Chapter 9
Refugees: Economic Costs and Eventual Benefits

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Abstract The war between Ukraine and Russia resulted in Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II. The chapter begins with a brief historic overview needed for a realistic assessment of the current situation. Then it deals with the problems of definitions and ambiguous, patchy, and sometimes contradictory statistics. The evolution of the international institutional and legal system for refugees is described, with its strengths and weaknesses analysed. Special attention is paid to the activities of the UNHCR. Recent trends and developments regarding attitudes and policies towards refugees are also discussed. The current Ukrainian refugee wave is compared with some earlier, and the most relevant data is presented on the magnitude and other dimensions of the refugee migration that the war has caused. The state of the refugees in CEE countries is described, focusing on Poland, where the number of Ukrainian refugees is the highest. Policies, field activities, costs and other expenditures are compared, especially those of accommodation, health, living conditions and education. A special section is devoted to the protection of children. The most important lessons learnt and policy recommendations are summarised at the end.

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9.1 Refugees and Migrants: Definitions, Data Sources, and the General Social and Political Context

According to the State Statistic Service of Ukraine (2021), the size of the country's population was 41.9 million in 2020, excluding the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol occupied by Russia in 2014. The Russian army attacked Ukraine in February 2022. By the end of March, the same year, millions had fled the country, and millions had been displaced inside it. The conflict generated the largest flow of refugees in a single year since the end of the Cold War. The size and the speed of the refugee wave placed a huge strain on neighbouring countries.

For assessing the situation, and for developing and implementing efficient and lasting solutions, we have to understand the economic, social, political, legal and institutional environment where this unprecedented wave of Ukrainian refugees arrived, considering similarities and differences between the host countries.

Analysis should always be supported with data, but in this case, it is not easy to meet that requirement. Ambiguity of definitions, differences in concepts and data collection methodologies between countries make the interpretation and comparison of international migration data very difficult. In some cases, people who have never undertaken migration are also referred to as 'migrants', e.g., 'second or third generation migrants'. Indicators change rapidly, statistics are frequently contradictory or confusing, and it is sometimes hard or impossible to identify the extent that different statistical populations overlap. Figures are often patchy and may understate the real number of uprooted people. In some countries, data published (or not published) may become 'political products' with the goal of influencing the public mood: the war is taking place not only on the battlefield, but also in the information space. The map of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has radically changed since 1990. The dissolution of the Yugoslav state started in 1991; the self-determined split of Czechoslovakia into the independent states of the Czech Republic and Slovakia took effect at the end of 1992; fifteen republics gained full independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991. As the borders have moved, some people might have become 'foreigners' officially or informally in the part of the world where they lived or could receive dual citizenship (Mikanowski, 2023). We try to use reliable information sources but are aware that even data coming from well-known organisations may sometimes be contradictory or confusing.

We have to be especially careful with using and comparing stock and flow figures (Shaver et al., 2022): within short periods, refugees may cross borders multiple times, they may look for asylum in different countries at the same time, many of them try to return home, several others are moving on to other countries, and all this may happen in very short time. Refugees' movement from country to country inside the EU is not necessarily registered officially. When refugees enter a Schengen country, they are allowed to travel on to other Schengen countries without visa or border checks, consequently it is not precisely known where they are at any given time.

At the end of 2019 (the year before the COVID-19 epidemic struck) there were approximately 80 million uprooted or displaced people in the world for a variety of reasons (Loescher, 2021). According to the United Nations' 1951 Refugee Convention, refugees are persons who, 'owing to a well-founded fear of persecution, on the grounds of race, religion, nationality or membership of a social group', are displaced outside of their country of origin, and are unable or unwilling to enjoy the protection of that country. Their number was about 24 million at the end of 2019 (ibid.). Being a refugee is not only a formal status, but also a state of mind: refugees are abruptly and violently uprooted from their familiar world, may experience violence and discrimination, and may be perceived as an economic burden and cultural threat (Kurkov, 2023). They cross borders to receive protection and assistance, but many other displaced persons do not: they are called internally displaced persons or IDPs. Based on some estimates, in 2019 there were more than 45 million IDPs. Many refugees are asylum seekers who officially submit claims for asylum in their host country. We should add that there are also millions of stateless persons in the world, without citizenship or any official documentation.

