

INTRODUCTION

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has internally and externally displaced more than 11 million people (UNHCR accessed 12/07/2023; IOM accessed 12/07/2023). As at 10 October 2023, 6.2 million refugees from Ukraine were recorded globally, with approximately 1.7 million residing in the six countries selected for analysis: Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia of the European Union (EU), and Moldova (Figure 1) (UNHCR accessed 18/10/2023).

These six countries are also included in the ACAPS regional dataset and Regional overview. The selection of the countries considered country capacity to accommodate the crisis (approximated by GDP per capita), the country's inclusion in the Refugee Response Plan, the number of refugees, and data availability.

The social protection systems of the six countries have not been designed to adapt to a rapid and high number of new recipients, namely refugees from Ukraine who hold **temporary protection (TP)** status. Before February 2022, all countries but Hungary (in 2015) had not experienced such a big inflow of displaced people. Most refugees from Ukraine in European countries may benefit from TP, with the exception of some groups discussed in the report. Depending on the country, TP holders are eligible for different special assistance measures and can access different elements of national social protection systems.

KEY FINDINGS

- **The financial assistance available from the State for refugees from Ukraine in all six countries** (both through special measures and general social protection systems) is **insufficient to cover their basic needs. About three to six in ten refugee households are unable to cover their basic needs.**
- Barriers to refugees' employment access (mainly around language, childcare, and recognition of qualifications for regulated professions), the stagnation of refugee employment levels, the depletion of savings, low benefits and low salaries, increasing cost of living, and lack of social housing all suggest that large numbers of refugees will remain without employment in the longer term and that **the demand for cash assistance and hostel-type housing will continue and may increase.**
- About one in three refugee households comprises an adult with children or other people they look after. **For a family of one adult and two children, the benefits available to TP holders** in the six countries, even if combined with employment at a minimum wage, only cover approximately one-third of the cost of living in **Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, one-half in Czechia and Romania, and one-tenth in Moldova.**
- People with heightened needs for social protection or who face additional barriers in accessing social protection include older people, people with disabilities, Roma and stateless people, certain women, especially those aged 50 or above, and certain youth and men at risk of social exclusion.
- **Older refugees** are especially vulnerable. About 7% of households comprise only older people. If combined, **Ukrainian pensions and the benefits available in the host countries only cover approximately 11–35% of the national cost of living of a single older person** in an independent household. For those in need of long-term care because of older age or disability, low availability or ineligibility limit access.
- **Policies to support refugee employment have been insufficient.** The lack of available **free language courses** in all countries except Czechia not only limits employment opportunities but also leads to low wages, increasing the demand for benefits. There is an insufficient number of places in early childhood education and care facilities, and procedures to recognise qualifications for the practice of regulated professions are unavailable for many qualifications acquired in Ukraine.
- **The cost of living is higher for refugees than locals** because refugees do not own houses and cannot rely on family resources. Allowances from regular social protection systems are not designed to take this into account, and special refugee **benefits do not match the cost of rent**, except in Romania. Access to collective accommodation is not limited only in Moldova and Slovakia, and social housing programmes are underdeveloped all six countries.
- The main barriers to **accessing social protection** include lack of accessible **information** on available benefits and services, especially around language. There is a lack of language interpretation to/from Ukrainian, Russian, and Romani in social protection institutions. This is compounded by **limited administrative capacity** in Hungary and Moldova, **procedures constraining TP access** or related rights in Hungary and Poland, and payment **delays** in Czechia and Romania.

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

Aim

This report presents an overview of the available national social protection services and benefits for Ukrainian refugees who have TP in six host countries: Czechia, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. The report also looks at the extent to which these benefits are accessible and help refugees meet their needs. The selection of the six countries considered the [ACAPS regional dataset](#) and [Regional overview](#).

Methodology

This report is based on a review of secondary data, including information from government and NGO websites, national legislation, media reports, and the indicators in the [ACAPS regional dataset](#). This is complemented by nine interviews with responders at the national and local levels in five of the six countries (except for Romania, where requested respondents were not available for interviews). Protection and social protection responders in the humanitarian response reviewed the report.

Limitations

This report is based on publicly available documents. It is not a comprehensive description of social protection systems in all six countries and all the barriers to accessing social protection. Some barriers that exist may not have been identified or included in the report because of a lack of information. Areas for further research include TP holders' rights to pensions and other contribution-based allowances, as regulated by bilateral agreements and host country laws, and the coverage of refugees by child protection services, including alternative care.

The report also includes estimates of the coverage of the cost of living by social protection benefits available to TP holders. This is based on several assumptions, including the approximation of the cost of living for certain types of households, the selection of typical benefits, and a certain exchange rate. Methodology of the estimation is described at the end of the report.

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UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL PROTECTION

There are several definitions and taxonomies of social protection. For the purpose of this report, ACAPS assumes that **social protection is a set of national policies and programmes to protect people from and aid people in poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion**. Its main segments are:

- **social assistance and social care**¹, which comprise:
 - **benefits** and subsidies (cash, in-kind assistance, vouchers) to alleviate poverty, as well as category-specific benefits (e.g. for children or for people with disabilities)
 - activities supporting **social inclusion** (e.g. social work, counselling, training)
 - **long-term care** for people with disabilities and older people (including in-home, residential, and day care)
 - **child protection** services (family counselling, alternative care)
 - **special measures for refugees from Ukraine**, such as benefits and shelter
- **labour market (employment) policies**, which comprise:
 - support with **job searching, training sessions, and internships**, wage subsidies, and support for starting a business (called ‘active labour market policies’)
 - recognition of **qualifications** and diplomas
 - **early childhood education and care**, which, although not a conventional element of social protection, are included in some social protection programmes as a measure to support caregivers’ employment
- **social security**, which covers risks and needs related to health (healthcare insurance), old age and disability (pensions), work accidents, unemployment, maternity and paternity leave, and more (socialprotection.org accessed 29/08/2023; MISSOC accessed 29/08/2023; ILO accessed 11/08/2023; EC accessed 05/09/2023; GSDRC accessed 05/09/2023).

The principles of social protection include respect for human rights, minimal accepted levels of subsistence or coverage, and insurance. There are three main types of access criteria to benefits and services considered in this study:

- **income-dependent** – if a households’ income or assets drop below a certain level; also called means-tested social assistance
- **insurance-based (or contribution-based)** – typically includes healthcare, pensions, and unemployment benefits if regular insurance premiums are paid (depending on the country’s system)

- **universal** – does not depend on insurance or income/assets and is category-specific, e.g. some child benefits or universal childcare (socialprotection.org accessed 29/08/2023; NRC 10/11/2022).

The extent of social protection benefits differs across countries, as do the criteria for benefiting from social protection. For example, maternity or unemployment benefits may or may not depend on previous contribution payments (MISSOC accessed 29/08/2023).

SCOPE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THIS REPORT

This report focuses only on the social protection rights and benefits available to those who benefit from TP. This report analyses the availability of and access to social assistance, social care, childcare, and employment support. Access to social protection for refugees with status other than TP is governed differently.

This report does not include:

- **insurance-based social security** (except unemployment benefits), because eligibility typically occurs after a certain employment period and because Ukraine has bilateral agreements signed with all six countries providing limited rights related to pensions (MISSOC accessed 29/08/2023; IOM 03/2019)
- **healthcare**, which is available to all TP holders (full access or access to only emergency and primary healthcare in the case of Moldova)
- **humanitarian aid** disbursed by non-governmental stakeholders
- **people not covered by TP**, e.g. those who applied for asylum.

¹ The distinction between social assistance and social care varies across definitions.

TEMPORARY PROTECTION STATUS

Most refugees from Ukraine who have fled to Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia after 24 February 2022 have applied for and been granted TP (UNHCR accessed 07/09/2023). In Moldova, a non-EU country, approximately 18% of refugees from Ukraine have been granted TP (UNHCR accessed 18/10/2023). The numbers in Moldova are likely lower because the option to apply for TP status was introduced one year later than in the other countries (ACAPS 05/09/2023).

The EU required its member states to implement TP as stipulated by the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) activated in March 2022. The directive obliges EU member states to provide TP holders with certain rights, such as the rights to reside on the territory of the respective country, move to another EU country, and access accommodation, employment, medical care, education, and social welfare (EC accessed 07/09/2023).

According to the TPD, EU member states should ensure that TP holders have access to accommodation or receive means to obtain housing, receive “necessary assistance in terms of social welfare and means of subsistence, if they do not have sufficient resources”, have access to medical care, and, for people with special needs (such as unaccompanied minors or people who have undergone violence) receive necessary medical or other assistance (EUR-Lex 20/07/2001).

How the TPD is transposed onto national law is at the discretion of each member state. Analysis of the regulations implementing TPD in the five EU countries shows significant differences in the provision of social welfare assistance or social protection for people granted TP (FRA 31/10/2022). For example, Poland and Romania have granted TP holders almost all the same rights to social assistance as their own citizens. Czechia and Hungary have used special measures instead. Slovakia has used a mixed approach; the Government has given refugees with TP status access to some social benefits, but others are restricted to those who are employed and/or hold permanent residency (as shown in Table 1 and Table 2).

Moldova introduced a TP mechanism only in March 2023, one year after the EU countries (ICMPD 04/07/2023; UNHCR 03/2023). Moldovan TP gives refugees with TP status the right to access social protection services, although the scope is limited given the country’s weak social welfare systems (ICMPD 04/07/2023; WB 28/04/2023). In Moldova, only those with markers of vulnerability defined by the Government (families with children and people with disabilities) have access to state social assistance (Table 2).

