan, with a hope that the humanitarian community will better complement efforts of the Polish government and its social assistance schemes.

⁴⁹ UNHCR *Poland Factsheet*, 19 September 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/poland/ukraine-emergency-unhcr-poland-factsheet-19-september-2022>

⁵⁰ <https://ukrainefinancialassistance.ifrc.org/polish-red-cross>

⁵¹ IFRC *Operation update report. Ukraine and impacted countries crisis*, 5 July 2022 <https://www.ifrc.org/media/50800>

2. Employment Opportunities

The ILO estimates that of the 5.23 million refugees who have fled to neighbouring countries, approximately 2.75 million (52.6%) are of working age of which 1.2 million 43.5% were previously working and have lost or left their jobs.⁵² As of October 2022, almost 60% of adult Ukrainian refugees in Poland have been legally and gainfully employed, which is a quite remarkable achievement compared to other refugee crises.

A premise of the Polish government's support for Ukrainians and assumption in the design of the international humanitarian support, is that Ukrainian refugees will find employment and be self-sufficient during their time in Poland, with reliance on temporary state support to bridge the gap before they find work⁵³.

NRC anticipates that the reality of achieving self-sufficiency through employment is much less certain than was envisaged and there is a "potential mismatch between skills and jobs"⁵⁴. Consequently, the state and international community should prepare to commit to longer term financial support for Ukrainians.

Employment provision

Under the Special Act, Ukrainian citizens legally residing in Poland can accept employment without a work permit. Employment processes for Ukrainians have been simplified: refugees can be employed even prior to receiving a PESEL number and employers are only required to inform the Employment Office (Urząd Pracy) that a refugee is employed. Notification must be given within 14 days via the *praca.gov.pl* ICT system. It must include the identification of the employee, place of

⁵² https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_844625/lang-en/index.htm

⁵³ Humanitarian coordination meetings for the Polish NGOs, organized by the Chancellery of the Prime Minister (KPRM) and attended by Polish NGO PCPM, Ministry of Family and Social Policy, 22 April 2022. This is in line with other statements made by other senior Polish decision-makers.

⁵⁴ NRC (2022), *Economic Inclusion of Ukrainian Refugees*, June 2022. <https://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/economic-inclusion-of-ukrainian-refugees-in-poland>

work, identification of the employing entity and place of work, data of identification information of the Ukrainian employee and information on the type of contract and work. Government support of PLN 300 (USD 65) coupled with potentially three months of cash support from the international community of an advised PLN 710 (USD150) per month for three months per person, could give Ukrainians approximately four months to find paid employment.⁵⁵

Job-seeking and skills-building support is available: To assist entry to the labour-market, vocational training programmes for Ukrainian refugees have been launched, including language classes and labour market inclusion (internships, supported employment, vocational trainings, medical tests necessary for employment). The programmes are run by local Employment Offices, funded by the national Employment Fund.^{56 5758}

An excellent job-seeking environment. As of August 2022, the Polish unemployment rate (adjusted seasonally) is 2.6%, one of the lowest unemployment rates within the European Union⁵⁹. This should work to the advantage of Ukrainian jobseekers, as there is an abundance of jobs in several sectors. However, as the NRC's assessment on economic inclusion from June 2022 shows⁶⁰, there is a mismatch of skills required and existing skillsets of newly displaced Ukrainians, and the types of employment opportunities they are seeking varied greatly based on expected duration of stay, validation of certification, access to childcare, housing, and access to transportation. Furthermore, vast majority of adult refugees are women, while the job vacancies are mainly in men-dominated jobs.

Employment challenges for Ukrainians

Misguided assumption of a seamless transition from the one-off assistance to full-time employment. Despite open access to the Polish job market and provision of job seeking and skills-building support, the available data suggests that it is more difficult to access employment than intended. By June 2022, around 185,000 Ukrainian nationals had accessed employment in Poland since 24 February.⁶¹ Based on this, the one-off one month of assistance from the Polish government is not of sufficient duration for Ukrainians to find work. We need data to understand if a three-month humanitarian transfer buffers this gap sufficiently or not. There is a

⁵⁵ Unemployment benefits are not paid until someone has been in formal contracted employment

⁵⁶ OECD data, August 2022

⁵⁸ ILO, 2022.

⁵⁹ <https://www.destatis.de/Europa/EN/Topic/Population-Labour-Social-Issues/Labour-market/EULabourMarketCrisis.html>

⁶⁰ NRC (2022), *Economic Inclusion of Ukrainian Refugees*, June 2022. <https://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/economic-inclusion-of-ukrainian-refugees-in-poland>

⁶¹ Reidy E., "Is Poland's smooth reception of Ukrainian refugees heading for trouble?", The New Humanitarian, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2022/08/04/Poland-Ukraine-refugee-concern-grows>

need for a discussion about support to Ukrainians who lack resources before they find work, and whether this gap will be filled through job-seeking support, or the humanitarian community take on a formal role to fill the gap until employment is found.

Ukrainians are overqualified for the jobs available. Many Ukrainian refugees in Poland are highly qualified: 66% are educated to tertiary level, almost half (49%) are highly skilled, and only 15% are low skilled.⁶² Figure 3 shows the types of skills Ukrainian refugees hold, versus the types of jobs available in Poland in Figure 4. This has already been a long-standing problem for Ukrainians in Poland. Prior to the crisis, only one quarter (27%) of Ukrainian labour migrants were in jobs commensurate with their qualifications.⁶³ The risk is that Ukrainian refugees may take up jobs that do not match their skills and capacities which could detract from economic self-reliance in the long run.