Refugees, asylum seekers, and IDPs are collectively defined as forced migrants. Refugees are international migrants, but not all international migrants are refugees. The basis of the distinction is whether the movement is voluntary. The UN estimates that there were more than 250 million international migrants in 2019, and their number has grown by 49% since 2000 (Loescher, 2021). In many instances, it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish between refugees and migrants who often use the same routes. Governments are generally interested in keeping the definition of refugees narrow, concerned that otherwise, they may have obligations for a larger number of people.

Besides armed conflicts, war, massacres, genocides and other kinds of direct violence, there are several incentives for international migration: scarcity of land and water, poverty, differences in living standard, job opportunities, climate change and other environmental pressures, rapid population growth, degradation of human habitat, weak and failing states where governance capacity is collapsing and who are unwilling or unable to provide even basic human protection (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Loescher, Long & Sigona, 2014). According to some estimates, by the year 2050, 140 million people may be displaced due to climate change only (Betts, 2021). New opportunities for migration have also emerged: globalisation, improving transportation and telecommunications, the rapid spread of social media, growing and better-organised diaspora networks, the development of people smuggling as a business, and so on.

Before considering the costs and benefits of the international movement of refugees and forced migrants from Ukraine to CEE countries, we should explore the theoretical concepts of international migration. Although there is no single, unanimously accepted theory of international migration (Skeldon, 2012), there is a predominant understanding that most contemporary economic migrants are favourably self-selected in terms of their socio-economic and demographic characteristics (Chiquiar & Hanson, 2005). They tend to be younger (Mayda, 2022), healthier (Lu, 2008), better educated (Bernard & Bell, 2018), and have more work or business experience than the

average individual in their home countries. This positive self-selection of economic migrants is further enhanced by selective migration policies in developed countries, where entry preferences are given to highly skilled individuals (Brücker & Defoort, 2009). Additionally, voluntary migration decisions are often made with at least some degree of rationality, involving planning and preparation, where future benefits and risks are considered (Brzozowski & Coniglio, 2021). Consequently, ex-post evidence shows that, upon settling in a new destination, economic migrants generally experience an improvement in their living conditions (Battisti, Peri & Romiti, 2022). Furthermore, international migration yields benefits beyond economic outcomes, as many individuals observe a significant increase in subjective well-being, measured by happiness or life satisfaction scores, compared to their situation before migration (Hendriks & Bartram, 2019).

However, these positive effects are valid mainly for economic migrants. In the case of individuals forced to leave their home countries due to military conflicts, persecution, or natural disasters, the selection process is not always positive. Studies indicate that refugees are positively selected for education in distant destinations, such as Iraqis or Syrians moving to Western Europe (Aksoy & Poutvaara, 2021), while those moving short distances, typically to neighbouring countries, are usually negatively selected in this aspect (Welker, 2022). Moreover, forced migrants move out of necessity, rather than choice which may lead to ill-prepared migration projects, rushed departures without proper planning, and difficulty in obtaining essential documents certifying their educational and professional background. Additionally, they are more exposed to health hazards, physically and mentally, and are more likely to seek healthcare services at their destination than economic migrants. Consequently, welcoming refugees is primarily a humanitarian obligation and a moral principle rather than ‘good business’. On average, the socio-economic integration of forced migrants and refugees is less successful than that of economic migrants (Brell, Dustmann & Preston, 2020).

Another crucial aspect requiring closer attention is distinguishing between voluntary and involuntary migration. While theoretical frameworks easily classify migrating individuals, real-life situations are often more complex (Erdal & Oeppen, 2018). Many economic migrants could be de facto refugees or forced migrants, as, even one individual may have diverse motives for moving. For example, during the 1980s political and economic crisis in Poland, some citizens were welcomed as refugees in Western Europe, the US, Canada, and Australia, while only a fraction of them had been active members of the Solidarity movement fighting the communist regime, which could result in political persecution (Pleskot, 2015). Similarly, in the Ukrainian diaspora’s current situation, one should consider that for many Ukrainians, the military conflict began as early as February 2014, with the Russian annexation of Crimea and the Russian-sponsored separatist conflict in the Donbas region. Consequently, labelled as economic migrants, many Ukrainians who migrated to Central and Eastern Europe between February 2014 and January 2022, were at least partially internally displaced persons in Ukraine who later chose to emigrate from their home country. This continuity of economic and forced migration is a specific feature of the Ukrainian

diaspora, resulting in unique patterns of social, cultural, and economic integration in major destinations.

