

Research for REGI Committee

Cities and the Ukrainian refugees

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused a massive, unprecedented refugee flow to Europe. As of today, 6,642,659 Ukrainians have fled the country¹ while 8 million are displaced within Ukraine.² One of the ways Europe shows solidarity with Ukraine is by housing and aiding the refugees fleeing the conflict. Cities play a crucial role in this regard. Due to their social infrastructure and strong economies, they can provide not just shelter, but also social and economic opportunities. Yet, cities are also pressured and face various challenges, especially in the effort to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the economy and social life.

This briefing summarizes the implications of the influx of refugees from Ukraine to European cities, and how cities can navigate challenges to continue being a positive factor in the support of Ukraine. The briefing is based on available official sources and expert commentaries and written in the context of the study 'Social challenges in cities' commissioned by the European Parliament³. The PPMI research team conducted desk research in English, Lithuanian, Hungarian, Romanian and Polish languages. National experts supported the search for information on the situation in Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Slovakia, Spain, and Malta.

1. The situation now

1.1. The influx of refugees in figures and characteristics

The war in Ukraine, with the immense threat to life and the destruction of civilian infrastructure, has forced inhabitants to flee to safer zones within and across their borders. To facilitate safe refuge, the European Commission adopted a right to stay and temporary protection approach, allowing refugees from Ukraine to travel freely within the EU's borders, remain where they choose, work legally, and access social services.⁴ Because of this situation, the refugees in the statistics may not be legally registered as refugees and they may choose to not permanently stay in the countries they currently reside in. There are already reports of refugees starting to return, especially to the Western

¹ UNHCR (2022) Refugees fleeing Ukraine (since 24 February 2022) as of 24 May 2022, Accessed 26.05.2022 from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

² UNHCR (2022) Ukraine situation: Flash Update #14, Accessed 26.05.2022 from <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/93039>

³ [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/699631/IPOL_STU\(2022\)699631_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/699631/IPOL_STU(2022)699631_EN.pdf)

⁴ IOM (2022) Situation Report Ukraine, <https://www.iom.int/news/almost-65-million-people-internally-displaced-ukraine-iom>



and Northern parts of Ukraine, but these statistics are for the moment not trustworthy and not included in this briefing.⁵

The responsibilities for hosting refugees have primarily landed on the shoulder of the Central and Eastern EU Member States. The main receiving countries in Europe are Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Germany.⁶ The biggest number of refugees arrived in March. Since Russia retreated from Kyiv the amount of new arriving refugees per month has decreased.

Table 1. Refugee influx from Ukraine: the biggest receiving countries (24 May 2022)

Country	Refugee population	Total POPULATION	Share of population
Poland	3,544,995	37,768,292	9,4
Slovakia	446,755	5,459,642	8,2
Hungary	654,664	9,614,006	6,8
Romania	972,203	18,995,613	5,1
Germany	600,000	84,290,181	0,1

Source: UNHCR (2022) for refugee statistics and Worldometers (2020/2022) from the overall population

Refugees from Ukraine are also seeking refuge beyond the top countries listed above. In France, 55,272 displaced persons were recorded entering the country between February 24 and May 12, 98% of whom were Ukrainian nationals.⁷ In Spain, on April 10, a total of 51,957 temporary protection documents had been granted to persons displaced by the war.⁸ Also smaller Member States have taken a share. As of April, a total of 337 Ukrainian citizens have received temporary protection in Malta.⁹ As of 25 May, Lithuania counted 53 891 refugees from Ukraine.¹⁰ Ukrainian nationals had submitted 23,482 applications for temporary protection in Finland as of 18 May.¹¹ According to reports by government officials to the research team, on 18 May, Estonia had received 40,100 refugees from Ukraine.

Refugees from Ukraine have settled mostly in the wealthier and bigger municipalities in Europe. In Poland, two-thirds of all Ukrainians live in the 12 largest metropolitan areas, and in Spain they also reside primarily in the area around Madrid as well as the Northern and South-Eastern Provinces. In Germany, this picture is different as only 42 per cent of refugees live in bigger cities, and they generally are more evenly distributed across urban and rural areas.