Occupation (ISCO-08) - Main job	Distribution (%)	Status in employment - Main job	Distribution (%)
Managers	8.3	Employees	88.3
Professionals	25.2	Self-employed	11.7
Technicians and associate professionals	15.5	Total	100.0
Clerical support workers	5.7		
Service and sales workers	21.7		
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	0.6		
Craft and related trades workers	4.3		
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	3.2		
Elementary occupations	15.5		
Total	100.0		

Figure 3 Estimated labour market characteristics of Ukrainian refugees (source: ILO)

Vacancies are for culturally ‘male’ roles. The war in Ukraine also caused an outflow of Ukrainian workers from Poland, called to the front to fight. Ukrainians comprised around 11% of construction workers and 13% of transport staff pre-March 2022. The escalation has exacerbated the shortage in some sectors which were already suffering from labour shortages but that are notoriously reluctant to hire non-male personnel⁶⁴. The 30 occupations identified as short of labour in the Ministry of Development, Labour, and Technology’s 2022 Occupational barometer,

⁶² S Szybkie, A. (2022) ‘The Social Protection Response for Ukrainian Refugees Poland’s Big4 Social Protection Programming Presentation’. Ppt presentation. 2022 [https://socialprotection.org/social-protection-response-ukrainian-refugees-poland%E2%80%99s-big4-social-protection-programming-and-Regional-Refugee-Response-Plan,-Protection-Sector-and-Information-Management-WG,-Poland-Protection-Analysis,-May-2022in-Blin-\(Forthcoming\)](https://socialprotection.org/social-protection-response-ukrainian-refugees-poland%E2%80%99s-big4-social-protection-programming-and-Regional-Refugee-Response-Plan,-Protection-Sector-and-Information-Management-WG,-Poland-Protection-Analysis,-May-2022in-Blin-(Forthcoming))

⁶³ ILO, 2017 and EU 2020.

⁶⁴ Anna Rzhavkina (2022) *Ukrainian refugees fill gaps in the Polish labour market but risk getting stuck in low-skilled jobs*. Notes from Poland 1 June 2022

<https://notesfrompoland.com/2022/06/01/ukrainian-refugees-fill-gaps-in-polish-labour-market-but-risk-getting-stuck-in-low-skilled-jobs/>

are predominantly blue-collar jobs and manual labour, aside from care and teaching roles (Figure 4).

Labour markets implicitly discriminate against women. Many of the available roles in Figure are inappropriate for the care responsibilities of many Ukrainian women. Other barriers to a sufficient income from labour may include informal work, low wages, or non-compliance with working hours. The tendency to engage in informal employment means Ukrainian women may lack the protection of unemployment benefits accessible to those in formal labour. Finally, there is a lack of information about employment of Ukrainians in informal labour markets.

Uncertain data about the levels of employment. The government claims that 358,000 Ukrainian refugees have already found employment in Poland⁶⁵ although this is disputed by some researchers who argue that this number does not consider employees taking on more than one job, and therefore the actual level of employment is much lower than the data provided by the MRiPS⁶⁶. This is backed up by the ILO figures above and is worrying given rumours that to protect local labour markets and public disquiet, the current labour policy may be curtailed, and limitations placed on how many Ukrainians a Polish employer may hire.

Occupational Barometer 2022

Poland



Figure 4 Employment needs in Poland, 2022

In summary, although the policy approach is open and there is an excess of work in the labour market, in practice, employment opportunities are not suited to many of the working age Ukrainian refugees (predominantly women). While we lack data on the specifics, it appears that either Ukrainians are too highly skilled, or the types of jobs available are not appropriate given their care responsibilities, or they lack necessary language skills and validation of professional certificates, or a lack of information about job opportunities (in Ukrainian). Data needs to be shared as to who is and is not in the job market as the basis for a subsequent discussion between

⁶⁵ @MRiPS_GOV_PL, https://twitter.com/MRiPS_GOV_PL/status/1552306859956109313

⁶⁶ @MaciekDuszczyk, <https://twitter.com/MaciekDuszczyk/status/1544257899324637190>

government and humanitarian actors on the support needed to fill the gap between emergency support and employment. This could include potential access to unemployment/job-seeking allowances and help from local and international organisations for Ukrainians to access government employment and skills services. We are concerned that in practice, many families are having to stretch out inadequate humanitarian transfers in the absence of employment. Overshadowing this is uncertainty as to whether the openness to Ukrainian employees will continue.

3. Filling the gaps: informal social protection

In Poland, there is an interesting perspective that the third sector – through public-private partnership or voluntary organisation, is an integral aspect of the Poland’s social protection framework⁶⁷. Civil society organisations and other NGOs are therefore partners in a nationwide venture to ensure welfare reaches those entitled to it, rather than as agencies compensating for the government’s lack of reach. While informal social protection has been crucial in responding quickly and very generously to the influx of Ukrainians, there is a concern that this benevolence is wearing thin. Additionally, there is a recognition that Ukrainians may be remitting a proportion of their incomes and humanitarian and social assistance back to Ukraine, which further erodes their subsistence in Poland.

Although this informal support is fundamental to how households manage shocks, (for example remittances comprise the largest value of external aid⁶⁸), this is not the conventional approach to social protection. However, this Polish perspective is very much in line with PCPM and NRC’s recognition of the importance of the community support. We explore how Ukrainians in Poland may be engaging with informal social protection and the challenges they may encounter.