Forced displacement and migration is not a new phenomenon in history. In the 1950s large groups of people fled the East European communist countries looking for resettlement in the West, where some 900,000 European refugees were absorbed, mainly by the USA. In the 1970s there was mass exodus from East Pakistan, Uganda, Cyprus, and Indochina. In the 1980s growing numbers of asylum seekers started to migrate from the Global South to the well-developed countries of the North. In the 1990s, brutal armed conflicts, genocides and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Central Africa forced many people to leave their countries and look for protection elsewhere. The early 21st century, the 'War on Terror' and the Western occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan opened a new chapter in the history of international migration. By the end of 2019, more than six million people had fled Syria, where millions more were internally displaced (Loescher, 2021).

In some countries of today's world, we notice a proliferation of complex emergencies, e.g., environmental degradation combined with ethnic and religious tensions generate political instability and armed conflicts, leading to economic collapse coupled with the disintegration of civil society. The average duration of refugee situations is getting longer, with increasing numbers of people spending decades outside their home countries. Millions of Palestinian have been in exile since 1948.

The vast majority of refugees do not travel far. They tend to stay in countries neighbouring their homelands, living in camps and urban areas (mainly slums). These days, 85% of them are in the Global South. At the end of 2019, the countries hosting the largest refugee groups were Turkey, Colombia, Pakistan, and Uganda. Since the refugee crisis in 2014-15, when more than a million people attempted to get into the EU (Pachocka, 2016), there has been a dramatic drop in the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Europe from Africa and Asia, but even now many risk their lives crossing borders and the open seas.

The subject of migration is usually highly politicised. Immigration and refugee issues strike deep social, political, cultural, religious, and political chords in many countries. Several governments of developed countries set strict limits on migrants and use such control measures as tight pre-arrival screening, limiting access to social and health services, routine deportation to so called 'safe third countries', forced separation of families, prolonged detention of asylum seekers, building walls and razor wire fences, and bilateral deals with transit countries. This attitude and behaviour are historically not new, e.g., the general consensus during the Great Depression in the first half of the 20th century was that national interest must be served by imposing limits on immigration, and the nations' own citizens must be prioritised when offering employment opportunities. Human rights principles frequently clash with the economic, security and political interests of certain groups of actors. Nationalist and populist leaders may use hatred and fear as political tools. Disinformation and prejudice spread very fast through online channels. Refugees and asylum seekers, mixed with other migrants who are looking for a better and safer life are frequently perceived as evidence of the risks and dangers of open societies and

economic globalisation. In many people's eyes, refugees are 'economic migrants in disguise' who cause tensions and violence, and drain national resources.

Asylum practices differ from country to country, but asylum seekers are commonly asked to prove that they were persecuted at home, and if they have no proof, they may be deported or may only be granted temporary right to remain. The hidden goal of long and bureaucratic processes may be to deter others from seeking asylum. An emerging new refugee treatment model is based on prevention, containment, and fast repatriation.

Observing the high and growing numbers of forced displacements, it transpires that the international community must be mobilised to ensure protection and provide lasting solutions for refugees. The basic forms of lasting or 'durable' solutions are repatriation, resettlement in another country, or local integration in a receiving country, preferably a nearby one. It is not an easy job, because state sovereignty prevents the international community from intervening without the individual countries' approval, unless the UN Security Council authorizes such action under a specific chapter of the UN Charter. Unfortunately, the UN's Security Council is a rather inactive and sharply divided organisation.

Currently, the most important international organisation responsible for the protection of refugees is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It was created in 1950, a few years after World War II, and since then has undergone an impressive growth in the scope and scale of its work. According to data published on its website (UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, 2023), it works in 137 countries and territories, employing almost 19,000 people at the end of 2021, with their large majority based in the field. The UNHCR's budget increased to USD 9.15 billion in 2021, and in 2023 it planned to raise 10.211 billion USD, to support an expected 117.2 million displaced and stateless people (UNHCR, 2022f).