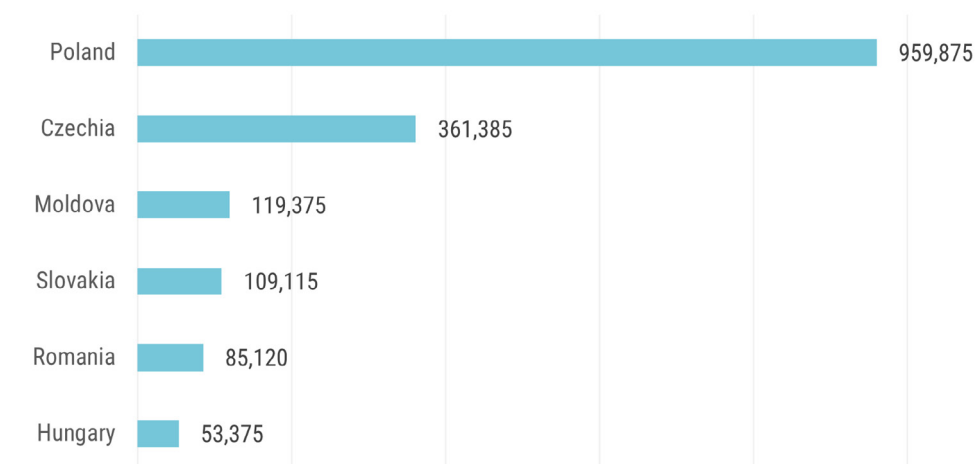
Third country nationals (with exceptions) **are not eligible for TP in Hungary, Poland, and Romania** and are excluded from many social protection mechanisms (OECD 09/05/2022; EC 10/02/2023; EUAA 08/2022 and EUAA 07/2022). **Refugees from Ukraine can lose their TP status if**

they leave their host country for more than a defined number of days (30 continuous days in the case of Poland or 45 cumulative days in the case of Moldova) or because of administrative issues (UNHCR 28/07/2023; Visit Ukraine 19/03/2023; UNHCR 15/08/2023; ACAPS 14/11/2023).

DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF REFUGEES IN THE ANALYSED COUNTRIES

As at October 2023, there were approximately 1.7 million refugees residing in the six countries (UNHCR accessed 18/10/2023). Although Poland has the highest total number of refugees, Moldova and Czechia have the highest proportion (4.2% and 3.5%, respectively) compared to their population (WB accessed 18/10/2022).

Figure 1. Total number of refugees from Ukraine



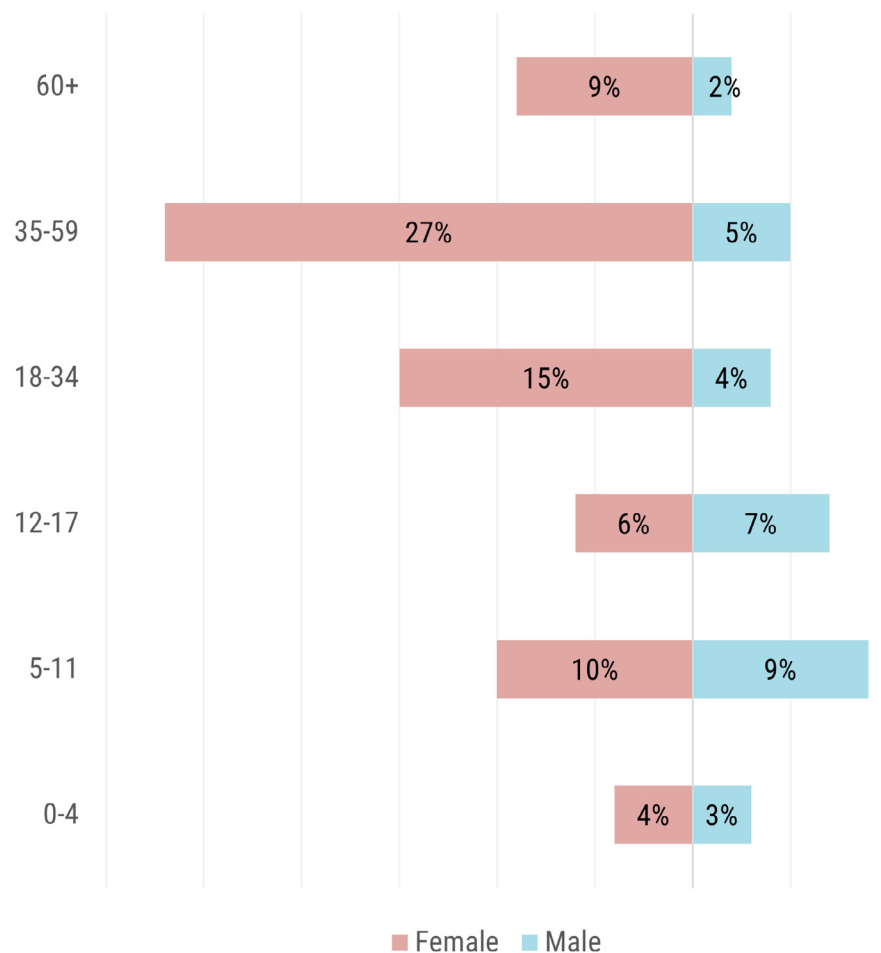
Note: data is based on information provided by country authorities, and ACAPS recognises discrepancies in host country methodologies of calculating the numbers of refugees from Ukraine.

Source: UNHCR (accessed 18/10/2023)

Because most Ukrainian men ages 18–60 cannot leave the country as a result of martial law, most Ukrainian refugees are women and children. There are some adult men among refugees who have been able to leave Ukraine legally with special conditions (including those unfit for military service, caregivers of three or more children or of a person with a disability, single caregivers, and those studying abroad) (Visit Ukraine 22/03/2022). As a result, women and women-headed households are overrepresented in the refugee population.

The following demographic data comes from the UNHCR intentions survey, which seeks to be representative and whose results are disaggregated for certain countries, including five of those analysed here: Czechia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. Children account for about 39% of all refugees, and older people for about 11%.

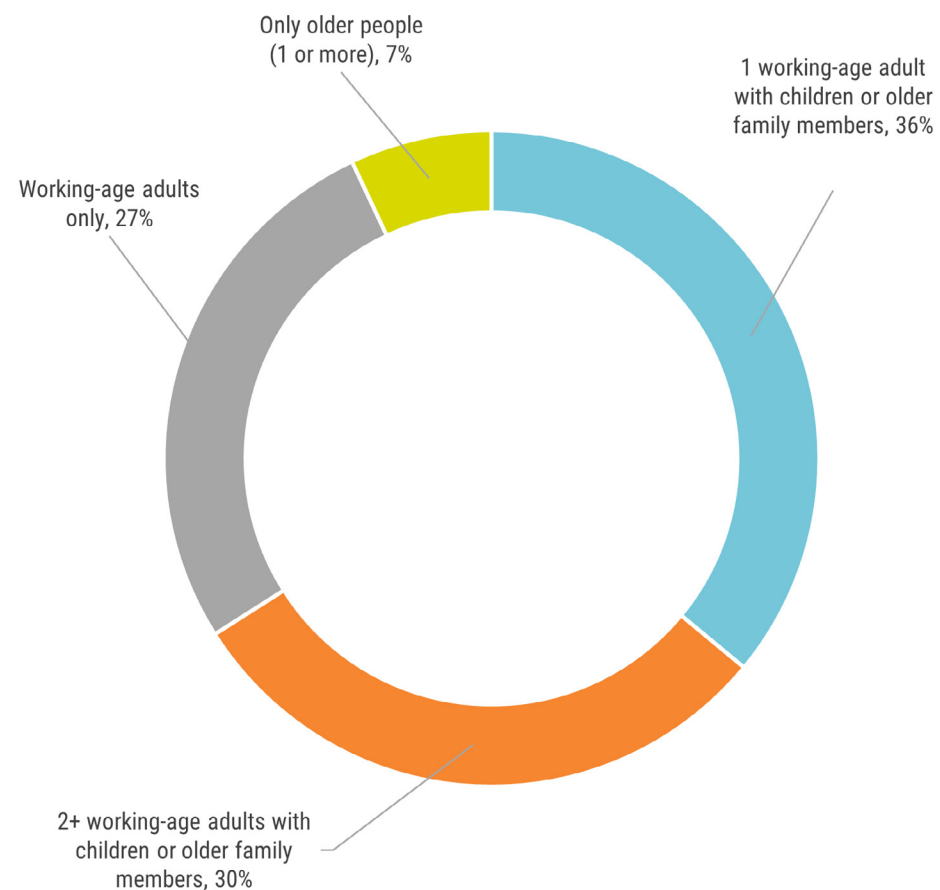
Figure 2. Refugees by age and gender



Source: UNHCR (accessed 02/11/2023)²

36% of refugee households comprise one adult caregiver (usually a woman) of working age, with children or other family members (e.g. older people) who require support or care. 7% of households comprise only older people, including single older refugees.