Community support

Unsurprisingly, Ukrainians are heavily reliant on informal support from voluntary organisations, family and friends, Polish families who offer private accommodation,

⁶⁷ Blin, 2022

⁶⁸ UN (2019) Remittances exceed the combination of direct foreign investment and official development assistance more than threefold. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/remittances-matter.html>

as well as their own personal funds (which are continuing to depreciate as the Ukrainian hryvna continues to lose value against the Polish zloty). This integration between state and third sector is an important lens through which we can better understand the non-governmental support to Ukrainians in Poland.

There is a lack of data, but the quantity of informal support coming from Polish communities and local civil society groups was very visible and rapid in the early months of the invasion. NGOs and churches continue to provide the in-kind social assistance and services with an increased level of professionalisation⁶⁹. However, there is evidence that Polish generosity will wear thin particularly in the face of rising costs of living. Some guesthouses and hotels asked refugees to leave so that they could benefit from the summer tourist seasons. The Polish branches of the Red Cross who spontaneously hosted Ukrainian refugees are also running out of resources and wish to return to their regular way of operations.⁷⁰ This compounds the problem that social welfare transfer values are already low for Polish citizens⁷¹.

Informal social protection include community-based and solidarity mechanisms through which households in and between communities support each other during hard times. Examples include remittances, community savings groups and regular charitable giving. They are created by and reinforce social capital and can be both in kind, 'services' or cash support. They are typically traditional or well-established but as they are governed by social rather than legal norms, they are not necessarily consistent or inclusive. Informal social protection can be important to community resilience and can underpin the social fabric of the community and is typically the first form of assistance that reaches people in a crisis.

Social Capital

Social capital is a key determinant for success in a protracted displacement crisis, although it is not held equally within displaced populations. The Ukrainian diaspora in Poland before the escalation of the conflict numbered over 600,000 people. This was one of the reasons why Poland became the main destination for refugees following the invasion⁷². Ukrainians who have greater social capital (for example they have friends or family from the pre-2022 diaspora whom they can rely on), should be more resilient than those who may lack the social capital (for example an

⁶⁹ Blin 2022

⁷⁰ IFRC (2022) Ukraine Update report. <https://www.ifrc.org/media/50800>

⁷¹ According to the Central Statistical Office (GUS) data, Polish citizens in extreme poverty are 4.2% for the year 2021 out of more than 30 million inhabitants. This roughly corresponds to 1.6 million people. <https://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/living-conditions/social-assistance/economic-poverty-rates-in-poland-in-2021.4.9.html>

⁷² Pifczyk S., "How many Ukrainian refugees are there really in Poland, and who are they?", Notes from Poland, May 2022. <https://notesfrompoland.com/2022/05/11/how-many-ukrainian-refugees-are-there-really-in-poland-and-who-are-they/>

elderly person travelling alone and residing in a collective shelter). Ukrainians will likely lack the social capital of Polish citizens that can help support them in face of low transfer payments. This all contributes to a more difficult context for Ukrainians to build a life and livelihood for themselves in Poland.

Remittances

Understanding remittances is important to paint a clearer picture about the spending patterns of Ukrainians in Poland. Remittances tend to be the first form of support in a crisis, and this is also the case of Ukraine.⁷³ Remittances far outstrip either foreign

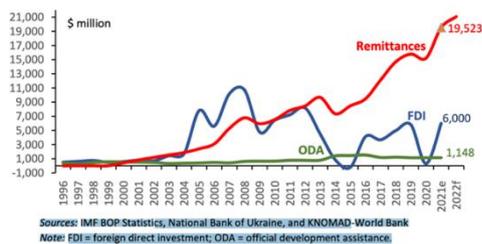


Figure 3 Remittance flows are significantly larger than FDI and ODA flows to Ukraine (Source: Ratha and Kimi, 2022).

(5.9%) (Figure 5). The temporary fee waiver of some money transfer agencies for sending money to Ukraine is ‘a welcome development’ but needs a longer-term commitment and emulating by others. On-going access needs to be facilitated.

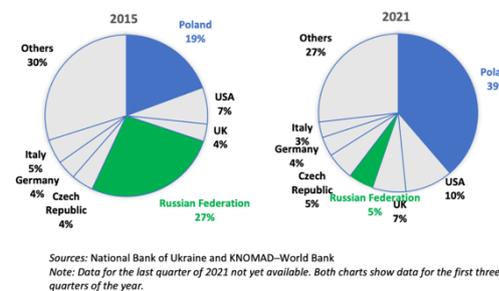


Figure 6 Sources of remittances to Ukraine, 2015 vs 2021, pre-invasion. (Source: Ratha and Kimi, 2022).

that remittances to Ukraine constitute an expense for Ukrainians in Poland which erodes the available expenditure for Ukrainian refugees in Poland.

direct investment or overseas development assistance (see Figure 5). Overall, in 2021, Ukraine received over USD 19 billion in remittances, accounting for 12% of its GDP. The highest share of this came largely from Poland (see Figure 6⁷⁴).⁷⁵ These have been likely severely disrupted due to the escalation of the conflict and relatively high pre-escalation fees for money transfers

In summary, Ukrainian refugees who are currently in Poland, are likely to be sending a part of any cash support back to Ukraine. Communications with some of NRC’s cash recipients reveal that this is not just to help their families but is considered as a part of a patriotic commitment to preserve Ukraine. Based on the available data, we understand