Officially the UNHCR works under the authority of the UN's General Assembly, but only its administrative costs are covered by the general budget of the UN, and for its operative work it needs voluntary contributions. The logic of the present international refugee system is built on the voluntary cooperation of states, with no binding obligation to share the costs of providing asylum. The UNHCR plays a vital role, but only with the approval and active contribution of states can it implement solutions. About 80% of its budget comes from a small group of donor states (Loescher, 2021). The organisation has to respond to the interests of the leading donor states, who frequently 'earmark' their contributions for specific countries and projects: in the recent past, mainly for Syria and Afghanistan. The consensus of states may be quickly eroded by the continuously changing global order and state interests.

Regarding the scope of the UNHCR's work, since 2005 it has also assumed formal responsibility for the protection of internally displaced persons.

The UNHCR is a major actor in the present 'refugee ecosystem', but only one of many. It has to compete for attention, resources and political support with other players like national and international offices, support organisations, religious and professional groups, and thousands of NGOs. There were relatively few international NGOs working on refugee issues until the late 1980s, but their numbers have recently exploded. After the European migration crisis in 2014-15, in most EU countries

opposition to further inflows of refugees and asylum seekers increased quickly, nevertheless generosity towards refugees is still impressive in civil society. Some civil organisations, e.g., the IKEA Foundation have significant resources. Médecins Sans Frontières is a non-profit, self-governing, member-based, worldwide organisation that can mobilise more than 60,000 people, mainly doctors and nurses. Its activities are frequently coordinated with the Red Cross, a humanitarian organisation capable of mobilising about 100 million volunteers worldwide. In 2021, it raised EUR 1.94 billion from millions of individual donors and private institutions (Médecins Sans Frontiéres, 2023). Considering the size, diversity and complexity of the 'refugee ecosystem', assessing the total costs of specific operations is a complex task.

The 'refugee ecosystem' is a highly competitive 'marketplace' of many actors representing different and frequently clashing interests. The number of rich donor states is limited, and only a few of them run regular resettlement programs. In the emerging 'refugee regime complex' (Betts, 2010), issues of humanitarianism, security, labour migration, international travel, peace-building and economic development are mixed, and the same confusion and cacophony is observed in the media and common talk.

We have to note here that there is limited research available on the role of NGOs in contemporary refugee crises (Milner & Klassen, 2021), while the mechanisms and means of their influence, and the intended and unintended consequences of their work are frequently debated.

In 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. The document confirms that global approaches and solutions are required, and that closed refugee camps must be the exception, refugees should be included in the communities; they must be allowed to develop and use their skills and become self-reliant, to contribute to local economies, and support the development of the communities hosting them. On 17 December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly affirmed the Global Compact on Refugees, providing a framework and blueprint for governments and other actors to ensure that communities hosting refugees receive significant support and refugees can lead meaningful and productive lives.

In a nutshell, the general economic, social, political and institutional environment was hard hit by the war between Russia and Ukraine and the unprecedented refugee wave set in motion in February 2022.

9.2 Dimensions and Characteristics of the Ukrainian Refugee Flow

The number of international migrants has increased over the past decades. According to the statistics published in the United Nations' World Migration Report (United Nations, 2022, p. 23) the number of international migrants was 84 million in 1970. This number increased to 281 million by 2020, which means that about 3.6% of the world's population lived in a country other than where they were born. Although

the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on the population of migrants is difficult to assess, the UN estimates that it may have reduced the growth in the stock of international migrants by around two million, but that was only a temporary drop. According to EUROSTAT, 1.9 million immigrants entered the EU from non-EU countries in 2020, which is a decrease of almost 30% compared with 2019, but 2.3 million immigrants arrived in 2021 (Eurostat, 2023a). In 2020, the major region of residence (destination) for international migrants was Europe, currently hosting about 31% of migrant population (United Nations, 2022, p. 24). At that time, the majority of international migrants were of working age, and the male to female split was 52 to 48%.

Table 9.1 shows the size of foreign inflows in five former socialist countries of CEE, as registered by the OECD's migration database between 2008 and 2018 (Austria is added for comparison). Table 9.2 shows the percentage of foreign-born population in the same countries.