Figure 3. Composition of households of refugees from Ukraine



Source: UNHCR (accessed 02/11/2023)

² Each time this source is referenced, it refers to the fourth round of the UNHCR Regional Intentions Survey of May 2023, with selected data for five countries: Czech, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. Data for Hungary is not available.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND SOCIAL CARE FORMALLY AVAILABLE TO REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE WITH TEMPORARY PROTECTION

Table 1. Special measures implemented by States for refugees from Ukraine who have TP

	CZECHIA	HUNGARY	MOLDOVA	POLAND	ROMANIA	SLOVAKIA
Cash aid and/or NFIs	Unconditional monthly benefit for adults of USD 219 for 150 days and USD 141 afterwards; USD 158–189 per child depending on age; higher benefits for certain groups, including older people, people with disabilities, and caregivers	USD 65 per month per adult (conditional upon registration with a labour office for the unemployed); USD 39 per month per child (conditional upon school enrolment for school-aged children)	No state-provided financial assistance exclusively for TP holders	One-time cash grant of USD 73 per person	USD 132 per person per month for the first four months of TP; conditional upon employment or registration as a job seeker after the first month, except for students, people with disabilities, older people, and caregivers of under-two children and children with a disability under the age of three	A subsidy for TP holders with disabilities of USD 328 for moderate disabilities or 555 for severe disabilities. No other state-provided financial assistance exclusively for TP holders
Shelter	Free accommodation in collective centres for the first 150 days of TP (over 150 days for certain vulnerable groups). Monthly allowance of USD 135 per person for house rental or USD 108 if the house is not included in the housing register	Free accommodation in collective centres for 30 days; hotel-type accommodation only for certain vulnerable groups and employed TP holders after the first month; emergency collective shelter for refugees not falling under these categories	Free accommodation in collective centres	Free accommodation in collective centres for the first 120 days since first arrival to Poland; over 120 days for certain vulnerability categories	USD 441 per family or USD 160 per single person for monthly accommodation expenses, available till the end of 2023; conditional after the first month (same conditions as above). Previous government compensation for verified hosts ended on 1 May 2023	Free accommodation in collective centres
Solidarity allowance for private hosts	Ended on 1 July 2023; replaced with a benefit supporting house rental	Since 1 August 2023 for hosting TP holders with disabilities, older people, or families with many children	No	USD 10 per refugee per day up to 120 days from the refugee's first arrival to Poland (over 120 days for certain vulnerable groups)	Ended on 1 May 2023; replaced with direct cash assistance for accommodation costs	USD 11 per person over the age of 15 and USD 5 per person under the age of 15 per day
Transportation benefits/waivers	Free travel on international trains	Reduced from September 2023 to free travel only on trains from the border to reception points and on international transit; other free transport for limited purposes	No information	Ended on 1 July 2023	Since the beginning of 2023, free public transportation for the first five days since arrival to Romania	Free travel on trains and suburban buses for children ages 6–16 enrolled to school, accompanying adults, and older people

These special measures last until the end of TP unless otherwise specified or changed during the course of TP. **Legend:**

Highest availability	Lowest availability	Some availability	Information gap or not applicable



Table 2. Availability of benefits and services from general social protection systems for refugees from Ukraine

	CZECHIA	HUNGARY	MOLDOVA	POLAND	ROMANIA	SLOVAKIA
Income-dependent benefits and subsidies (cash, in-kind, and/or vouchers)	No	No, except for free meals for refugee children in schools and pre-school facilities and in other forms during holidays	Yes for families with children and unaccompanied minors	General social assistance benefits and benefits for low-income families	Yes	Yes
Universal child benefits (independent of income)	No for both Ukrainians and Czech citizens	No for refugees from Ukraine, with the exception of a maternity allowance	No	Yes	Not eligible	Subsidy for meals for some schoolchildren; childcare allowances for employed parents with a child of up to three years of age or up to six years of age for a child with a long-term adverse health condition
Unemployment benefits	Yes if refugees meet the national criteria of previous employment in the country or if they meet the Ukrainian criteria	Yes if refugees meet the national criteria of previous employment in the country	No information	Yes if refugees meet the national criteria of previous employment in the country or if they meet the Ukrainian criteria	Yes if refugees meet the national criteria of previous employment in the country	Yes if refugees meet the national criteria of previous employment in the country or if they meet the Ukrainian criteria
Social work/ case management/ counselling	No information	No	Yes for families with children and unaccompanied minors	Yes	Potentially	Yes
Child protection/ alternative care	Alternative care for an unaccompanied child without secured care	Eligibility of refugee children to child protection up to the age of 14; institutional alternative care or placement with relatives for unaccompanied children	Temporary guardianship for refugee children; referral to alternative care services for unaccompanied children in a situation of risk	Placement in alternative care for unaccompanied children; appointment as guardian of the alternative carer (including groups from institutional care) that come with a child but not in the alternative care system	Yes	Yes
Long-term care	No information	No information	No information	Yes	Yes	Likely entitlement to long term care ³
Access of refugees with disabilities to disability rights and services with a Ukrainian disability certificate	Eligibility to an increased humanitarian benefit with a Ukrainian disability certificate, but not to assistance for citizens with disabilities, as TP holders are not eligible to social assistance benefits from the general social protection system	Recognition of Ukrainian disability certificates but no eligibility to assistance for citizens with disabilities (KII 14/09/2023; KII 21/09/2023)	No access; requirement for a national disability certificate	Eligibility to cash aid for the purchase of assistive devices based on a Ukrainian disability certificate or a declaration if the certificate is missing; otherwise, requirement for a national disability certificate	Requirement for a national disability certificate to access state benefits for people with disabilities	Eligibility to assistive devices and cash aid of value dependent on the severity of disability, assessed in a simplified procedure; otherwise, requirement for a national disability certificate to access full rights (KII 06/09/2023)

Legend:

Highest availability	Lowest availability	Some availability	Information gap or not applicable

³ Applicants for the benefits for people with disabilities need to declare that they are not receiving long-term care.

INADEQUACIES OF AVAILABLE BENEFITS IN MEETING REFUGEE NEEDS

Refugee incomes and available benefits versus the cost of living

In each of the six countries, the sources of income available to TP holders are often insufficient to meet basic needs. These include employment, social welfare from Ukraine, social welfare to which they are eligible in host countries, and humanitarian aid. Based on available reports, ACAPS estimates that **between one-third and over half of refugee households are unable to cover their basic needs with their current income**. In five countries (CZE, MDA, POL, ROU and SVK), 35% of households reported inadequate income to meet their needs (UNHCR accessed 02/11/2023). In Hungary, 39% of households said they lacked sufficient cash, and 22% said they struggled to access sufficient food (IOM/UNHCR 23/11/2022). In Poland, between 46–60% of surveyed refugees (depending on the study) reported insufficient or no income at all (Deloitte et al. 27/02/2023; REACH 10/2022). In Czechia, 61% of households are unable to meet most of their everyday needs (PAQ 06/09/2022). Across Moldova, Poland, and Romania, roughly one-third of refugees said they have had to eat less nutritious food because of financial precarity (NRC 21/02/2023).

The cost of living has increased across all six countries as a result of inflation, ranging from 13% in Slovakia to 29% in Moldova in 2022 (WB 19/06/2023). Inflation is predicted to remain high in 2023, though lower than in 2022 in five countries except Hungary, where it is expected to increase (OECD accessed 29/09/2023). This has aggravated the cost-of-living crisis for Ukrainian refugees and host communities.

Refugees receiving humanitarian aid from international responders are not better off than those who do not. In Moldova, Poland, and Romania, the share of refugees receiving humanitarian assistance but unable to cover their basic needs is the same (approximately 70%) as those who do not receive humanitarian assistance (NRC 21/02/2023).

ACAPS compared the typical values of various social protection benefits in each country with the cost of living for two types of households: a household with one adult of working age with two children and a household with one older person (of retirement age)⁴. The analysis shows that **social protection benefits in all six countries are insufficient to ensure subsistence for refugees: for both the unemployed and those working for minimum wage without other sources of income**. This is coherent with previous analysis of social protection systems and findings from survey-based research (socialprotection.org 17/08/2022; PCPM 18/01/2023; UNHCR 17/10/2022; PAQ 06/09/2022; NRC 21/02/2023). Some benefits currently unavailable to refugees were included in the analysis to show the potential impact if they were made available.

Figure 4. Income sources available to TP holders compared to the cost of living per country, calculated for a family of three (one adult and two children)

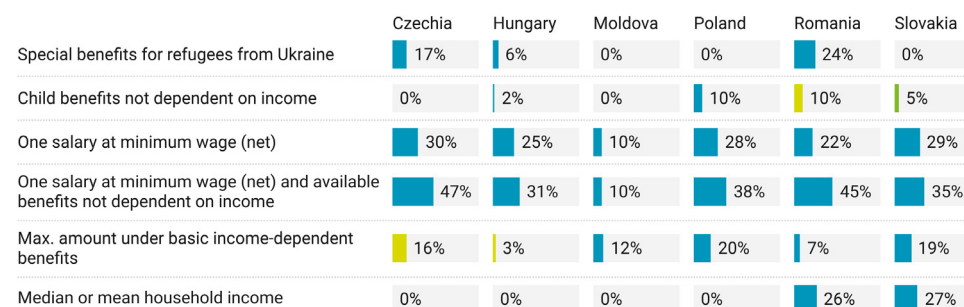
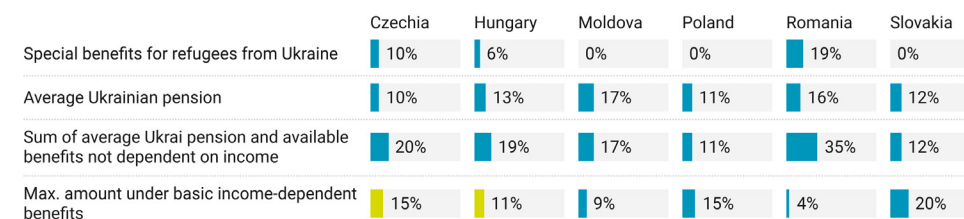


Figure 5. Income sources available to TP holders compared to the cost of living per country, calculated for a single person of retirement age



Note: yellow indicates current ineligibility, and green indicates conditional eligibility. The sources and methodology are described at the end of the report.