Based on PPMI's desk research¹², we find the following cities to be the ones in Europe hosting the most refugees in comparison to their latest overall official city population.

⁵ UNHCR (2022) Refugees fleeing Ukraine (since 24 February 2022) as of 24 May 2022, Accessed 26.05.2022 from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

⁶ UNHCR (2022) Refugees fleeing Ukraine (since 24 February 2022) as of 24 May 2022, Accessed 26.05.2022 from <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

⁷ French ministry of internal affairs (2022) Foire aux questions - Accueil des réfugiés ukrainiens, 22 April 2022. Accessed 26 May 2022 from: <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/actualites/dossiers/situation-en-ukraine/foire-aux-questions-accueil-des-refugies-ukrainiens>

⁸ EP DATA (2022) The refugee crisis following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in charts, May 23, 2022. Accessed 26 May 2022 from <https://www.epdata.es/datos/crisis-refugiados-invasion-rusia-ucrania-datos-graficos/647?accion=2>

⁹ Malta Home Affairs Ministry, as cited in Times of Malta, April 21, 2022.

¹⁰ Migration department (2022) Accessed 25 May 2022 from <https://migracija.lrv.lt/lt/statistika>

¹¹ Finnish ministry of migration (2022) Accessed 26 May 2022 from <https://migri.fi/en/statistics-on-temporary-protection>

¹² We could not find official data on Slovakian, Hungarian and Romanian cities.

Table 2. Top 10 receiving refugee cities listed according to share of the population

City	Refugee population	Total population ¹³	Share of population
Rzeszów (29 Apr) ¹⁴	80528	197863	40,7%
Gdańsk (29 Apr)	101530	470805	21,6%
Katowice (29 Apr)	51310	290553	17,7%
Wrocław (29 Apr)	112696	641928	17,6%
Kraków (29 Apr)	121312	779966	15,6%
Lublin (29 Apr)	45827	338586	13,5%
Warsaw (29 Apr)	164537	1794166	9,2%
Łódź (29 Apr)	48690	672185	7,2%
Poznań (29 Apr)	37488	532048	7,0%
Vilnius (May 25) ¹⁵	20013	592 389 ¹⁶	3,4%
Berlin (10 May)	100000	3 664 088 ¹⁷	2,7%
Bratislava (March 25) ¹⁸	11069	475 503 ¹⁹	2,3%
Hamburg (3 May) ²⁰	18000	1 841 000 ²¹	0,98%
Munich (28 Apr) ²²	13311	1 579 380 ²³	0,84%
Madrid (25 April) ²⁴	14709	3 305 408 ²⁵	0,44%

The top cities, not surprisingly, are to be found in Poland. Rzeszów stands out as the refugees from Ukraine account for around a third of the city's population now. The city already had 24,256 Ukrainian nationals living there before the war. President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, announced the signing of Decree № 355/2022²⁶ on the establishment of the honorary title "Rescuer City", and the first to receive this title was the Polish city of Rzeszów²⁷.

¹³ Cities in Poland based on Polish National Statistics office, 2021. From: <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/ludnosc/powierzchnia-ludnosc-w-przekroju-terytorialnym-w-2021-roku,7,18.htm>

¹⁴ Data on the Polish cities is from Wójdat, M., & Cywiński, P. (2022) Urban hospitality: unprecedented growth, challenges and opportunities, Union of Polish Metropolises, Accessed 26 May 2022 from https://metropolie.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/UMP_raport_Ukraina_ANG_20220429_final.pdf Please see table 'ESIMATED GROWTH OF UKR' (01.02 - 01.04.2022) for central city on page 50. For the total number, this adult and youth number was added with the number for Ukrainian children in table 'CHILDREN (0-14): MIGRATION CRISIS DYNAMICS' central city on page 51. Children were not counted in statistics before the war, likely because children were not a significant group of Ukrainian migrants before the war, and one can therefore assume that the majority of the Ukrainian children are refugees.