Table 9.1: Inflows of foreign population into selected OECD countries (thousands of people)
Data: OECD (2023)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Czechia	76.2	38.2	28.0	20.7	28.6	27.8	38.5	31.6	34.8	43.5	55.9
Hungary	35.5	25.6	23.9	22.5	20.3	21.3	26.0	25.8	23.8	36.5	49.3
Poland	41.8	41.3	41.1	41.3	47.1	46.6	32.0	86.1	107.0	128.0	137.6
Slovakia	7.4	5.1	4.2	3.8	2.9	2.5	2.4	3.8	3.6	2.9	2.9
Slovenia	43.8	24.2	11.3	18.0	17.3	15.7	18.4	19.9	20.0	27.7	2.9
Austria	94.4	91.7	69.9	109.9	125.6	165.2	154.3	198.7	158.7	139.3	131.7

Table 9.2: Stocks of foreign-born population as a % of total population, 2019
Data: OECD (2023)

	%
Czechia	8.5
Hungary	5.8
Poland	2.0
Slovakia	3.6
Slovenia	12.8
Austria	19.3

As stated in the Introduction, not all migrants are refugees or asylum seekers. According to the UNHCR's 2022 Mid-year Trends report (UNHCR, 2022b), there were 32.5 million refugees in the middle of 2022 including 26.7 million under the organisation's mandate and 5.8 million Palestinian refugees who belong to the UNRWA.[1] The number of asylum seekers was 4.9 million, and there were 53.1 million internally displaced persons (ibid. p.2). More than three quarters of all refugees and other people in need of international protection came from just six countries (Table 9.3).

Table 9.3: Number of refugees by country of origin, middle of 2022
Data: UNHCR (2022b)

	Million
Syria	6.8
Venezuela	5.6
Ukraine	5.4
Afghanistan	2.8
South Sudan	2.4
Myanmar	1.2

Measured by today's standards, there were only three relatively large, forced displacement flows across borders within one specific year between 1981 and 2011, each well below three million persons. There was a sudden large outflow from Afghanistan in 1981, another one from Iraq in 1991 after the first Gulf War, and from Afghanistan again in 2000. Each extra wave was followed by smaller ones in the years after the large outflows. This trend has changed radically from 2012, when refugees started to flow out of war-ravaged Syria. Refugees from Syria, South Sudan and Myanmar ignited a large refugee wave of multiple years between 2012 and 2017. The Venezuelan refugee exodus, caused by power shifts in the country, pushed the yearly number above five million in 2018, then, after a short COVID-19 interval, came the war between Russia and Ukraine, igniting the largest and fastest cross-border refugee outflow in one year since the end of the Cold War.

Before the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the war in the Donbas (both of which may in retrospect be interpreted as preludes to the frontal attack in 2022) had already resulted in more than two million refugees and internally displaced persons. According to some reports, their reception was rather cool in Europe with relatively low success rates in asylum claims and weak media interest (Mitchneck, Zavisca & Gerbe, 2016). Many of them were uprooted again when the war started in 2022.

[1] The war in Gaza which erupted in 2023 may change this number.

Due to a highly turbulent history and serious economic, social and political problems (Sakwa, 2014), in many parts of the world Ukraine had a large diaspora. At the end of 2021, 1.57 million Ukrainian citizens were officially authorised to stay in the EU, representing the third biggest non-EU citizen group. The largest groups lived in Poland, Italy (more than 230 thousand) and Czechia, and many had residence permits in Czechia, Poland, Lithuania, Estonia and Slovakia (Eurostat, 2023b). Before the war, Ukrainian citizens were the most numerous foreign workers in Poland, it is highly probable that in some periods demand far exceeded supply. After 2010, tens of thousands of Hungarians in Ukraine received Hungarian citizenship and passports, thus becoming dual citizens according to the Hungarian legal system. Double citizenship, although officially not penalised, is not legally recognised by the Ukrainian constitution. Under the present wartime conditions, it is extremely uncertain how this situation may change, how these travel documents can be used, where these people are, and what other international complications may arise from the system. Table 9.4 shows the number of Ukrainian citizens with a valid residence permit in the eight CEE countries at the end of 2021.