⁴ The methodology used to reach these numbers and the sources are included at the end of the report.

Non-complementarity of income-dependent social assistance benefits with other national social protection benefits and with humanitarian aid

Income-dependent benefits often cannot be combined with other income sources, including humanitarian aid, for several reasons (NRC 10/11/2022).

- Eligibility depends on whether household income (and in most countries, property value) does not exceed a certain threshold, which is the guaranteed minimum income. All income is investigated or 'means-tested'. Transfer values may be calculated as the difference between household income and the threshold, as is the case in Czechia, Poland, and Slovakia (MISSOC accessed 29/08/2023).
- National legislation specifies the benefits and allowances exempt from consideration when determining an applicant's income. In four of the EU countries (Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia), **special state allowances for TP holders and humanitarian cash assistance are likely not exempt from consideration**. There may be an exception in Romania, where "occasional sums granted... as compensation or financial support for exceptional situations" are not included in the means test (MISSOC accessed 29/08/2023).
- **Social assistance income thresholds are very low** in all six countries (MISSOC accessed 29/08/2023). In Poland, the value of humanitarian multipurpose cash assistance, calculated at survival level, is higher than the national threshold of eligibility for income-dependent benefits, so recipients are unable access income-dependent benefits even though they are at survival level (PAH/UNHCR 01/06/2023; Govt. Poland accessed 12/09/2023).

Non-complementarity of social assistance benefits from Ukraine and social assistance benefits from host countries

In Romania and Poland, certain benefits from Ukraine and the host country cannot be pooled. In Romania, refugees are not eligible to social assistance if they receive it from the Government of Ukraine (AIDA 24/05/2023). In Poland, refugees are not eligible to an allowance for caregivers of people with disabilities if they receive a similar benefit from Ukraine (UNHCR/SIP 31/12/2022). This principle may apply in the other countries as well. Further research is needed.

Low financial value of benefits

Special state benefits for TP holders are only available in three of the six countries, only cover between 6–24% of the cost of living (Figures 4 and 5), and mostly have time limits. Universal child benefits are only available to TP holders in Poland, where they cover about 10% of the cost of living of a family of three, and (conditionally) in Slovakia, where they cover 5%.

Income-dependent social assistance benefits are also of comparably low value. In Czechia and Poland, the value of such benefits is determined in relation to a theoretical basket of basic goods and services, which is calculated for survival and not to cover basic needs. This approach is also built on the assumption that recipients do not need to pay for a place to live (EC 01/2016; IPISS 30/03/2023; KII 08/09/2023). This is not the case for many refugees, who are unlikely to own their home and have less social support networks, meaning **the cost of living is higher for them than for members of the host community** (NRC 10/11/2022).

The gap between the cost of living and accessible sources of income remains. If refugees, in particular TP holders, were eligible to all benefits from national social protection systems, and if all benefits could be pooled, the gap would decrease but would not close. This explains why the average expenses of refugee households can exceed their incomes, as seen in Slovakia (REACH 31/10/2022). **Between 20–76% of refugee households have had to spend their savings to survive**, depending on the country and study (PCPM 18/01/2023; UNHCR/REACH 18/01/2023; REACH et al. 12/09/2022).

COMMON CONSTRAINTS IN ACCESSING SOCIAL PROTECTION

Limited information

Lack of information about social assistance has been cited as a challenge for refugees to apply for benefits in Czechia, Poland, and Slovakia and is likely among the reasons why few refugees receive income-based benefits in Poland, in contrast to universal family benefits (KII 06/09/2023; KII 19/09/2023; NRC 10/11/2022; ZUS accessed 20/09/2023; HelpAge et al. 09/10/2023).

Limited translation and lack of interpretation services

Lack of interpretation services limits access to TP registration and benefits, as evidenced in Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania (STAAR 07/2022 a; KII 06/09/2023; OECD 27/07/2022; NRC 10/11/2022; Wrocław 02/06/2022; IOM 15/08/2023; AIDA 24/05/2023; CJI 15/11/2022). A lack of interpretation is likely also a limitation in Moldova and Slovakia. Information in **Ukrainian** is sometimes unavailable or only partially available on the **websites** of social protection institutions (MINV accessed 23/10/2023; National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing accessed 23/10/2023).

Translation and interpretation are even more widely lacking for other languages spoken by Ukrainians. About 3% of refugees from Ukraine do not speak Ukrainian, and **Russian** is the second most widely spoken language among Ukrainians (UNHCR accessed 23/10/2023). Websites and documents are often not available in Russian (ProtectieUcraina accessed

23/10/2023). One of the reasons why Roma people face challenges in accessing information about assistance is that it is not available in **Romani** (Ethnographic Research Hub 06/2023; KII 11/09/2023). There is also a lack of interpretation to/from **Ukrainian sign language**, and it is important to note that Ukrainian sign language and local sign languages differ (STAAR 07/2022 a; DEC 06/07/2023; Bickford 2005).

Administrative barriers

Administrative and capacity barriers limit access to TP and related social protection. In Hungary, it can take up to 55 days to receive TP (ECRE 01/2023; STAAR 07/2022 a). In Moldova, some refugees could not apply for TP because they could not provide formal proof of accommodation (Caritas 06/06/2023). In Poland, issues with registration at the border have led to the **loss of TP and related social protection** for some refugees from Ukraine (ACAPS 14/11/2023). In Hungary and Poland, the manner in which refugees' residence is verified can result in the loss or limitation of access to benefits (AIDA 19/04/2023; ACAPS 14/11/2023). In Czechia and Romania, administrative issues have led to delays in the payment of benefits and limited access to services (AIDA 24/05/2023; Caritas 06/06/2023; ACAPS 14/11/2023).

SOCIAL SERVICES

Social housing

Collective accommodation provided by the State to refugees from Ukraine is unavailable in Romania and limited to certain vulnerable groups in Czechia, Hungary, and Poland (page 6). At the same time, **benefits** available to TP holders (non-income-dependent, the availability of which is very limited) are **insufficient to cover the cost of rent**, except for a family with children in Romania (see the methodology at the end of this report). There is also a limited amount of low-cost accommodation options because **social housing is lacking** across the region (Pędziwiatr and Magdziarz 2022; OECD accessed 13/10/2023; Habitat accessed 02/11/2023 a; Habitat accessed 02/11/2023 b; Habitat accessed 02/11/2023 c).

Quality assurance of the collective accommodation provided to refugees by the State is insufficient. Available information from Poland demonstrates that issues include the long stays of people with disabilities in large collective centres not adapted to their needs and certain locations not providing dignified meals, WASH, and security (Gazeta Wyborcza 08/03/2023; Codzienny Poznań 10/06/2023; BRPO 05/09/2023). More research is required on the quality of collective accommodation in other host countries.

Long-term care

In May 2023, about 7% of refugees in five of the six countries⁵ were over the age of 60, and 14% of refugee households said that they had members with care needs for a disability or illness, some of whom may need long-term care (UNHCR accessed 02/11/2023). Those requiring care cannot rely on national social protection systems. In Czechia and Hungary, they are not entitled to it, and in all five EU countries, long-term care systems are underdeveloped. They are even less developed in Moldova (Table 2) (EC 07/09/2018). The availability of places in residential long-term care institutions varies (KIGS accessed 12/09/2021; Głos Wielkopolski 27/07/2020).

Alternative care

Unaccompanied and separated children and those who were in institutions in Ukraine are at risk of experiencing poverty (STAAR 07/2022 b). All six countries provide child protection and alternative care for refugee children, but in **Hungary**, refugee children are only **eligible to child protection until the age of 14** (ELA accessed 02/10/2023).

Ukrainian authorities require that children evacuated from institutions remain together in host countries (HRW 13/03/2023). According to the UN guidelines on deinstitutionalisation, family-based care should be prioritised (OHCHR 09/09/2022). Regardless, in **Poland**, children arriving from institutions remain in their original groups with their institutional caregiver, who is appointed as guardian. This parallel system of temporary guardianship results in a **lack of access to family-based foster care** (FDDS 07/06/2022; HRW 13/03/2023; STAAR 07/2022 b). More research is necessary to understand other host countries' policies regarding the placement and return of children from institutional care.

The UN guidelines on deinstitutionalisation recommend that refugees should not be returned to institutions when conflict subsides (OHCHR 09/09/2022). By the end of 2022, however, **about 700 refugee children were returned to their institutions in Ukraine from various countries** (HRW 13/03/2023). By May 2023, at least 140 refugee children in institutional settings had been sent back from Poland to Ukraine at the request of Ukrainian authorities, some **without an assessment of whether it was in their best interest** (STC 15/05/2023; ACAPS accessed 03/11/2023; UNHCR 26/09/2023).

⁵ There is a lack of representative data for Hungary.