⁷³ Dilip Ratha and Eung Ju Kimi (2022) Russia-Ukraine Conflict: Implications for Remittance flows to Ukraine and Central Asia. Knomad, POLICY BRIEF 17, 4 March 2022. knomad.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/KNOMAD_Policy%20Brief%2017_Ukraine-Implications%20for%20Migration%20and%20Remittance%20flows_March%204_2022.pdf

⁷⁴ Dilip Ratha and Eung Ju Kimi (2022) Russia-Ukraine Conflict: Implications for Remittance flows to Ukraine and Central Asia. Knomad, POLICY BRIEF 17, 4 March 2022. knomad.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/KNOMAD_Policy%20Brief%2017_Ukraine-Implications%20for%20Migration%20and%20Remittance%20flows_March%204_2022.pdf

⁷⁵ Quartz.com (2022) Remittances to Ukraine and Russia have shot up by more than 50% since the invasion. Updated 20 July 2022 <https://qz.com/2138958/remittances-to-ukraine-and-russia-have-spiked-since-the-invasion/>

4. Recommendations

Considering the above, NRC and PCPM recommend the following:

For the Government of Poland

In the long term there is a need to review the social protection policy to better meet needs for poor and vulnerable households in Poland. In the interim:

Address the barriers to **access** to social assistance and employment for those who have fled Ukraine since February 2022:

- Disseminate information about the available schemes in Polish, Russian and Ukrainian languages, so that both Polish and those who have fled Ukrainian can apply for assistance.
- Allow third country nationals to remain in Poland and receive support on the same basis as Ukrainian nationals.
- Discount temporary humanitarian aid from contributing towards the income of means-tested benefits.

Review the **adequacy** of social assistance for Ukrainians and host communities:

- Continue the provision of skills and language training for employment opportunities and fast-track validation of professional certificates.
- Extend the solidarity hosting payments over the winter to support vulnerable Ukrainians hosted by Polish households, given the high need for shelter.
- Link cash transfers to inflation and an updated, and appropriate basket of goods and services.
- Explore interim support options to Ukrainians who have exhausted the one-off assistance interim payments and humanitarian MPCA but have not yet found the employment.

Improve the **quality** of social assistance:

- Monitor and share with humanitarian actors' regular data regarding application for and receipt of benefits and access to employment, so that government and development partners are better informed to make appropriate programming decisions.
- Develop and provide access to an effective complaints and appeals process for Ukrainians, monitored (and perhaps implemented) by local civil society organisations.

For the International Community

Improve the **appropriateness** of humanitarian cash by adopting a social protection ‘approach’ which will provide a comprehensive package of support, beyond cash.

- Shift from provision of multi-purpose cash assistance to a more specific approach which identifies and fills the gaps in government social assistance. This may mean providing sector-specific support for different individuals with particular needs, such as topping up the gap between government cash transfers and shortfalls in rent.
- Cash actors must coordinate with other humanitarian sectors to link cash transfers to other transfers and services such as referrals, accommodation, employment and protection (social) services whether through direct provision or referrals.
- Open policy discussions with government to encourage an approach based on Ukrainians retaining their Ukrainian assets and social protection payments.
- Compile and share data on movement of Ukrainians across the border to better design programmes to provide cross-border support where needed.

Address the **administrative** issues of the humanitarian response:

- Resolve the collaboration between the PESEL UKR with the databases of humanitarian agencies to identify those who lack support.
- Adopt ways of working and protocols to engage more directly and consistently with local level government, to address gaps in support and services.
- In conjunction with local and national government, calculate and monitor locally appropriate MEBs throughout Poland.
- Analyse the gap between income and expenditure for vulnerable Polish and Ukrainians and provide MPCA top-ups when required.
- Discuss and support the capacity needs of the government to implement the recommendations above.

Improve the design and quality of programming:

- **Grow the longstanding role of national NGOs and further support them** as critical actors providing sustainable, appropriate, timely response. This requires assessing their capacity needs and filling those gaps; systematically incorporating local NGOs into the humanitarian response structure; and developing the role of local NGOs to hold government to account in the future.

Recommendations for humanitarian actors providing cash assistance

Humanitarian actors providing cash assistance should consider the following for future programming in Poland.

- Link recipients of cash transfers with government service provision and employment opportunities. This should become *modus operandi*. Similarly, there should be coherence across programme sectors.
- Frame design of programming around a social protection approach, which aims to fill gaps and facilitate access to the government support and an exit strategy that ensures that all its recipients can access other or longer-term support or services when needed.
- Define design of cash transfers from generic MPCA to top-ups that fill gaps in the government provision.
- Explore options for facilitating and easing the costs of sending remittances.
- Build relationships with partners that adopt this approach into partners' operations.

Across All Actors

- **The Government of Poland should convene a national government-humanitarian-local agency dialogue** regarding the future policy for Ukrainians in Poland. This should decide the role of humanitarian actors in filling gaps in government assistance and contingencies for new waves of refugees from Ukraine.
- **Improve coordination.** Establish joint coordination mechanisms between the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, ZUS and other government actors, (from national to local level), local NGOs and international humanitarian actors, including the CWG, to ensure access to cash, services, employment, and livelihoods opportunities.
- **Establish robust data collection to systematically monitor and evaluate** needs, coverage, and adequacy of support. International humanitarian actors should become strategic partners supporting the government and ZUS to respond to the needs of refugees from Ukraine consistently and effectively.
- **Develop contingency plans** to prepare for a new wave of refugees from Ukraine. This should include emergency support (in a multi-sector approach, beyond cash, coordinated between sectors and across actors), as well as medium-term programming for those who remain in Ukraine and linking up to assistance and services for those that return.
- **Adopt social protection schemes** that will coordinate meeting basic consumption needs, with the need for employment, accommodation, and access to services.

