SLOVAKIA

4 May 2022

Since the war began in Ukraine on 24 February 2022, **over 382,000 refugees from Ukraine have crossed into Slovakia**, the vast majority (89 per cent) women and children, as well as older people and others with specific needs. Many require urgent medical care, including persons with chronic illnesses and those with mental health and physical disabilities.

To ensure a favourable protection environment, UNHCR is supporting government-led efforts through a multisectoral response focusing on **protection, reception and accommodation,** and **material as well as cash assistance** for the most vulnerable groups including those with specific needs.

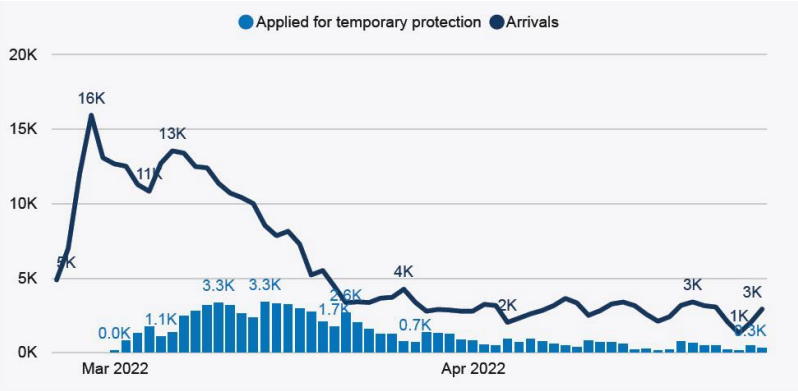
UNHCR and partners are present at border crossing points and other locations where refugees are assisted, including in urban areas, to **provide information on rights and available services, identify vulnerable refugees and refer them to relevant services**, and to **monitor and reinforce reception conditions**.

382,000 refugees arriving to Slovakia from Ukraine
(as of 2 May 2022, excluding Slovak nationals)

73,191 applications for temporary protection status in Slovakia (as of 2 May 2022)

DAILY ARRIVALS TO SLOVAKIA FROM UKRAINE & APPLICATIONS FOR TEMPORARY PROTECTION STATUS

Since 24 Feb 2022



UNHCR and partners are present at border crossing points and other locations where refugees from Ukraine are arriving in Slovakia © UNHCR/Ramazan Cebe

UNHCR PRESENCE IN SLOVAKIA

STAFF:

- **32** Total staff in Slovakia
  - **25** Staff on deployment/mission
  - **5** National staff
  - **2** Roving staff

OFFICES:

- **1** National Office in Bratislava
- **1** Field Office in Košice
- **1** UNHCR Representation for Central Europe in Budapest

For more information, see the Operational Data Portal for the Ukraine Refugee Situation.

Operational Context

Like other countries neighbouring Ukraine, Slovakia has seen a rapid influx of refugees fleeing hostilities at its four border crossing points with Ukraine, the majority **women** and **children,** and inclusive of **older people and those with specific vulnerabilities.** While the initial influx has decreased in late-April, the volatile security situation in Ukraine leaves open the possibility of a large exodus in the coming weeks. Many of those arriving have experienced trauma and distress associated with the conflict and require Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), while others are in need of urgent medical care to treat underlying illnesses. Border authorities continue to process new arrivals, providing information on **temporary residence, asylum** and **temporary protection status**, with onward transport arranged for those seeking to reach urban centres. Information is provided at all border crossing points alerting refugees to available services including accommodation, food, work opportunities, and healthcare. As of 2 May, nearly 73,200 individuals have applied for temporary protection in Slovakia, while many have moved on to other European countries. To respond to the scale, pace and complexity of the situation, UNHCR has declared Slovakia a **Level 3 Emergency**, the highest possible designation.

Local authorities have rapidly responded to the influx. The Border and Aliens Police and Fire Rescue Service have prepared reception centres and temporary hosting sites to accommodate those staying in Slovakia for short periods. Local communities have taken a welcoming stance, with humanitarian actors, civil society and community volunteers providing significant support at border reception points, including advice and referal to **temporary housing, transportation,** and **legal counselling services**. However, continuous efforts are needed to ensure all arrivals are informed about the possiblity to apply for temporary protection or asylum, as well as the rights associated with different legal statuses in Slovakia.

As the vast majority of arrivals to Slovakia are women and children, **protection from sexual abuse and exploitation (PSEA)** remains a critical priority. UNHCR is working with authorities and other humanitarian partners to ensure that people of concern understand their rights, can access assistance, and can communicate any risks or report instances of SEA to humanitarian actors. Further capacity is needed to prevent the threat of illegal activity along border crossing points, including trafficking and exploitation.

Additional screening is also required to identify people with **specific vulnerabilities,** including older people and those with limited mobility or physical impairments. Comprehensive screening is also needed to identify and refer **unaccompanied and seperated children (UASC)** arriving at border crossing points to specalized services.

During her recent mission to Slovakia, UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner Kelly Clements visited Bottova Registration Centre in Bratislava on 22 April, where she met with State Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, Vendelín Leitner, as well as municipal officials, NGO partners, and volunteers assisting refugees arriving to Slovakia from Ukraine. ©UNHCR/ Zsolt Balla

Working with Partners

UNHCR's Representation for Central Europe in Budapest covers activities in **the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia,** and **Slovenia.** UNHCR has been present in Slovakia since 1994.