LIMITATIONS TO REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

Table 3. Employment support available to TP holders

	CZECHIA	HUNGARY	MOLDOVA	POLAND	ROMANIA	SLOVAKIA
Job search, training, or other active measures	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Host country language courses for adults	Yes, reimbursed by labour offices for registered jobseekers	No; state language lessons for adults for 24 months mandated by law but not available (KII 21/09/2023)	No	Some public funding for labour offices, NGOs, and other partners covering language courses [1], [2], [3]	No, except for a self-study course from Romanian Public TV	No state-provided language courses available
Recognition of qualifications and diplomas for employment in regulated professions⁶	Application of standard recognition procedures, but more information on the recognition of non-EU/EEA7 qualifications for regulated professions is not available Simplified requirements for healthcare professionals and psychologists, and simplified processes for teachers	Application of recognition procedures for university-level and some vocational qualifications Possible exemption for refugees from fees Possibility of work under supervision for healthcare staff from Ukraine until recognition of their medical qualifications	Application of standard recognition procedures Simplified procedures for healthcare staff	Application of standard recognition procedures for university-level qualifications Simplified or waived requirements for healthcare professionals, psychologists, teachers, miners, and employees of the public administration	Application of standard recognition procedures for university-level and some vocational qualifications Possible employment for Ukrainian teachers after recognition, which may be done even without documents proving teachers' qualifications	Application of standard recognition procedures for university-level qualifications Simplified requirements for teachers and healthcare staff, although with discrepancies in the available information on whether some vocational qualifications may or may not be recognised
Early childhood care and kindergarten	Yes	Yes	Access to kindergartens, but no information about early childhood care	Yes	Access to kindergartens, but no information about early childhood care	Yes, including small home-based groups

Legend:

Highest availability	Lowest availability	Some availability	Information gap or not applicable

⁶ A profession is regulated if a special licence or certificate is required to be allowed to perform it in a country (ENIC-NARIC accessed 22/09/2023). Some examples include medical personnel, teachers, lawyers, architects, and installers and operators of specific technical equipment (EC accessed 22/09/2023).

⁷ The EU Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications only applies to countries of the EU and of the European Economic Area/European Free Trade Association (EEA/EFTA), which Ukraine is not a part of, and to Switzerland (Europa accessed 14/11/2023).

Employment access constraints

With large discrepancies across studies, it cannot be determined how many refugees are employed, but the data suggests that refugee employment levels are the highest in Czechia and Poland. **Refugee employment levels are stabilising in Czechia, Hungary, Moldova, and Slovakia and continue to increase in Poland.** The evidence in Romania is mixed (ACAPS accessed 29/09/2023; UNHCR accessed 30/09/2023).

Refugees do not struggle to find employment because of a lack of jobs (WB accessed 29/09/2023). **They struggle to find work because of a mismatch in skills (especially language), caregiving duties, and challenges around the recognition of their qualifications.** The response to these challenges from national social protection systems has been insufficient.

The better the refugee's command of the local language is, the more likely they are to be employed (IOM 08/06/2023; NBP 13/04/2023; UNHCR 06/06/2023; PAQ 06/09/2022). Language is one of the key barriers to employment according to 27–75% of unemployed respondents, depending on the study) (UNHCR 30/09/2022; UNHCR accessed 21/08/2023; IOM 08/06/2023). **Lack of language proficiency, including industry-specific vocabulary, limits employment opportunities to low-skilled jobs** (IMPACT 05/07/2023; OECD 06/01/2023; KII 15/09/2023). Local language command among refugees who arrived between February–April 2022 has been increasing in Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, with mixed findings for Romania. In Moldova, however, the proportion of refugees from Ukraine who speak Romanian (Moldova's official language) has been decreasing, perhaps because some of those speaking Romanian have moved to Romania (UNHCR accessed 30/09/2023). Even in the countries with the highest linguistic proximity to Ukrainian (Czechia, Poland, and Slovakia), only one-third of refugees who arrived between February–April 2022 said that they spoke the language in May 2023 (UNHCR accessed 02/11/2023).

This suggests that free language learning has been insufficient. In practice, free language courses are only available in Czechia (Page 11). Free language-learning opportunities paid by the States have also decreased in 2023 (UNHCR 17/10/2022; KII 14/09/2023; Praca.gov accessed 05/10/2023). Paid language courses, costing between USD 6–12 per hour, are unaffordable to many, especially those who are not employed or paid the minimum wage (Correct accessed 19/10/2023; Edu & More accessed 19/10/2023; Babilon accessed 19/10/2023; Ariel accessed 19/10/2023; IH Bratislava accessed 19/10/2023; Slovak Friends accessed 19/10/2023). People working full-time or with caregiving duties also lack the time to attend language courses, limiting their opportunities to access better jobs (Reuters 21/07/2023; PAQ 06/09/2022).

Lack of childcare also impedes access to the labour market. One-third of refugee households comprise a single caregiver with children or other family members, and another third have two or more caregivers with people they look after (UNHCR accessed 06/09/2023; IMPACT 05/07/2023). Among those not employed, caregiving responsibilities or a lack of access to childcare

was the reason why between one-fourth and one-half were not looking for work (IOM/UNHCR 23/11/2022; REACH/UNHCR 16/12/2022; IOM 08/06/2023). **Nurseries, kindergartens, and schools in all six countries lack the infrastructure or the staff to accommodate more children** (UNHCR 17/10/2022; GLOBSEC 25/04/2023; Caritas 06/06/2023; ECRE 10/02/2023; Euractiv 30/04/2023). Where childcare is available, facilities close earlier than many jobs, further limiting options for single caregivers (KII 15/09/2023). Given that part-time employment in this part of Europe is rare, and that, in the EU, between 20% (Hungary) and 32% (Romania) of employees work shifts, these childcare hours likely have a large impact on refugees (OECD accessed 01/10/2023; Eurostat accessed 01/10/2023).

Long-term care services for older people or people with disabilities are insufficient (EC 07/09/2018). Refugees from Ukraine are not eligible to long-term care in Hungary and Czechia, and this lack has been identified as a barrier to caregivers' employment in the latter (Page 7) (PIWG 02/05/2023).

Public employment services play a secondary role in refugee employment. Available examples include Romania and Moldova, where the numbers of people employed through these labour offices are low (ProtectieUcraina accessed 11/08/2023; Anofm accessed 11/08/2023). In Romania, this is partly because of a lack of accessible information about employment services (UNHCR 08/08/2023).

Lack of recognition of professional qualifications can be a barrier to accessing employment. The recognition processes are different for regulated professions than for nonregulated professions and further education. **For further education and non-regulated professions,** primary and secondary education does not require recognition in the EU, while vocational education diplomas require recognition in Moldova. University diplomas for non-regulated professions are automatically recognised in Poland and Hungary (Ukrinform 22/07/2021; Govt. Ukraine/Govt. Hungary 10/27/1998; NAWA accessed 01/10/2023). Recognition procedures apply in Czechia, Moldova, Slovakia, and Romania. Missing diplomas can be replaced with an affidavit in the latter two (Govt. Ukraine/Govt. Slovakia 08/09/2015; CNRED accessed 02/10/2023; ELA accessed 02/10/2023; Govt. Moldova accessed 02/10/2023).

The number of **regulated professions** varies across the five EU countries, from over 200 in Romania to more than 400 in Hungary (ENIC-NARIC accessed 22/09/2023; EC accessed 01/10/2023). Recognition is required to work in the medical profession and for employment in a range of roles, from teachers and lawyers to engineers and technicians (EC accessed 22/09/2023; ENIC-NARIC accessed 02/10/2023). For refugees seeking to continue practising such professions, **the procedures for the recognition of university-level qualifications are slow, costly, and not always possible** given differences in the education system in Ukraine and in the host countries (OECD 06/01/2023; FRA accessed 2023; Brno Daily 26/10/2022; UNHCR 15/02/2023). Simplified procedures for provisional recognition for TP holders from Ukraine exist for some professions in some countries (Table 2).

The recognition of the vocational-level qualifications held by refugees from Ukraine for regulated professions is less developed. These include jobs that involve installing and operating specific equipment. The schemes to aid the comparison of vocational qualifications do not apply to qualifications acquired outside the EU and EEA/EFTA and Switzerland nor for regulated professions (EC accessed 02/10/2023; EUR-Lex 10/08/2022; Europa accessed 01/10/2023; Cedefop accessed 01/10/2023). There are procedures for the recognition of some vocational qualifications for regulated professions in Romania (e.g. geodesy and cartography technicians, forklift and crane operators, several transport professions) and Hungary, but more research is needed as to whether they recognise Ukrainian qualifications (CNRED accessed 02/10/2023; Oktatási Hivatal accessed 06/10/2023; NJT accessed 06/10/2023). It is unclear if there are any recognised in Slovakia (IP accessed 02/10/2023; Govt. Slovakia accessed 02/10/2023). Incompatibilities were identified when some vocational qualifications were compared between Ukraine and Poland, revealing challenges to potential recognition (IOM accessed 02/10/2023).

Insufficiency of national minimum wages (the working poor)

Most refugees from Ukraine are highly skilled but work in a profession below their level of qualifications or experience (OECD 06/01/2023; IMPACT 05/07/2023; PAQ 06/09/2022). In Central and Eastern Europe, between one-third and one-half of employed refugees work in elementary occupations⁸ (IMPACT 05/07/2023; OECD 06/01/2023; KII 15/09/2023). Language is the main access barrier to highly skilled jobs (OECD 06/01/2023). Other barriers include a lack of available skilled jobs in some locations and employers' reluctance to hire people that require training without the certainty that they will stay (NRC 10/11/2022). Difficult or limited recognition of qualifications is another impediment to accessing high-skilled jobs (see above in "Employment access constraints"). Unemployment and underemployment mean that countries miss out on the skillset of refugees, reinforcing the need for social protection benefits (OECD 06/01/2023; NRC 21/02/2023; IOM 25/05/2023).