¹⁵ Lietuvos Statistika (2022) Karo pabėgėliai iš ukrainos, Accessed 25 May 2022, from: <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/ukraine-dashboards>

¹⁶ Registru Centras, "Gyventojų skaičius pagal savivaldybes", 2022 January 5

https://www.registrucentras.lt/bylos/dokumentai/gr/2022_01_05_Gyventoju_skaicius_pagal_savivaldybes.pdf

¹⁷ Statistics Berlin, 2020 from: <https://www.statistik-berlin-brandenburg.de/bevoelkerung>

¹⁸ Statistics from the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic cited in Kiripolska, K., Krájanova, D., Tomek, R. (2022) Graf dňa: Utečenci mieria najmä do Bratislavy a realitný trh v hlavnom meste to citi, Accessed 27 May 2022 from: <https://e.dennikn.sk/2784015/graf-dna-ukrajinski-utecenci-nastartovali-bratislavsky-trh-s-prenajmami/>

¹⁹ Pravda "Bratislava Census" based on national statistics office data. From: <https://spravy.pravda.sk/regiony/clanok/614202-bratislava-vnima-scitane-pozitivne-rozdiel-20-tisic-ludi-vsak-ziada-vysvetlit/>

²⁰ Statistics cited by a spokesperson of the interior ministry in Die Zeit (2022) Weniger Kriegsflüchtlinge kommen nach Hamburg, Accessed 27 May 2022 from: https://www.zeit.de/news/2022-05/03/weniger-kriegsfluechtlinge-kommen-nach-hamburg?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

²¹ Hamburg Chamber of Commerce, 2018 from: <https://www.ihk.de/hamburg/produktmarken/beratung-service/konjunktur-statistik/hamburger-wirtschaft-zahlen/bevoelkerung-3676958>

²² Statistics cited in Buchwalk, S., Niesmann, S., and Wimmer, S. (2022) Ich fühle mich verantwortlich und das wird sicher so bleiben. Accessed 27 May from: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/muenchen-fluechtlinge-ukraine-unterkunft-privat-probleme-1.5575485#:~:text=Aber%20jetzt%20hat%20sich%20gekl%C3%A4rt,in%20M%C3%BCnchen%20horen%20Wohnsitz%20angemeldet.>

²³ Statistics Munich, 2022 from: <https://stadt.muenchen.de/infos/statistik-bevoelkerung.html>

²⁴ Statistics from the Spanish Ministry of the Interior cited in Schengenvisainfo (2022) Spain Has Issued 75,000 Temporary Protections for Ukrainian Refugees So Far, Accessed 27 May 2022 from: <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/spain-has-issued-75000-temporary-protections-for-ukrainian-refugees-so-far/>

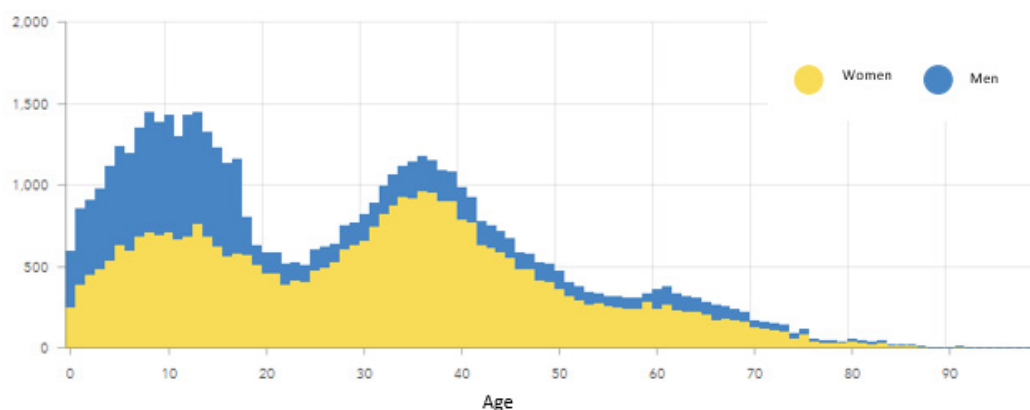
²⁵ Spain Statistics Office, 2021 from: <https://www.ine.es/jaxi3/Datos.htm?t=2911>

²⁶ Official website of the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy (2022) УКАЗ ПРЕЗИДЕНТА УКРАЇНИ №355/2022, Accessed 27 May 2022 from: <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/3552022-42613>