Table 9.4: Number of Ukrainian citizens holding a valid residence permit at the end of 2021
Data: UNHCR (2022b)

	Head
Bulgaria	9,149
Croatia	2,405
Czechia	193,547
Hungary	63,175
Poland	651,221
Romania	2,260
Slovakia	54,138
Slovenia	2,655

The war in Ukraine started on 24 February, 2022. By the end of February 2022, about 2.3 million Ukrainian refugees had entered neighbouring EU countries (The Economist, 2021), almost as many as in 2015 and 2016 combined, at a culmination period of the Syrian war. According to the data continuously collected and updated by the UNHCR (UNHCR, 2023b), 1,720,227 refugee arrivals were registered at the Polish border between 24 February and 13 March, plus 255,291 in Hungary, 204,862 in Slovakia, 84,671 in Romania, 131,365 in Russia, 106,994 in Moldova, 1,226 in Belarus, and 304,156 in other European countries. By the end of May, Poland alone had taken 3,5 million refugees.

Four million people fled war-ravaged Ukraine in just five weeks, and millions more were displaced at home. That number is far higher than any other since 1990, especially if we consider that, officially, men of fighting age were not allowed to leave Ukraine. The sentiments and intentions of uprooted people may fluctuate rapidly due to such after-shock psychological conditions as confusion, fear, panic, rage, euphoria, apathy, and depression. The Economist reported that in the two weeks to May 23, 2022 the number of Ukrainians travelling home from Poland (345,000) was well above of those entering the host country (253,000), and other countries also observed a similar trend (The Economist, 2022a). By the middle of June the same year, the cumulative number of border-crossings from Ukraine into neighbouring countries reached 7.7 million, while the flow in the opposite direction stood at 2.6 million, meaning that only about a third of those who fled the country may be going home (The Economist, 2022b). Some of the crossings may only be short trips to check what is happening, and how conditions are changing at home.

EU countries bordering Ukraine have allowed entry to all Ukrainian refugees, and the EU has invoked, with the unanimous approval of its Member States, the 2001 EU Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) providing temporary, but immediate protection for displaced persons arriving from outside the Union's borders. The directive was introduced in the aftermath of the Yugoslav wars, has been in effect since August 2001, but the first time it was invoked was in 2022. It is intended to be used in exceptional circumstances when the 'normal' EU asylum system cannot handle properly a sudden mass refugee influx. It requires Member States to host refugees according to their capacity and to behave by the principles of solidarity and balanced efforts.

Between May and September 2022, the UNHCR and its partners in some host countries conducted thousands of interviews with adult refugees from Ukraine about their profile, needs and intentions at the time of data collection (UNHCR, 2022d). According that random sample survey, most adult refugees (85%) were women, many of them holding university or higher degrees (46%) or certificates of vocational training (29%). Since men aged 18 to 60 are not allowed to leave Ukraine, 87% of refugees were women with children, a ratio confirmed not only by official statistics but by numerous (sometimes shocking) photographs published in the media. The 'typical refugee' is a young woman with a small child. 13% were older persons. 23% of respondents had visited Ukraine at least once since their first arrival. The top three urgent needs were cash, employment, and accommodation. 63% of the respondents planned to stay in their present host country in the near future.

The unprecedented outflow of women and children may profoundly and permanently change Ukraine. The country's demographic decline may be accelerated to an unprecedented degree. The war with Russia has caused a large-scale demographic disruption with an unpredictable future (Aksyonova, 2022). Ukraine was a country in deep demographic crisis even before the war. The extremely low fertility rate (the lowest in Europe in 2021) is combined with a rapidly aging population, high mortality, poor health conditions, striking inequalities, intensive external and internal migration, a growing gap between rural and urban areas, and many other economic and social challenges. Most families have only one child. According to the Ukrainian

data analytics website Opendatabot, the country's birth rate was 28% lower in the first six months of 2023 than in the same period in 2021, and that has been the highest decline since Ukraine gained its independence in 1991.