Short-term, low-skilled jobs are among the lowest-paid jobs (NBP 13/04/2023; REACH 10/2022). Although all six countries have a legal minimum wage, it is insufficient to cover basic needs. According to ACAPS calculations (page 8), in the five EU countries, **income from a full-time minimum wage job, even when combined with the available benefits for refugees from Ukraine,⁹ only covers between one-third** (Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) **and one-half** (Czechia and Romania) **of the estimated cost of living; in Moldova, the minimum wage covers only 10% of the estimated cost of living.**

Rent currently constitutes between 64% (Slovakia) and 83% (Poland) of the net minimum salary (see methodology notes at the end of the report). The difficulty to make a living when renting a place to live is also demonstrated by the fact that **29% of households with rented accommodation and 26% of those with employed household members could not cover their basic needs** compared to the general figure for all refugee households from Ukraine (35%) (UNHCR accessed 02/11/2023). This is also confirmed by accounts from refugees about their struggle to rent an apartment and make ends meet with a minimum wage and through humanitarians' observations (NRC 21/02/2023; IOM 25/05/2023; Ethnographic Research Hub 06/2023; KII 14/09/2023; KII 21/09/2023). **The limited capacity to rent despite employment is also demonstrated by the fact that only 61% of employed refugees live in rented accommodation.** This is not much more than among all of the respondents, 54% of whom rent accommodation, suggesting that even employed refugees struggle to rent homes (UNHCR accessed 02/11/2023).

Precarious employment

There is some evidence that **refugee employment is disproportionately more precarious compared with employment for members of the host community**, especially in Moldova and Poland. In Moldova, according to refugees' accounts, they lack access to the full spectrum of workers' rights (NRC 21/02/2023). In Poland, labour regulations differ from those in the other four EU countries in that there are diverse types of employment contracts, many of which **do not guarantee full workers' rights** (STAAR 07/2022 b). 70% of refugees from Ukraine work under precarious contracts compared to about 20–30% of Poles (DGP 17/01/2023; Interia 05/11/2020). In Czechia, 13% of refugees from Ukraine reported working through labour agencies, which is considered a precarious form of labour (PAQ 06/09/2022). In both Czechia and Poland, a large proportion of **working** refugees from Ukraine are daily wage workers (18% and 13%, respectively), with lower proportions in Hungary and Slovakia (IOM 15/08/2023, 29/08/2023, 10/08/2023, and 15/05/2023). Not only are refugees more vulnerable in the workplace because they lack links to the host community, lack knowledge of workers' rights, and may have experienced psychological distress given their displacement, but the temporary nature of their protection status also contributes to unstable employment, as employers do not know if these employees will be staying (OECD 28/01/2016; Reuters 21/07/2023).

Refugees from Ukraine are at increased risk of undeclared work and labour exploitation, including forced work (ELA 04/10/2022; OECD 06/01/2023). Available examples include reports of the exploitation of and discrimination against refugees from Ukraine in Poland, including through pay below the legal minimum, lack of payment, and ill treatment by employers and staff. Lack of knowledge about their rights and fear of retaliation (including losing their jobs) have resulted in refugees not complaining when such exploitation

⁸ "Elementary occupations involve simple and routine tasks that mainly require the use of handheld tools and often some physical effort." (ILO accessed 01/10/2023)

⁹ This is except for income-dependent benefits, which the employed are not eligible to.

or discrimination occurs (NRC 10/11/2022; Gazeta Wyborcza 10/06/2023; IOM 25/05/2023; KII 15/09/2023). In Czechia, 30% of refugees from Ukraine earned less than the minimum wage,¹⁰ and 7% worked for “informal labour brokers”, despite the risk of penalty for undeclared work (PAQ 06/09/2022; Visit Ukraine 13/04/2022). **The likelihood of engaging in undeclared work is highest in Moldova**, where 23–56% of all workers (not only refugees) work in the informal sector (ELA 11/2017; ILO 06/12/2022; ILO accessed 06/11/2023). This is followed by Poland and Romania, where approximately 20% of all work is undeclared in the enterprise sector and 15% in the whole economy,¹¹ while 16% of people in Poland perform undeclared work. Slightly fewer people perform undeclared work in Hungary and Slovakia, while evidence for Czechia is mixed (ELA 11/2017; ILO accessed 06/11/2023). In Poland, in the second quarter of 2023, 10% of working refugees from Ukraine were employed informally (IRC 26/09/2023). The risks of exploitation and human trafficking are aggravated by the fact that, according to an IOM survey, six in ten refugees from Ukraine would accept suspicious job offers that may result in exploitation (UNHCR 26/09/2023).

REFUGEE GROUPS MOST VULNERABLE TO POVERTY OR SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Poverty: people are said to be living in **poverty** if their income and resources are so inadequate that it precludes them from having a **standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live**.

Because of their poverty, they may experience **multiple disadvantages**, such as **poor housing, inadequate healthcare, and exclusion** from participating in economic, social, educational, and cultural activities that are the norm for other people, and their access to fundamental **rights** may be restricted (EC 05/2004).

After over a year of displacement, **most refugees from Ukraine are at risk of poverty, with insufficient social protection measures compounding existing barriers to socioeconomic inclusion** (UN 16/05/2018; STAAR 07/2022 b). While economic vulnerability and socioeconomic exclusion are characteristic of people with multiple markers of vulnerability, some groups with potential vulnerabilities have been overlooked mainly because they are **not specified as target groups in national social protection systems** and because of a **lack of systematic and comprehensive procedures to identify people with specific needs** at the early stages of their registration in the host country (UNHCR 17/10/2022; MISSOC accessed 29/08/2023).

Older people

One of the challenges that households with older people (aged 60 or older) report is the lack of identity documents and difficulties in replacing them (UNHCR 26/04/2023). This can impede access to TP status and related state social protection services (UNHCR 17/10/2022). According to a UNHCR survey, **60% of older refugees rely on pensions from Ukraine, and 46% rely on social protection and cash assistance in the host country** (the survey allowed multiple answers) (UNHCR 22/02/2023). Older people who are heads of households relying only on their pension from Ukraine are in especially precarious situations (STC 30/08/2023; KII 08/09/2023). The average Ukrainian pension combined with the available benefits¹² in the respective host countries only covers between 11% (Poland) and 35% (Romania) only of the cost of living, meaning older people cannot sustain themselves and rent a home (Figure 5).

Half of all retired refugees in five countries reported income inadequate to meet their needs (UNHCR accessed 02/11/2023). In Poland, only 15% of older refugees are employed, and only half have a working household member (HelpAge 09/10/2023). Older people are at a heightened risk of having insufficient digital skills and struggle to understand the procedures for applying for benefits online, especially if they are on their own (HelpAge 09/10/2023; KII 15/9/2023). In Poland, only 15% of older refugees are employed, and only half have a working household member (HelpAge 09/10/2023).

Older people are more likely to live in collective accommodation or be hosted by relatives or non-relatives than other refugees, especially if they do not have fellow household members of working age (UNHCR 26/04/2023; UNHCR accessed 02/11/2023; HelpAge 09/10/2023). In Poland, many of those currently living in collective accommodation returned to it after a period of living in hosted or rented accommodation (HelpAge 09/10/2023). This may be because the possibilities of staying with private hosts have ended, the benefit eligibility for hosts has finished, or refugees’ resources have run out. Across the region, given a lack of places in early childhood education and care (described above in “Employment access constraints”), older people also assume caregiver roles for their grandchildren if one or both parents work or if conflict has separated the children from their parents, often preventing them from focusing on their needs, including finding additional income (UNHCR 26/04/2023).

Older refugees are also at risk of isolation; 7% of the households in five countries comprised only older people (UNHCR accessed 02/11/2023). In Poland, nearly one in five older refugees did not go out to meet friends or attend activities. There are insufficient host language courses and inclusion activities for older refugees (HelpAge 09/10/2023).

¹⁰ This estimation is based on declared hourly salaries.

¹¹ The share of undeclared work input may be higher than the share of people performing such work.

¹² Income-dependent benefits have been excluded because they cannot be combined with many other income sources. See the section on non-complementarity..

People with disabilities

People with disabilities face barriers in accessing information and social protection services, depending on their needs. The insufficiency or lack of interpretation services constrains access for those with a hearing disability, and inaccessible facilities and transportation limit access for those with physical disabilities (STAAR 07/2022 a, 07/2022 c, 07/2022 d, and 07/2022 e; DEC 06/07/2023).

Of the six analysed countries, only Czechia and Hungary recognise disability certificates issued in Ukraine, but in both countries, TP holders are not eligible to social assistance for citizens, including that for people with disabilities (Page 7) (MPSV accessed 20/10/2023; MPSV accessed 07/09/2023; KII 14/09/2023; KII 21/09/2023). Certain benefits are available in Czechia, Poland, and Slovakia for the holders of Ukrainian **disability certificates** (Page 7). In Poland and Slovakia, refugees from Ukraine need to obtain national disability certificates to be eligible to rights and benefits from social protection systems like nationals, but they are eligible to special programmes supporting access to assistive devices (Page 7). In Romania and Moldova, they also need to obtain a national disability certificate, but this gives them limited access to rights for people with disabilities from the national social protection systems. In Romania, their eligibility to disability-specific support may be limited given unclear legal provisions on what social assistance vulnerable groups are eligible to (ProtectieUcraina 12/05/2022). In Moldova, only children and women with children are eligible to assistance from the general social protection system (Govt. Moldova 26/01/2023). Both in Romania and Moldova, the social protection systems are weak (WB accessed 19/09/2023). The non-recognition of Ukrainian disability certificates hampers access to social protection, and people face lengthy procedures for acquiring national certificates (including waiting lines to the doctors who assess the medical conditions), language barriers, and expensive fees for document translation, among others (ECRE 10/02/2023; Mapuj Pomoc 10/01/2023; UNHCR accessed 21/09/2023).

Lack of adapted accommodation has also been reported as a challenge. **People with disabilities are also more likely to live in collective centres and hotels**, where adaptations and accessibility are lacking, because they or their caregivers cannot afford to rent private accommodation (DEC 06/07/2023; UNHCR 26/04/2023; BRPO 05/09/2023). Limitations imposed on free accommodation in Czechia and Poland have resulted in people with disabilities needing support to find alternative housing, despite being, in principle, exempt from payment for shelter (Page 6) (UNHCR 26/04/2023). People with disabilities also struggle to physically reach or access some registration points in Hungary because of inaccessible design (AIDA 19/04/2023; STAAR 07/2022 a).