²⁷ UA TV (2022) President Zelenskyy conferred honorary title of the Rescuer City to Rzeszów and invited the Rada to expand the rights of Polish citizens in Ukraine, Accessed 27 May 2022 from: <https://uatv.ua/en/president-zelensky-conferred-honorary-title-of-the-rescuer-city-to-rzeszow-and-invited-the-rada-to-expand-the-rights-of-polish-citizens-in-ukraine/>

With regards to the background characteristics of the refugees from Ukraine, UNHCR reports that 90 per cent are women and children.²⁸ This is due to all men of Ukrainian nationality between the ages of 18 and 60 currently being prohibited from leaving the country. In a study conducted by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) in Germany, 84% of the adults were female with an average age of 38,2 years and 58% were accompanied by their children. The figure below shows the gender and age distribution of Refugees from Ukraine in Lithuania, which also shows a similar trend. The gender distribution among the children is naturally more even.

Figure 1. Refugees from Ukraine in Lithuania, distributed by gender and age



Source: Migration department of Lithuania (2022)

Little research has been conducted yet on other background characteristics of refugees from Ukraine. In Germany, there is data to suggest that most refugees are highly educated - 83 % of the refugees had studied at tertiary education institutions (BMI 2022) – and willing to integrate.²⁹ The latter may be because there is a higher percentage of refugees from Ukraine that want to reside permanently in Germany and not return to their home country, therefore this finding may not apply to Romania and Slovakia. Lastly, among the refugees there is also a smaller but significant group of stateless persons and 'Third-Country Nationals.' In April, the European Commission counted 186,000 third-country nationals fleeing from Ukraine.³⁰ These are nationals from other states that have settled in Ukraine but have not become naturalized citizens. Since they are less likely to have established connections in Europe and due to reports of discrimination and racism, they face a different set of challenges in getting protection in Europe.³¹

1.2. The influx of refugees: challenges and opportunities

1.2.1. Immediate needs and short-term policy implications

At the beginning and first couple of months of the war, the most important effort of cities when admitting refugees from Ukraine, was to be able to organize **humanitarian aid, immediate support** and **housing**, education, access to health care, and job opportunities. At this time, a major challenge in Poland was linked to the **poor coordination of the financial aid**. The Polish minister on the government's plenipotentiary for war refugees reflected that humanitarian aid often was provided on an ad hoc basis, and therefore it was difficult to organize and ensure consistency in aid

²⁸ UNHCR (2022) Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan, Available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/92257>

²⁹ Jurić, T (2022) Ukrainian refugee integration and flows analysis with an approach of Big Data: Social media insights, medRxiv 2022.04.18.22273958; doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2022.04.18.22273958>

³⁰ European Commission, Ukraine: Commission proposes temporary protection for people fleeing war in Ukraine and guidelines for border checks, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1469

³¹ UNHCR (2022) Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan

delivery systems to those in need. This primarily affected childcare, language courses, and relocation of refugees in centres and thereby moving them from large to smaller centres.³²

With regards to health services, Ukraine has a relatively large population living with communicable diseases like HIV and hepatitis C, along with other non-communicable conditions and a large share of the population is not vaccinated against COVID-19 and measles.³³ Refugees from Ukraine need timely and appropriate health assistance also for mental health protection and protection from gender-based violence. It has been **a challenge to ensure equitable and fair healthcare** for both refugees and residents in the cities that have had an especially high influx of refugees compared to their overall population.³⁴

To provide social services to the refugees as well as all inhabitants, European cities have felt the pressure of services being overcrowded resulting in the need to encourage and offer refugees to stay in smaller towns and make these attractive. Another solution to this challenge was to rely on the solidarity and volunteering spirit of locals. European countries that had a shortage of available housing for refugees, **organized housing for refugees through citizen volunteering programmes**, with allowances for the families signing up. For instance, to this day, private individuals offered more than 10,000 places to stay (flats, houses, etc.) for Ukrainian families in Lithuania.³⁵