In March 2022, Andrey Kurkov, a prominent Ukrainian writer published an article in The Economist's 1843 Magazine (Kurkov, A., 2022) stating that although displacement on this scale is hard to grasp, in his opinion refugees fall into different 'tribes'. The largest group is that of 'first timers': people who had to flee their home for the first time, who are in panic, are disoriented and look into the future with horror. Another group is that of 'double refugees', persons who fled the war and the economic disaster in eastern Ukraine and resettled in the central and eastern parts of the country, mainly in cities. They are less scared but more fatalistic, and when having to flee again, they use their previous experience to decide what and what not to take along. Then, there are people who simply run for their life. Others plan their exit meticulously, collect information and try to assess the real situation before taking to the road. Groups and individuals have different choices and options. Although it is a mass exodus, each refugee has her/his own story. The confusion of refugees and of those receiving them, the complexity of life situations, the diversity of intentions and plans, and the general uncertainty are well reflected in the reports based on personal experiences on the spot (Hetényi, 2023).

In any serious conflict, the first to flee are people who can: individuals with cars, credit cards, family members or friends abroad, and language skills. Many refugees fleeing the invasion carry with them trauma and loss, and suffer the stress of family separation and living abroad. Politicians in host countries say refugees will return home once peace is restored, but that eventual return depends on several factors.

The UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Europe regularly publishes Flash Updates on the Ukrainian situation. In the 16 January, 2023 issue (UNHCR, 2023b, latest document), they reported that fluctuating pendular movements could be observed to and from Ukraine. Although there were some slight increases in exit numbers depending on the intensity of the war and the destruction taking place, no significant increase was reported.

As the war went on, the UNHCR's support shifted from an emergency project to a longer-term response. The UNHCR and the UNICEF established 39 Blue Dots (protection and support hubs) in eight countries. Using the country snapshots in the UNHCR's 16 January 2023 Flash Update, Table 9.5 gives the number of refugees registered for temporary protection and the numbers of those that received cash assistance. Temporary protection is a protection status for Ukrainian refugees, available in the EU. It provides residency rights such as access to shelter if one needs it, social welfare assistance, medical care, access to education for children under 18 and access to the labour market without a work permit.

Table 9.5: Ukrainian refugees, country updates as of January 11, 2023
Data: UNHCR (2022b)

	Refugees registered for temporary protection (head)	Refugees receiving cash assistance (head)
Bulgaria	150,510	5,060
Czechia	477,614	n.a.
Hungary	33,446	n.a.
Poland	1,563,386	293,073
Romania	103,825	43,000
Slovakia	105,533	29,458
Estonia	42,000	n.a.
Latvia	45,000	n.a.
Lithuania	73,000	n.a.

In March 2022, the UNHCR developed a Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) with the purpose of coordinating the efforts of 142 partners including the International Red Cross and Red Crescent, UN agencies, national and international NGOs, religious institutions, academic institutions and local civil societies. The plan was recalibrated in October the same year to be adapted to emerging priorities and winter-related needs. The UNHCR's continuously updated Operational Data Portal publishes data on the numbers of refugees from Ukraine recorded in the countries featured in the RRP (In February 2024 these were Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia), and in other countries. Table 9.6 shows the situation in the RRP countries and six others between January 2023 and February 2024.

Table 9.6: Number of refugees from Ukraine recorded in 16 selected countries, January–September 2023 (stock data, number of registered refugees present in a country on a given day)
Data: UNHCR (2023b)
Note: UNHCR's data table separates columns for 'refugees registered for temporary protection' (see Table 9.5 and the explanation above it) and 'refugees recorded in country' (used in this table), which is the estimated number of individual refugees who are currently present in a country. Some numbers may be rounded or not updated on time. Countries in italics are featured in the UNHCR's Refugee Response Plan (list downloaded on 22 Sept 2023).