5. Conclusion

At the beginning of the escalation of the war in Ukraine, the Government of Poland was quick to utilise its social protection system to meet the needs of 1.5 million Ukrainians, who sought refuge within its borders during the first days following 24 February 2022. It has extended social assistance and employment opportunities to Ukrainians until August 2023 and to meet the most immediate needs, provided a one-off temporary cash grant. Despite these interventions and despite straightforward registration and application processes, **there are in practice many barriers that prevent this support from adequately meeting the needs of Ukrainians in Poland.**

Firstly, the policy applies exclusively to the Ukrainian nationals and their spouses. Third country nationals that had the right to be in Ukraine and fled the crisis are denied rights to any support in Poland and must leave the country within 14 days. This jeopardises the lives of individuals, whose number is estimated at less than 1% of all people seeking refuge in Poland and potentially who risk going 'missing' or returning to unsafe conditions in their home countries.

Secondly, access to employment is hindered because Ukrainians lack the skills - or are overqualified - for the sectors where there is large demand but are not compatible with the care responsibilities or professional profile of many working-age Ukrainian refugees.

Thirdly, social transfers are heavily targeted at children and families, which is not appropriate for many other vulnerable Ukrainian groups such as the elderly and persons with disabilities. It proves to be challenging to seek out and apply for support for these categories.

Fourthly, even Ukrainian households that do access financial support, still find themselves disadvantaged compared to their Polish counterparts. Social benefits are relatively low in Poland and have not recently been adjusted in line with the inflation rates. The rate is fixed to a minimum income threshold for applying for means-tested benefits, not an up-to-date calculation of costs of living. Refugees from Ukraine face barriers in accessing and utilising support in the administration of the interventions, for example lacking access to information about the different benefits available, or a lack of social networks to provide additional support and are likely to remit a portion of any transfers they receive back to Ukraine.

These factors all put a strain on how the Ukrainian refugees can both survive and thrive in Poland.

There are three broad reasons for a seemingly strong response resulting in a weaker impact than anticipated:

A mistaken policy assumption: the idea that Ukrainians would receive a single one-off assistance to support them while they are settling in and seek jobs, the latter making them self-sufficient and not dependent upon state support beyond the first month, is optimistic. As far as NRC can ascertain, access to employment, particularly at the right skills level, has been more difficult than anticipated.

A design flaw in making use of Poland's social protection system to support Ukrainians, as it has not been tailored sufficiently to the demographic characteristics of those in need of support. It broadly meets the needs of the large group of mothers and children, but it fails to give adequate attention to other vulnerable groups such as the elderly and the persons with disabilities, nor recognise complex needs of individuals.

An implementation challenge: the lack of adequate coordination, collaboration, and effective data-sharing between actors across the response, has inhibited the effective utilisation of Poland's social protection system and curtailed the added value of humanitarian response as it has been hard to identify who is left out of the system.

Compounding the flaws in the government policy approach, is the approach of the international humanitarian community. This has been hindered by a lack of information and coordination, access to data about who has received what and when, which makes it difficult for the UN and NGOs to top up support and plug the gaps, where there are specific needs.

In addition, the valid attempt to immediately support the government's response to refugees with humanitarian cash transfers by non-governmental actors has led to a coordinated cash transfer value that fails to meet basic needs.

On the other hand, beyond this, there seems to exist a disconnection to align humanitarian assistance with government social protection, specifically: access to services, employment, and longer-term social assistance. The lack of monitoring or data and accountability in government provision of transfers and services, further compounds these problems.

The response of the Polish government to Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion, was fast, generous, and well-executed and the policy approach seemed

reasonable. This has led to an assumption by the international community that needs of Ukrainian refugees in Poland are by large being met. This seems far from the case. Instead, we see the need for a more realistic approach from the government that better meets needs and supports incomes beyond the emergency phase, (given the difficulties in accessing the employment) and monitors and shares data regarding who has accessed what and when. This also reveals larger structural problems with Poland's social protection system beyond the needs of Ukrainians.

These cannot all be resolved by the state assistance, which will inevitably focus on broad rather than tailored programmes. The international and local NGO community have a strong role to provide targeted support to meet different vulnerabilities, rather than the ongoing focus on multi-purpose cash transfers and on the accountability of the assistance. This gives a substantial insight into how humanitarians engage with social protection during a crisis: while we advocate for state provided universal access to scalable social protection, humanitarian interventions must continue to plug where people will inevitably fall through the holes of government shock responsive assistance. This means we must better dovetail (align) with government assistance – topping up needs for vulnerable groups and taking a more holistic approach which integrates cash with needs for accommodation, employment, and access to services.

In short, expecting a social protection system to respond at scale to a massive influx of refugees may be demanding too much: it assumes that the system is sufficiently robust, flexible and can absorb the needs and costs for many people over many years. As this paper shows, equality alone is not sufficient for vulnerable households, and the refugee response requires an approach based on equity to help them thrive.

Annex 1 – A non-exhaustive overview of the key social assistance schemes in Poland

Categorical universal benefits

As outlined in the document, Poland’s key categorical focus is on families. The most accessible programmes are those related to children and parents and are known as the ‘Big 4’. They can be applied for online or at social welfare centres. These include the monthly PLN 500 (USD 115) Child Benefit ‘*Rodzina 500+*’ to help with child costs, the 300+ Good start ‘*Dobry Start*’ (assistance with education costs for children), a supplement to help with the nursery care costs and a one-off transfer Family Care Capital (PLN 12,000 / USD 2,780), for those who do not choose the nursery supplement for their second and third child. There is also the Parental Benefit of PLN 1,000 (USD 232) paid monthly to parents with children under 7 years.