UNHCR works closely with Slovak Government counterparts to ensure refugees and asylum-seekers can enjoy their **essential rights** and have **access to basic services**. UNHCR maintains positive collaboration with state entities including local and municipal authorities, UN agencies, NGOs, humanitarian partners, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders to provide support and assistance to those seeking protection.

As part of the Ukraine Situation response, UNHCR leads and coordinates the implementation of the **Refugee Response Plan (RRP)** in line with the **Refugee Coordination Model (RCM)** and in close collaboration and consultation with relevant government couterparts, and with the support of inter-agency partners and other stakeholders. UNHCR also co-leads the **Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF)** at country-level to ensure harmonized response within existing government structures and among inter-agency partners, NGOs, volunteers and other stakeholders, with associated **working groups** (Protection and Inclusion, Health, Cash), **sub-working groups and task forces** (Education, Child Protection, Anti-Trafficking, MHPSS) and **cross-cutting working groups** (Information Management, PSEA, AAP) to effectively coordinate partners' response.

UNHCR is in the process of formally expanding its partnerships in Slovakia to ensure availability of comprehensive support and services to people seeking protection, including those with specific needs. UNHCR's main implementing partners are the **Slovak Humanitarian Council** and **Human Rights League**, who provide social **counselling and legal assistance** to refugees at reception and information points, and organise community-based initiatives to raise awareness among people of concern regarding their rights and access to services. Additional partnership agreements are being finalized with:

REACH – to strengthen data collection and information management, including with regards to multi-sector needs assessments, protection monitoring and site mapping

People in Need – for social assistance and service referrals to vulnerable people via mobile teams

Mareena – to promote social cohesion and strengthen resilience of refugee and host communities.

During a 20 April contingency planning workshop—jointly organized by the Slovak Ministry of Interior and UNHCR—various stakeholders from the Government, UN agencies and civil society discussed lessons learned from the first weeks of the refugee response, while identifying scenarios for future planning.
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Main Activities

As the arrival of refugees from Ukraine into Slovakia continues, **provision of information** remains crucial to ensuring refugees are able to **access key services, make informed decisions, and actively participate in the response.** UNHCR and partners are working to ensure those arriving from Ukraine have access to information through preferred channels, feedback mechanisms, community networks, and are able to participate in all stages of the response. **Blue Dot** hubs are being launched in Slovakia and other countries to strengthen information provision, two-way communication, social and legal counselling, and referrals for people with specific needs, while serving as a safe space for women and children recently arriving from Ukraine.

UNHCR is helping identify **those with vulnerablitiles**—including people with specific needs, those with disabilities, and unaccompanied and separareted children—for **referral to specialized services** in Slovakia. In coordination with local authorities, referral pathways are being developed to ensure refugees can access necessary services, in accordance with their needs and preferences. Additionally, **prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)** and **protection from gender based violence (GBV)** is being priortized through reinforced inter-agency networks and PSEA mechanisms and systems, including referrals, at the national level. In this regard, UNHCR is conducting trainings for humanitarian actors and volunteer networks focusing on PSEA and core humanitarian principles, while preparing a Code of Conduct and system for screening and background checks among humanitarian actors present along border areas and at reception points. Trainings on **protection monitoring and profiling** were undertaken between 21 – 22 April, including a detailed illustration of UNHCR's protection monitoring tool.

UNHCR and partners are working to monitor and reinforce **reception conditions**, including through strengthening reception capacities in Slovakia and monitoring of arrivals to ensure access to rights and services on a non-discriminatory basis, including for third-country nationals. UNHCR is supporting authorities in scaling up of accommodation capacity, including for temporary shelter to accommodate those with both immediate and longer-term needs.

UNHCR and partners are preparing to support the Government of Slovakia in the delivery of **unrestricted cash assistance,** to be implemented for vulnerable groups and individuals with specific needs as a means of improving access to basic goods and services, while reducing the risk of resorting to harmful coping mechanisms. On 27 April, a press conference took place in Bratislava to formally launch interagency coordinated cash programming for Ukrainian refuees in Slovakia, followed by the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies (UNICEF, IOM, Slovak Red Cross).

UNHCR's Senior Emergency Coordinator, Seda Kuzucu, greets Slovakia's Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Milan Krajniak, following the formal signing ceremony for coordinated cash programming for Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia on 27 April 2022. The ceremony was followed by a press conference attended by officials from the Ministry as well as humanitarian partners including UNICEF, IOM and the Slovak Red Cross. ©UNHCR

Special Thanks to Donors

UNHCR is grateful to the donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions to the Ukraine situation. Unearmarked contributions provide UNHCR with vital flexibility in determining how best to protect and assist persons of concern who are in the greatest need or at the greatest risk.

Donors of USD 10 million or more are (as of 26 April):

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United States of America | Denmark | Japan | European Union | Sweden | Czechia | Ireland | CERF | Australia for UNHCR | Republic of Korea | Poland | Lichtenstein | Cyprus | other private donors.

* Financial information relates to the Representation for Central Europe, which covers Belarus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Slovakia and Slovenia.

For more information, please visit UNHCR's **Global Focus page for the Ukraine Situation**, available here.

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More Information

For further information, please visit the UNHCR Ukraine Situation Operational Data Portal

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