However, an NGO in Malta reported that although people have been very generous with the funding, the **governments were not coordinating the volunteering schemes well**, and there was **misinformation and a lack of prepared protocols** for action in general specifically with regards to the community housing scheme. Guidelines and advice on how to resolve potential conflicts were lacking. This became a concern and made the policy less efficient, as the hosting families were uncertain about their responsibilities and obligations.³⁶ Similar concerns were reported in Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland. Other concerns have been **the amount of the allowance being low** to cover day-to-day costs, especially due to the rising energy prices in Europe and the pressure on the local housing stock in some cities and the drop in available accommodation over time.³⁷

In the example of Lithuania, refugees that come with minors acquire the right to child benefits and 6 months of compensation for pre-school education. 5,643 children, 6 years-old and younger, moved to Lithuania, primarily to the bigger cities. This puts **additional stress on the early childhood education and care (ECEC) institutions** that were already overcrowded in bigger cities. The policy solution was to amend the current legislation and expand the class sizes from 15 to 17 in younger groups and 20 to 22 in older groups of children in ECEC. Similar measures were adopted at the primary and secondary school levels. There have been **concerns regarding the possible impact of this measure on the quality of education**, but there is no evidence yet of a negative impact and these increases were also not very drastic.

Another challenge is to ensure that Ukrainian nationals who have to or choose to stay longer in the cities get a **legal status** that is durable and easier for accessing rights. Due to the EU rule on free movement for refugees from Ukraine, the cities need to provide refugees with temporary protection. There are already situations of refugees from Ukraine having gotten temporary refugee status in other places that they are currently residing. The Ukrainian Plenipotentiary in Košice

³² Comment by Deputy Minister Paweł Szefemaker, the government's plenipotentiary for war refugees on May 9th, 2022 <https://pap-mediroom.pl/polityka-i-spolnoczenstwo/mswia-miedzynarodowa-konferencja-ministrow-do-spraw-uchodzcow-wojennych-z>

³³ Marchese, V., et al. (2022) Examining the pre-war health burden of Ukraine for prioritisation by European countries receiving Ukrainian refugees, in *The Lancet Regional Health Europe* 15, 100369, March 17, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lanepe.2022.100369>

³⁴ UNHCR (2022) Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan

³⁵ Strong together (2022) Assistance for war refugees from Ukraine, Accessed 27 May 2022 from: <https://stipruskartu.lt>

³⁶ Times of Malta (2022) Over 300 Ukrainians given temporary protection in Malta, Accessed 26 May 2022 from <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/over-300-ukrainians-given-temporary-protection-in-malta.949498>

³⁷ ICMPD (2022) Integration of Ukrainian refugees: The road ahead, International Centre for Migration Policy Development, Accessed 27 May 2022 from: <https://www.icmpd.org/blog/2022/integration-of-ukrainian-refugees-the-road-ahead>

explained to the research team that the statistics “do not take into account people who have not yet taken temporary refuge and it does not take into account people who have temporary refuge registered elsewhere (e.g., in Michalovce) but are actually living in Košice.” The challenge here is that the social rights are related to the place of temporary residence but exercising them might be restricted if one lives in another area, which makes it difficult for refugees to gain access to the rights they are granted under the temporary protection.

In terms of employment, the temporary protection status can also be a challenge because it creates **uncertainty** as to how long the refugees will stay in their residing cities, and this creates some challenges **for employers**. While many entrepreneurs are counting on employing workers, because of the labour shortage, especially in sectors such as construction or industry, a significant number of Ukrainians openly declare that they are only in the hosting country temporarily.

While refugees from Ukraine can contribute positively to the demographic situation of cities and workforces even if they stay for a short time, all the integration measures require resources and incentives for business. They also need to be coordinated and include long-term planning, which is often outside the scope of local government action or beyond their financial capacity.

1.2.2. Ongoing challenges, opportunities and long-term implications for policy

Despite the **incredible solidarity and volunteerism** seen in the European region, migration is still a contentious topic in Europe. Besides, there may also be a natural ‘limit’ to volunteerism. As stated by Bogusław Kośmider, the Deputy Mayor of Krakow: “In the first weeks, we managed to cope with it thanks to the unprecedented dedication of the inhabitants, thousands of volunteers, and the actions that were quickly launched at the level of the commune and its agendas. It is known, however, that the enthusiasm of volunteers will not last forever.”³⁸ One of the main challenges, especially for the cities where there is not enough financial support capacity from the central governments to fund humanitarian aid projects over the long term, will be to continue these efforts when the level of solidarity and volunteerism in the cities drops, which is likely to happen. As noted by Myroslava Keryk, president of the “Our Choice” Foundation NGO in Poland, refugees from Ukraine are probably likely to still need necessities to be covered even once they get a bit more established and can get access to housing and the labour market, due to a vast group of them consisting of in effect one-parent households.³⁹