Name of Benefit	Description	Claimants	Application Process	Period of Benefits	Deadline
500+ Childcare benefit (Rodzina 500+)	Family financial support, 500 PLN child upbringing grant per month.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen of Ukraine or a spouse (TCNs) of a citizen of Ukraine • Legal stay in Poland • A temporary guardian who has Ukrainian citizenship and came from Ukraine to Poland after 23 February 2022 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining a PESEL UKR number for the applicant and the child/children the application should be submitted only electronically on PUE ZUS / Electronic Service Platform • Creation of an account on PUE ZUS • e-mail address • Polish telephone number • Polish Bank account number • NB ZUS pay benefits only to a Polish bank account 	1 June 2022 – 31 May 2023	Before June 2022 for the annual period 2022/2023 ⁷⁶ After June 2022 for the remaining months
300+ Good Start (Dobry Start)	A one-off benefit of 300 PLN for all students starting the school year. It is possible to receive it	<u>Additional documents</u> that may be required:		School year 2022/2023	Application from 1 July till 30 November

⁷⁶ NB: Must be requested in advance for the whole annual period (PUE ZUS). People applying now will receive benefits from the moment they apply but must always apply again before June to receive the entire annual period. It is not retroactive.

	as a school starter kit once a year, regardless of the family's income: up to 20 years old or up to 24 years of age (in the case of a student with a disability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • court rulings as a temporary guardian on the basis of a Polish court ruling, you are a temporary guardian • a document confirming the placement of a child in foster custody, based on a judgement of the Polish court, you exercise custody of a child • a document confirming your legal stay and access to the labour market in Poland if you arrived in Poland before 24 February 2022, but your child/children arrived in Poland after 23 February 2022. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-form for 500+: 'SW-U', available from 22 March • E-form for 300+: available from 1 July • E-form for RKO: 'RKO-U', available by 22 April (benefit with arrears from March 2022 if PESEL registration happened in March 2022) • E-form (same as for the Polish citizens) available since 1 April. Distinction between the E-form for parents (DZ-R) and guardians (DZ-O). 	
Family care capital – RKO (Rodzinny Kapitał Opiekunicy)	A benefit of up to 12000 PLN for the second and subsequent child in the family from 12 to 35 months of age NO in the case of nursery supplement			12 to 35 months of age of the second and subsequent child From 22 April 2022 (PUE ZUS)
Nursery supplement – co-financing	A benefit of 400 PLN per month or not more than the actual institutions' fees, payable to the account of the institution attended by the child			N/A From 1 April 2022 (PUE ZUS)

Other Universal benefits

The range of sickness or disability support, includes parental support for those who have left their work to look after a child with a disability or ongoing disability allowance (renta socjalna).⁷⁷ Poland also pays a flat rate for unemployment, which decreases with the duration of the unemployment.⁷⁸ In 2020, following COVID-19 crisis, the basic amount for unemployment benefits increased from PLN 847.80 (USD 197) to PLN 861.40 (USD 200) and then to PLN 1,200 (USD 280)⁷⁹ but only around 15% of registered unemployed are entitled to unemployment benefits⁸⁰ – so receiving these benefits is not automatic. Moreover, the uptake in other benefits from those unemployed during Covid-19, indicates the need for reform of Poland’s unemployment compensation, although the increase in the value is permanent⁸¹. Poland has a complex system of contributory pensions and benefits. Pensions are eligible for women from 60 years and for men from 65 years. An annual one-off non-contributory pension scheme in Poland, the ‘13th pension’⁸² was introduced in 2020 and first paid in autumn 2021, to those already eligible for pensions⁸³, resulting as in an additional cash support.⁸⁴ The new pension system introduced in 2017 no longer requires a minimum period of contribution to be eligible to receive the pension, although the benefit value slides according to the past contributions.

⁷⁷ Blin (forthcoming).

⁷⁸ EU (2021) ESPN Thematic Report on Social protection and inclusion policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis - Poland

https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?pager.offset=25&advSearchKey=%20ESPN_covid2021&mode=advancedSubmit&catId=22&policyArea=0&policyAreaSub=0&country=0&year=0

⁷⁹ *Ivi.*

⁸⁰ NRC calculations based on data in EU (2021) ESPN Thematic Report on Social protection and inclusion policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis - Poland

⁸¹ *Ivi.*

⁸² <https://www.zus.pl/-/trzynasta-emerytura-czyli-dodatkowe-roczne-swiadczenie-pieniezne>

⁸³ This includes retirement/disability pensions as part of the universal scheme, retirement/disability pensions for farmers, retirement/disability pensions for uniformed services, bridge pensions, pre-retirement benefits and payments, social pensions, restructuring pensions, teacher compensation benefits, supplementary parental benefits and disability pensions for war invalids and military personnel.