In some countries, such as Moldova, **refugees struggle to have their intellectual disability or mental health conditions recognised** because there is no mechanism to identify and register

people with such conditions. This leads to problems with leaving overcrowded collective centres and accessing adequate accommodation (NRC 05/07/2023). One Moldovan NGO worker stated: “People who have certain mental disorders and those who rely on obtaining regular medical treatment but do not have a visible need do not get the required support by social workers and are refused special rights.” (KII 19/09/2023)

At the same time, as humanitarians have observed, certain men with unaddressed pre-existing mental health conditions display an abuse of alcohol, intimate partner violence, and other problematic behaviours (NRC 25/10/2023; KII 21/09/2023). Some of them have lost their places in collective accommodation given non-compliance with regulations. The lack of psychological support puts them at risk of homelessness (KII 21/09/2023).

Roma people

Roma people were already underprivileged in Ukraine, where they often experienced economic vulnerability, segregation, substandard housing, and a lack of access to basic public services (Oxfam 19/06/2023). As at April 2022, an estimated 100,000 Roma refugees (one-quarter of the country’s Roma population) had fled Ukraine (EC 07/04/2022). **Roma people face discrimination in the host countries**, including those analysed for this report, in all stages of their displacement, starting from crossing the borders, to applying for TP or other forms of protection, and to accessing basic services (accommodation, healthcare, education, and employment) and social protection (STAAR 07/2022 b; GLOBSEC 25/04/2023; BRPO 25/07/2023). As in Ukraine, Roma refugees face discrimination from host communities, including **officials in public institutions** (UNHCR 17/05/2023; KII 13/09/2023). **Discrimination**, or the fact that **the needs of Roma refugees are not always understood**, results in their unequal **access to aid** compared to other groups (COE 05/09/2023 and 05/07/2022; CCL 08/04/2023; Open Democracy 20/12/2022; RFE/RL 03/06/2023; Govt. Poland et al. 15/12/2022; KII 11/09/2023; Ethnographic Research Hub 06/2023; FWD accessed 22/09/2023).

Roma refugees experience higher **illiteracy** rates than their Ukrainian counterparts and are **less likely to speak Ukrainian or the host country’s language**, hampering their access to social protection (UNHCR 15/02/2023; Ethnographic Research Hub 06/2023; KII 11/09/2023).

Lack of documentation, including identification, for some Roma refugees either **impede or prolong their application for TP status** (STAAR 07/2022 b; GLOBSEC 25/04/2023; CARE 21/07/2022). Their lack of a regulated status put Roma refugees in vulnerable positions, as it prevents them from starting legal employment (CARE 21/07/2022). 94% of Roma refugees surveyed in Moldova, Poland, and Romania said they **could not afford to meet their basic needs** (NRC 21/02/2023). The skills of Roma refugees are also often incompatible with the labour market in their host countries, as many do not have formal education, and professional skills learnt through family businesses do not translate to their new locations (UNHCR 17/05/2023; Ethnographic Research Hub 06/2023).

Stateless people

Lack of documents confirming citizenship or their stateless status have been a barrier for stateless people to register for TP status and access services, including social protection (Caritas 06/06/2023; UNHCR 15/02/2023). As at September 2023, only 883 people in Ukraine were recognised as stateless, though the real number was estimated to be 35,000 (UNHCR accessed 26/09/2023). It is not known how many stateless people have been displaced from Ukraine to other countries after February 2022. Four of the six host countries (Czechia, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia) do not have a statelessness determination procedure, or extant procedures do not cover some stateless refugees, hampering their ability to access TP (HNLAC 21/11/2022; Statelessness Index accessed 26/09/2023, ENS 11/05/2022; BRPO 09/09/2023).

Women

Refugee women are at increased risk of long-term unemployment compared to refugee men, non-refugee foreign women, and host community women (Kosyakova and Kogan 23/09/2022; EUAA et al. 28/10/2022). The high proportion of women and children (about 90% in May 2023) among refugees also means a high number of women-headed households, and because many refugee women cannot work given their caregiving duties, they often rely on humanitarian or social assistance (UNHCR accessed 02/11/2023; UNHCR 15/02/2023; IOM 08/06/2023).

When refugee women do not have additional markers of vulnerability, such as having children or a disability, they often cannot count on social assistance or receive insufficient material aid. This has been the experience of many **single refugee women over 50 years of age** but below the retirement age. Some refugee women over the age of 50 report struggling to find employment (reflecting the experience of women of the same age in the host community) (Marinov et al. 2022; NRC 21/02/2023; KII 06/09/2023).

Children

Refugee children, similarly to children in general, are often at a higher risk of economic vulnerability than adults even within same household given the unequal distribution of resources within a household (Beltramo et al. 29/07/2023; Dirksen and Alkile 23/06/2021; UN Women/WB 2018). The limited availability of social housing affects refugee children from Ukraine, who have pointed out an apartment for their family and a separate room for them and their siblings to be among their four biggest needs. Their other key needs (having friends from their host community and the opportunities to play sports or enjoy their hobbies and learn the local language) indicate a struggle with social inclusion (STC 11/2022).

Youth and young adults

Youth and young adults are often expected to or want to work to support their families but face the same barriers to inclusion as others (lack of language skills and unpredictable legal status), compounded by barriers specific to their age group, such as lack of professional experience, which affects wages (NRC 04/2023 and 25/10/2023; KII 21/09/2023).

COUNTRY SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

Czechia

TP eligibility: Czechia has adopted a wide scope of people eligible for TP (FRA 31/10/2022). Some Roma people from Ukraine, however, face constraints in accessing TP because of prejudice or dual citizenship. As some Ukrainian Roma also have Hungarian or Romanian passports, they are ineligible for TP but also struggle to access citizen rights (Radio Prague International 25/05/2022; AI 2022).

Challenges in accessing special measures for refugees from Ukraine: administrative obstacles linked to registration and accommodation often delay the transfer of refugee benefits. Strict eligibility criteria to the increased refugee benefit make it difficult for people with disabilities or caregivers of under-four children to apply (Caritas 06/06/2023).

Constraints in accessing benefits from the national social protection system: Although TP holders in Czechia are eligible to special social protection measures for refugees, they are not eligible for social assistance from the general social protection system (MPSV accessed 07/09/2023).

Constraints to accessing employment: there is a lack of Ukrainian-speaking staff or interpreters in labour offices, affecting job-seeking refugees who do not speak Czech (KII 06/09/2023). The procedure to recognise formal qualifications is difficult and time-consuming (OECD 06/01/2023; InfoMigrants 20/03/2023; Brno Daily 26/10/2022). The lack of space in kindergartens and childcare facilities hinders caregivers with young children from attending language courses or starting a full-time job (GLOBSEC 25/04/2023). These constraints are most severe in big cities, such as Prague and Brno (GLOBSEC 25/04/2023; PAQ 06/09/2022).

Hungary

TP eligibility: third country nationals displaced from Ukraine are not eligible for TP. They may apply for a residence permit for conditional reasons such as studies, healthcare, or

employment (Govt. Hungary accessed 08/09/2023). For those eligible for TP, the process can take two or more months, and the application is not always accessible (ECRE 10/02/2023; STAAR 07/2022 a). Dual Ukrainian-Hungarian citizens are not eligible for TP but struggle to access citizen rights because they lack a social security number or registered address. They are eligible to some TP elements (AIDA 19/04/2023).

Challenges in accessing special measures for refugees from Ukraine: all recipients of the allowance for TP holders over the age of six need to report to municipal offices in person each month to confirm their residence (AIDA 19/04/2023; ELA accessed 02/10/2023). This may limit availability to people with reduced mobility, older people, those who are employed (because of office hours), and those with children. Some allowances are delayed or not paid (AIDA 19/04/2023 <https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2007-301-20-22>).

Constraints to accessing benefits from the general social protection system: although TP holders are eligible to special social protection measures, they are not eligible for social assistance from the general social protection system (AIDA 19/04/2023).

Constraints to accessing care services: over-14 children are not eligible for child protection services (STAAR 07/2022 a).

Constraints to accessing employment: receiving TP status takes a long time, and during the process, freedom of movement is limited to transit sites, where people cannot work (STAAR 07/2022 a). State-provided accommodation can be free but is often in remote areas with no work opportunities (KII 14/09/2023). While access to kindergartens is available for children from age three, access to nurseries varies across the country depending on availability, affecting caregivers' employment opportunities (EUAA 06/2022; KII 14/09/2023).

Moldova

TP eligibility: as at 18 October 2023, 19,693 (18%) of refugees had received TP status (UNHCR accessed 06/10/2023). The Moldovan TP mechanism is similar to the EU's with regard to social protection and gives limited access to social assistance, emergency accommodation, and the right to employment (ACAPS 09/05/2023). Refugees from Ukraine who did not regularise their stay in Moldova by 13 August 2023, either by applying for TP, asylum, stateless status, or another form of protection giving them the right to reside in the country, are no longer eligible for government services and face fines (UNHCR 17/08/2023; Dopomoga accessed 20/09/2023). Capacity issues have slowed TP status registration, and some refugees could not apply given a lack of proof of accommodation (Caritas 06/06/2023). Some refugees have paid for proof of residence, and there have been reports of rent increases after requests for such documents from landlords (UNHCR 17/08/2023).