Due to the number of Ukrainian people having studied at a **tertiary educational level** (83% in comparison to Germany with 74%), the educational and professional qualifications of the arrivals have been noted as extensive – in the case of Germany.⁴⁰ This may allow many arrivals a rapid integration into the job market. Even though the current language qualifications are lacking (10% of the arrivals speak German), the Ukrainian population in the past has shown a great potential to learn the German language, which shows again that there is a great potential for integrating and employing refugees from Ukraine. Overall, as the war is extending over time, short-term responses (e.g., introduction courses and increasing limits on classroom quotas) are not sufficient to address **long-term needs in the compulsory education systems**. The education systems need to adapt to accommodate the language and academic needs of refugee learners by developing language-sensitive curricula and strengthening the skills and support of language pedagogues and teachers to avoid additional burdens on municipal budgets.

³⁸ Bartus, Zbigniew (2022) Kraków: Uchodźcy z Ukrainy chcą pracować i prowadzić firmy. To wyzwanie, ale i wielka szansa na rozwój gospodarczy stolicy Małopolski, *Dziennik Polski*, Accessed 27 May 2022 from: <https://dziennikpolski24.pl/krakow-uchodzy-z-ukrainy-chca-pracowac-i-prowadzic-firmy-to-wyzwanie-ale-i-wielka-szansa-na-rozwoj-gospodarczy-stolicy/ar/c10-16333309>

³⁹ Bankier.pl (2022) Uchodźcy z Ukrainy powoli aklimatyzują się w Polsce, ale potrzeby nie maleją, Accessed 27 May 2022 from: <https://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/Uchodzy-z-Ukrainy-powoli-aklimatyzuja-sie-w-Polsce-ale-potrzeby-nie-maleja-8339620.html>

⁴⁰ IAB (2022) Consequences of the war in the Ukraine on refugee migration and integration, Accessed 27 May 2022 from: https://www.imcb22.com/fileadmin/Imcb22/Dateien/IMCB22_Webinar_Ukraine_Presentation_Herbert-Bruecker.pdf

The **changing characteristics of the refugees** from Ukraine may pose another potential challenge in the longer run. Information from Slovakia signals that the type of background and education level of refugees from Ukraine is shifting now that the conflict goes into a different stage and there are fewer refugees from Northern and Western Ukraine. Roman Dohovič, the representative of the city of Košice for humanitarian aid to refugees from Ukraine, expressed that the first wave of refugees had more connections to Europe and the current wave is fleeing more from the Eastern parts. The refugees from the Eastern parts of Ukraine may face different challenges and needs than those from the West and North given that the destruction of the cities and people's livelihoods has been more extensive in the East. In that sense, if the conflict continues primarily in the East, the ability to easily integrate the refugees in European cities may prove more challenging than with the first wave of refugees.⁴¹ Due to lower incoming numbers of refugees, this may be less of a challenge and lessons from the first wave can be used to improve the effectiveness of policy responses.

The main ongoing challenge, in the long run, is the **shortage of affordable housing** which is already a problem in the capitals and bigger cities of Europe. For example, in Vilnius, the prices for flats increased by 23,8% already in January 2022 compared to the previous year and by 22% a year earlier. Additional migration of Ukrainian refugees inflated the prices even more to the point where renting a flat became too expensive, therefore, even working Ukrainians must rely on social housing for prolonged periods. The challenge of finding affordable housing in cities is a problem throughout Europe which will also impact refugees from Ukraine while the increasing number of residents could further contribute to increasing housing prices.