⁸⁴ Government of Poland Ministry of Family & social policy. <https://eures.praca.gov.pl/en/looking-for-a-job-in-eu/you-are-an-eu-or-efta-citizen/living-and-working-in-poland/social-insurance-in-poland/pensions-and-old-age-benefits#:~:text=From%201%20October%202017%2C%20the,retirement%20pension%20to%20be%20granted>

Name of Benefit	Description	Claimants	Application Process	Period of Benefits	Deadline (UKR)
Renta socjalna	It is a universal benefit that can be claimed in case of inability to work due to impairment(s) or other health reasons.	An adult with inability to work due to an impairment that has arisen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> before the age of 18 during school or university education - before the age of 25 during doctoral studies or post-graduate studies. 	<p>Application should be submitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> statutory representative and/or legal guardian the head of the social welfare centre, if asked for help another person with written power of attorney <p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PDF application form + PUE system a certificate from your school or university <i>OL-9 medical certificate</i> <i>OL-9A form</i>, other medical documentation <p>If foreigner is applying for a social pension:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a residence card with the annotation "access to the labour market", or live in Poland and have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> permanent residence permit, <u>refugee or subsidiary protection status</u>, national of an EU Member State 	<p>If meet all the necessary conditions, may be entitled to a social pension:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> permanently - when your inability for work is permanent, for a specified period - when your inability to work is temporary 	<p>In the month in which one reaches the age of majority.</p> <p>As soon as possible - if you are an adult.</p>
Unemployment benefit (<i>Zasitek dla bezrobotnych</i>)	Unemployment benefit is an allowance for individuals who are in a state of involuntary unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previously employed and earned a remuneration of at least the minimum wage on which there is an obligation to pay a contribution to the Labour Fund Previously performed work on the basis of a tolling agreement Previously provided services based on an agency contract or contract of mandate or another contract for the provision of services Previously paid social insurance contributions for non-agricultural activity or cooperation Previously paid a contribution to the Labour Fund in connection with employment or other gainful work abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> register with the relevant poviats labour office (electronic or in-presence) 	<p>The period of receiving the allowance is 180 days for the unemployed living in the period of receiving the allowance in the poviats</p> <p>In particular cases the benefits could be for a period of 365 days</p>	N/A

Retirement pension (Emerytura)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> women from 60 years men from 65 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retirement application or PUE ZUS electronic application information on contributory and non-contributory periods documents needed to establish / re-establish the initial capital from 1 January 2022, an additional declaration on the nursing benefit must be submitted to the application. 	Not earlier than 30 days prior to the fulfilment of the last of the conditions required for granting the benefit.	N/A
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Means-tested (cash) benefits

Under the Special Act (art. 26)⁸⁵, refugees from Ukraine have the right to receive Polish family allowances and relative supplements⁸⁶. Poverty targeted support is dependent on an income, which is subject to an interview by a social worker with the applicant’s family in their home, and it is not clear if Ukrainians are subject to the same verification as Polish families, which would pose an additional challenge.⁸⁷ Besides, full documentation and confirmation of the disability status in Poland is needed to apply for disability-related benefits, which in turn requires additional time and efforts. There are several benefits to partially support low-income families, so are means-tested, available only for households with an income less than PLN 674 (or PLN 764 – around 160 \$ - if there is a child with disability in the family). In addition to that, there are three key means-tested benefits: the monthly Periodic Allowance (GMI) for those lacking income; a monthly Permanent Allowance for those unable to work due to disability or age, and a one-off Special Needs Allowance to meet emergency needs. This is 50% of the difference between the household’s income and income threshold.

⁸⁵ <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/material-informacyjny-o-zasadach-przyznawania-swadczen-rodzinnych-obywatelom-ukrainy-przybywajacym-na-terytorium-polski-w-zwiazku-z-toczacyimi-sie-dzialaniami-wojennymi>

⁸⁶ Those supplements include supplements for the education and rehabilitation of a child with a disability, for a child attending a school outside the place of residence, for single parenthood, for large families, for the birth of a child and for the new school year (the last two as a one-off). <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/dodatki-do-zasilku-rodzinnego>

⁸⁷ EU (2021) **ESPN Thematic Report on Social protection and inclusion policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis - Poland** https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?pager.offset=25&advSearchKey=%20ESPN_covid2021&mode=advancedSubmit&catId=22&policyArea=0&policyAreaSub=0&country=0&year=0

	Name of Benefit	Description	Criterion	Claimants	Allowance
Family allowance and supplements to family allowance Zasiłek rodzinny i Dodatki do zasiłku rodzinnego	Family allowance (Zasiłek rodzinny)	Family allowance is intended to partially cover the cost of maintaining a child			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PLN 95 for a child up to the age of 5. 2. PLN 124 for a child over 5 to 18 years of age. 3. PLN 135 for a child over 18 up to 24 years of age.
	Supplement to the family allowance for education and rehabilitation of a disabled child (Dodatek z tytułu kształcenia i rehabilitacji dziecka niepełnosprawnego)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly family income 	The right to family allowance and supplements to this allowance are granted to:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PLN 90 for a child up to the age of 5. 2. PLN 110 for a child over 5 to 24 years of age.
	Supplement for a child commencing school education outside the place of residence (Dodatek z tytułu podjęcia przez dziecko nauki w szkole poza miejscem zamieszkania)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • per person (or the income of a learner) 	1) parents, one of the parents or the child legal guardian.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PLN 113 per month per child in the case of a child or a person with disability in education 2. PLN 69 per month per child (travel from the place of residence to the town where the school is located)
	Allowance for the beginning of the school year (Dodatek z tytułu rozpoczęcia roku szkolnego)		< 674 PLN	2) the actual guardian of the child	Once a school year in the amount of PLN 100 per child
	Single parent supplement (Dodatek z tytułu samotnego wychowywania dziecka)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a family member is a child with disability 	3) a person in education (an adult in education, not dependent on his/her parents)	PLN 193 per month per child, but not more than PLN 386 for all children
	Childbirth allowance (Dodatek z tytułu urodzenia dziecka)		< 764 PLN		once in the amount of PLN 1,000
	Childcare allowance for large families (Dodatek z tytułu wychowywania dziecka w rodzinie wielodzietnej)				PLN 95 per month for the third and subsequent children
Childcare allowance during parental leave (Dodatek z tytułu opieki nad dzieckiem w okresie korzystania z urlopu wychowawczego)				PLN 400 per month	