Constraints to accessing benefits from the general social protection system: there is a lack of sufficient national resources to provide social assistance to refugees from Ukraine and an overload of national institutions delivering aid (WB accessed 19/09/2023). Access to social assistance is limited to families with children and unaccompanied minors with TP status (Govt. Moldova 26/01/2023). Social assistance offices in municipalities, responsible for the delivery of both national and international assistance, are overstretched and often do not have proper information on what kind of support they should offer to refugees (STAAR 07/2022 e; KII 13/09/2023).

Constraints to accessing employment: about 1% of the total refugee population and about one in four of those not intending to migrate further are employed (IOM 18/05/2023; NRC 05/07/2023; UNHCR accessed 28/09/2023; UNHCR accessed 02/11/2023). Employment options are limited because of Moldova's own economic issues and a lack of support for jobseekers, such as counselling and job placement (NRC 04/2023). Although TP status allows children access to both schools and kindergartens, the lack of places, linked to an acute shortage of teachers and educators, remains a barrier (Caritas 06/06/2023; ECRE 10/02/2023; UN Women 12/05/2023).

Poland

TP eligibility: third country nationals are not eligible for TP, with the exception of family (spouses and children of Ukrainians; other family household members only if the Ukrainian has a documented Polish origin) and people who had a permanent residence permit or international protection in Ukraine prior to 24 February 2022 (ACAPS 05/09/2023; EUAA 08/2022; BRPO 09/09/2023).

Challenges around special measures for refugees from Ukraine: the one-off cash transfer of approximately USD 73 for refugees from Ukraine is insufficient to cover even the most urgent needs (NRC 10/11/2022). Accommodation quality assurance is lacking, and some refugee hostels, run by private entities with state funding, do not provide dignified meals or WASH facilities. At least one resident who complained has been intimidated or evicted (Gazeta Wyborcza 08/03/2023; Codzienny Poznań 10/06/2023).

Constraints to accessing benefits from the general social protection system: universal family benefits are relatively accessible, but only about three-quarters of TP holders have applied for them, implying insufficient information. About 15% of refugee children who had received the universal family benefit lost it in the first quarter of 2023 given administrative issues with the confirmation of residence, leading to the undue loss of TP status (ACAPS 14/11/2023). Income-dependent benefits are less accessible: in September 2022, each of the respective income-dependent benefits was received by fewer than 1% of refugees, much less than the share of those with no income (REACH 10/2022). Older people are more likely to receive

income-dependent benefits, but many are still unaware of the range of social assistance they may be eligible for (HelpAge 09/10/2023). The temporary guardians of unaccompanied children receive a special financial benefit but are not entitled to the benefit for large families because they are not part of the alternative care system (Bankier 22/04/2022; Prawo.pl 19/08/2023; KII 14/08/2023).

Constraints to accessing care services: long-term care, including day care for older people and those with disabilities, is co-paid, but payment is determined individually and may be waived. Some refugees, however, have not been admitted because they could not cover the costs (Nasz Rzecznik 20/04/2023; Warszawa accessed 24/08/2023). Free places in residential long-term care are available in smaller communities, but wait times are longer in cities (Govt. Poland 12/09/2023; KIGS accessed 12/09/2021; Głos Wielkopolski 27/07/2020).

Constraints to accessing employment: recognition of qualifications allowing for the performance of regulated professions is time-consuming and expensive (NRC 10/11/2022; NAWA accessed 17/08/2023; AFSC 09/08/2023). There is no system of recognition of vocational qualifications acquired outside the EU and EEA (NIK 01/07/2021; KII 14/08/2023). Discrimination and non-compliance with the law by employers affect workers from both Ukraine and Poland. Refugees often have precarious contracts, and some work in the informal sector. They earn below the minimum wage, are made to work extra hours, and for about half of those employed, experience discrimination and bullying by managers or coworkers (IRC 26/09/2023; NRC 10/11/2022; Gazeta Wyborcza 10/06/2023; IOM 25/05/2023). Childcare access remains challenging given a lack of available space and staff (Wrocław 02/06/2022; Euractiv 30/04/2023). There is also insufficient access to specialised childcare for children with disabilities (AFSC 09/08/2023).

Romania

TP eligibility: third country nationals and stateless people without a legal permit to reside in Ukraine cannot get TP status (EUAA 07/2022). Lack of information about the available entitlements and how to apply for them upon the granting of TP status is a barrier (AIDA 24/05/2023).

Constraints to accessing benefits from the general social protection system: the state child allowance is not available to TP holders (AIDA 24/05/2023). The capacity of Romania's social system is limited, and the resources allocated to social assistance do not eliminate chronic issues leading to poverty or economic shocks (STAAR 07/2022 f). In 2020, despite the available benefits and other social transfers, 18% of the Romanian population lived in poverty (i.e. their income was lower than half of the national median) (OECD accessed 27/10/2023). Social assistance is provided at the county level, not the municipal level, which may make it difficult for people living outside towns and cities to access support (Govt. Romania accessed 02/10/2023).

TP status documentation does not include the address of residency, leading to delays and challenges in accessing TP benefits, such as healthcare (AIDA 24/05/2023).

Slovakia

TP eligibility: stateless people who do not meet the eligibility criteria for application (i.e. having international protection in Ukraine prior to displacement or family relations with Ukrainian nationals) cannot apply for TP status. They can apply for other forms of international protection (ENS 11/05/2022).

Challenges around special measures for refugees from Ukraine: because the national housing allowances for entities and individuals providing accommodation to refugees from Ukraine are awarded for a short time and their extension is unpredictable, private property owners are losing interest in hosting refugees (Habitat accessed 02/11/2023 a).

Constraints to accessing benefits from the general social protection system: refugees with TP status are eligible to fewer types of benefits than Slovak citizens. They are not eligible to parental allowance, maintenance allowance, funeral allowance, and childbirth allowance (UPSVR accessed 18/09/2023; Caritas 06/06/2023; STAAR 07/2022 c). One of the main barriers in accessing social assistance benefits is the lack of information on what benefits are available to refugees. Some individuals have exploited this by offering refugees information, often inaccurate, in exchange for money (KII 19/09/2023).

Constraints to accessing employment: difficulties with the recognition of qualifications/diplomas is among the key barriers to labour market entry (UNHCR 15/02/2023). Some qualifications from Ukraine are insufficient for certain professions in Slovakia. For example, in Slovakia, it takes ten years to become a paediatrician, compared to only six in Ukraine (FRA 2023). The lack of childcare facilities and kindergarten places prevents caregivers from working and attending language and integration support courses. Some NGOs have filled the void and opened centres with childcare, but more support is needed (Caritas 06/06/2023; ECRE 10/02/2023; UNHCR 15/02/2023).

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES ON THE CALCULATION OF THE COVERAGE OF THE COST OF LIVING

Estimations of the cost of living were based on data from Numbeo in USD as at 29 August 2023. Numbeo only provides the cost of living for a single household and for a household of four, as well as average rent prices. Their estimation of the cost of living is based on a basket of goods and services (Numbeo accessed 06/09/2023). The average size of a refugee household in May 2023 in five of the analysed countries (CZE, MDA, POL, ROU and SVK) was 2.7, so a calculation was made for a household of three people (UNHCR accessed 02/11/2023). The cost of living for a household of three was estimated as the total of the cost for a single household (provided by Numbeo), one-half of the cost for a household of four, and the cost of renting a one-bedroom flat outside the city centre (Numbeo accessed 29/08/2023).

Minimum gross monthly salaries were used (Wage Indicator accessed 29/08/2023; Mauve 26/05/2023; Orbitax 16/12/2022). Where the number of children affects net salary, the conversion to net salaries was calculated on the assumption that the household comprised one adult and two children (Pexpats accessed 29/8/2023; Gyarmathy accessed 29/08/2023; Surucinski accessed 29/08/2023; Pracuj.pl accessed 04/08/2023; Paylab accessed 04/08/2023; Platy accessed 29/08/2023).

The values of income-dependent social assistance benefits connected to the guaranteed minimum income represent the basic social assistance benefit or the income threshold of entitlement to social assistance and are relevant for the indicated household composition (one adult and two children or one adult aged 65 or older). The following benefits were considered: Czechia: living allowance; Hungary: employment substituting benefit; Moldova: minimum guaranteed income; Poland: income criterion for a family of three; Romania: social aid; Slovakia: material need assistance (STAAR 07/2022 b; MISSOC accessed 12/09/2023; Govt. Poland accessed 12/09/2023; DASBV accessed 12/09/2023).

As to the values of income-dependent benefits, only the basic benefits were considered, without supplements for disability or housing, for example. For both income-dependent benefits and those independent of income, if values varied with the age of the children, the value for the youngest and the second youngest were used. If universal (non-income-dependent) benefits existed in a country, they were considered, with information about their eligibility for TP holders (STAAR 07/2022 b; MISSOC accessed 12/09/2023; Ocnita 03/2023; Govt. Poland accessed 12/09/2023; DASBV accessed 12/09/2023).

Data sources used the median refugee income in Romania and the mean (average) in Slovakia (REACH 18/01/2023 and 31/10/2022). As analysis was performed at the household level in the sources, and then income per capita was calculated, for the purpose of this report, ACAPS multiplied the income per capita by three. As the mean is highly influenced by the incomes of smaller groups with higher incomes, it overestimates typical income.

Sources of the values of special financial benefits for refugees (see Table 1): where the values decreased with time, the lower rate was used, as most refugees arrived in the first eight months after the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine (UNHCR accessed 22/09/2023).

Average Ukrainian pension: Suspilne 06/04/2023

Conversion rates are of 29/08/2023: Exchange-Rates accessed 29/08/2023