2. The way forward

At the local level, it will be important to learn from this experience to ensure that one is ready and prepared for potential new waves of refugees and to improve the overall urban resilience systems of cities. From our analysis, it seems that cities like Hamburg have been better at learning from experience and being resilient and flexible in this regard. For example, the reaction of Hamburg's Senate was to increase the capacity of already operating refugee centres as well as construct new facilities. In addition to this, many hotels and other interim locations have been prepared quickly to receive refugees and negotiations have been made to extend the limitations on previously agreed-upon limitations for refugee facilities. Yet, it should also be noted that Hamburg and other German cities may be better placed financially to absorb large numbers of refugees quickly. Germany has also been more successful in distributing the refugees across the country to alleviate the pressure on the biggest cities.

Due to refugees from Ukraine primarily being women and children, at the moment, the most important social service infrastructure in cities to focus on would be to ensure access to nurseries, kindergartens and schools, so to ensure smooth integration and that women can be active participants in the labour market. Vaccination should be strengthened, ensuring COVID-19 protection, polio and measles outbreak containment, and adequate mental health support, and this should also be a priority area to prevent further burdens on the local health care systems. There needs to be a stronger and clearer communication and legal counselling for refugees as well as gender, age and diversity-oriented inclusive content of briefing materials, talking points, speeches and websites.

The final study on 'Social challenges in cities' recommends policies that focus on building the capacities of longer-term residents in solving local challenges. To implement these on a city level, resources could be allocated to resident-led micro-interventions in the form of participatory budgets or similar initiatives. A similar approach may be taken to address housing challenges for

⁴¹ KOSICE town (2022) In Košice, the number of Ukrainian refugees decreased, Accessed 26 May 2022 from <https://www.kosice.sk/clanok/v-kosiciach-sa-znizil-pocet-ukrajinskych-utecencov>

refugees from Ukraine. It is advisable to involve residents who are knowledgeable about the scheme in neighbourhood-level strategy building to increase trust among citizens and the ownership of responsibilities relating to the integration of refugees and foster peer learning.

In the context of Poland, the country is organizing migration policies at the governmental level and did not have a lot of experiences to build upon until the Belarus-Poland border crisis. Now, with the refugees from Ukraine, the municipalities and voivodeships do most of the work (providing housing, admitting places in schools, providing medical assistance, etc.) and this financial burden is mostly on regional (municipal) budgets. Some legislative and financial changes may be needed to help those cities and regions that have the biggest financial problems at the moment, and align the responsibilities over tasks so that coordination can be improved. If a multi-level governance approach is taken, it will require more comprehensive planning, better coordination and forecasting of adverse side effects.

At the EU level, policymakers, funders, and other stakeholders can support the capacity building of local authorities and civil society to host refugees from Ukraine and develop resilient systems of coordination and collaboration for the future. They can support the representation of refugees from Ukraine under the partnership principle in EU-run urban projects.

Regarding legislative and administrative aspects, it will be important to review the current EU directive on temporary protection, and how it can be improved or supported by better policies and reporting practices to ensure that refugees from Ukraine also have social protection and guarantees in the long term, especially given that the refugees are moving a lot between cities and some are waiting to apply and others have moved away from the area they first applied to for temporary protection.

Regarding health aspects, an effective European health information system for refugees from Ukraine could foster the management of diseases and thereby alleviate some of the tasks from cities.⁴² Personal data protection and cross-border continuity of care based on voluntary reporting could be ensured through the adoption of digital tools (e.g., the EU Digital COVID Certificate). Such measures could make sense given that refugees from Ukraine can travel freely in Europe across borders and therefore should also be included in the facilitating and sharing of cross-border information. This could also make it easier for those refugees moving to another city or traveling to see relatives. As shown in the section on statistics, in many cases the refugees have not settled but are very often still on the move and have been separated unwillingly from their families in Ukraine and the wider regions.

Most importantly, the above shows that a relatively small number of EU countries and cities have taken a bigger responsibility for hosting the refugees from Ukraine and that the local city infrastructures are struggling to provide adequate support – especially in the long term. The EU can also play a key role here to further ensure financial assistance to the most affected states and to alleviate the financial pressure not just on the national level but also city level in the most affected regions.

⁴² Marchese, V., et al. (2022) Examining the pre-war health burden of Ukraine for prioritisation by European countries receiving Ukrainian refugees, in *The Lancet Regional Health Europe* 15, 100369, March 17, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lanepe.2022.100369>

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