Care benefits
Świadczenia opiekuńcze

<p>One-off childbirth grant (<i>Jednorazowa zapomoga z tytułu urodzenia dziecka</i>)</p>	<p>One-time benefit for the birth of a child in the amount of PLN 1,000 per one child</p>	<p>Family income per person does not exceed PLN 1,922 net</p>	<p>The allowance is granted to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the child's parent(s). 2. the legal guardian of the child. 3. the actual guardian of the child 	<p>Lumpsum: 1,000 PLN</p>
<p>Special care allowance (<i>Specjalny zasiłek opiekuńczy</i>)</p>	<p>The special care allowance is granted to a person who has a maintenance obligation, as well as to spouses if: do not take up employment or other gainful work or they quit employment or other gainful work</p>	<p>Total income of the family of the person providing care and the family of the person requiring care per person < 764 PLN</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person concerned • Caregiver 	<p>PLN 620 per month</p>
<p>Nursing benefit (<i>Świadczenie pielęgnacyjne</i>)</p>	<p>Nursing benefit due to resignation from employment or other gainful work to care for a person with a disability</p>	<p>The disability of the person requiring care has arisen:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) not later than the age of 18. 2) during school or university, but not later than the age of 25. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the child's parent(s) • the actual guardian of the child, • a foster family • other person who has a maintenance obligation 	<p>PLN 2,119 per month.</p>
<p>Nursing allowance (<i>Zasiłek pielęgnacyjny</i>)</p>	<p>The nursing allowance is granted to partially cover the expenses resulting from the need to provide care and assistance to another person due to the inability to live independently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family members • Caregivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a child with disability • a person with disability over the age of 16, if he or she has a severe disability certificate • a person with disability over the age of 16 who has a certificate of moderate disability, if the disability occurred up to the age of 21 • a person who is 75 years of age or older 	<p>PLN 215.84 per month</p>

Annex 2 – Basic Subsistence Allowance (BSA)⁸⁸

Quoting from the CWG Briefing Note: *As a rapid response measure, the CWG will base its assistance on a basic amount of PLN 710 per person per month to cover basic needs for the first member of the HH followed by an additional PLN 610 for each additional member up to 5 maxima. [...] the*

CWG recommends setting the initial grant amount at PLN 710 per person per month in Poland in line with basic subsistence estimates provided by the Polish Department of Statistics as of 2020 but adjusted to reflect inflation estimates since then. This amount is set based on secondary information and the CWG co-chairs have updated the tables below to reflect the changes in line with what was agreed and expected since the initial CWG meeting.

Tabela 1. Wartość minimum egzystencji w 2020 r., w zł

Wyszczególnienie	Gospodarstwa pracownicze						Gospodarstwa emeryckie	
	1-osobowe	2-osobowe	3-osobowe	3-osobowe	4-osobowe	5-osobowe	1-osobowe	2-osobowe
	(M+K)/2	M+K	M+K+DM	M+K+DS	M+K+DM+DS	M+K+DM+2xDS	(M+K)/2	M+K
Żywność	261,97	523,93	748,41	836,12	1 060,59	1 372,77	226,94	453,89
Mieszkanie	287,90	409,23	585,76	585,76	766,16	944,18	287,90	409,23
-użytkowanie i energia	268,81	383,85	552,80	552,80	721,76	890,73	268,81	383,85
-wyposażenie	19,09	25,38	32,96	32,96	44,39	53,45	19,09	25,38
Edukacja	0,00	0,00	4,31	63,01	67,32	130,33	0,00	0,00
Odzież i obuwie	26,83	50,23	74,70	76,97	101,44	128,19	26,83	50,23
Leki	11,73	20,21	45,47	32,49	56,93	69,06	18,84	34,42
Higiena	22,74	45,00	56,22	62,29	73,53	90,98	20,10	39,71
Pozostałe wydatki	30,56	52,43	75,74	82,83	106,30	136,78	29,03	49,37
Razem ME	641,74	1 101,03	1 590,60	1 739,47	2 232,26	2 872,29	609,65	1 036,86
ME na 1 osobę	641,74	550,52	530,20	579,82	558,06	574,46	609,65	518,43

Źródło: Obliczenia Instytutu Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych na podstawie danych Departamentu Statystyki Społecznej GUS.
Uwaga: Symbole użyte w tablicy oznaczają odpowiednio: M – mężczyzna w wieku 25–60 lat, K – kobieta w wieku 25–60 lat, M+K/2 – wydatki na poziomie średniej arytmetycznej dla gospodarstwa męzczyzny i kobiety, DM – dziecko młodsze w wieku 4–6 lat, DS – dziecko starsze w wieku 13–15 lat. W przypadku gospodarstw emeryckich symbole M i K oznaczają odpowiednio mężczyznę i kobietę w wieku powyżej 60 lat.

⁸⁸ Poland Cash Working Group Briefing Notes, <https://pah.sharepoint.com/:f:/r/sites/PolandCWG/Shared%20Documents/CWG%20Briefing%20Notes?csf=1&web=1&e=ncFimB>

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