Country	January 22nd	March 22nd	May 22nd	July 22nd	Sept. 22nd
Bulgaria	50,325	49,610	50,576	162,935	61,150
Czechia	482,049	497,217	520,234	354,825	368,300
Estonia	66,074	67,601	71,215	48,590	50,450
Hungary	33,603	34,248	35,030	52,335	53,375
Latvia	35,212	35,243	31,769	38,145	32,470
Lithuania	73,040	75,197	77,444	48,425	49,970
Moldova	102,283	107,277	108,620	113,555	116,950
Poland	1,563,386	1,564,711	1,602,062	968,390	959,875
Romania	106,644	110,106	94,952	95,430	85,255
Slovakia	107,476	111,756	116,202	104,830	108,500
Austria	91,631	94,551	97,047	100,575	68,700
Croatia	20,164	21,232	22,382	22,760	23,430
Germany	1,021,667	1,021,667	1,061,623	1,079,815	1,094,155
Italy	167,925	171,739	175,107	163,750	167,525
Slovenia	9,081	9,075	9,312	9,935	10,195
United Kingdom	155,509	165,700	204,700	208,500	210,800

The total number of refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe was 5,828,000 on 22 September 2023, and the global figure was 6,197,200. 24,882,825 border crossings were recorded from Ukraine since 24 February 2022, and 17,896,775 to Ukraine in the same period. The difference between the number of refugees recorded (stock) and border crossings (flow) is especially striking in the case of Poland where the high number of refugees is combined with intensive two-way border traffic (Duszczyk & Kaczmarczyk, 2022).

At the beginning of March 2023, The Economist, using multiple data sources (University of Warsaw, Destatis, Eurostat, IMF, ONS, UNHCR) published data on Ukrainian refugees living in selected countries as a percentage of the population

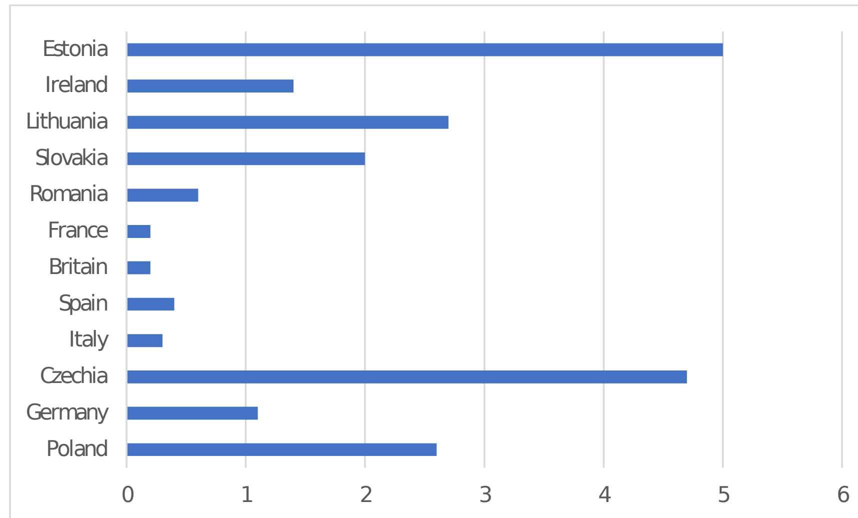
Table 9.6 Cont.: Number of refugees from Ukraine recorded in 16 selected countries, November 2023 – February 2024 (stock data, number of registered refugees present in a country on a given day)

Country	November 22nd 2023	January 23rd 2024	February 23rd 2024
Bulgaria	52,245	51,860	67,770
Czechia	368,685	375,590	381,400
Estonia	50,450	50,450	38,245
Hungary	53,375	63,775	65,558
Latvia	32,470	46,610	43,825
Lithuania	50,690	52,305	52,670
Moldova	113,185	120,695	116,195
Poland	958,939	956,635	956,635
Romania	83,280	85,710	78,745
Slovakia	111,860	114,270	115,875
Austria	106,215	83,185	84,135
Croatia	23,855	24,150	24,355
Germany	1,114,070	1,125,850	1,139,690
Italy	167,525	169,040	168,840
Slovenia	10,435	10,635	10,865
United Kingdom	246,760	250,360	253,160

(Fig. 9.1). It is evident from that chart, that the burden of supporting refugees is not spread evenly across countries.

At the end of 2023 and the beginning of 2024, Russia appeared to be determined to exhaust Ukraine and to wear out its partners turning the country into a dysfunctional and abandoned state whose refugees cause problems in Europe. Aware of the military situation, observers have increasingly expressed the opinion that both countries (and Europe) must be prepared for a long war and a prolonged refugee crisis. By UNHCR's Operational Data Portal (UNHCR, 2023b), 6,004,100 refugees from Ukraine were recorded in Europe in the middle of February 2024, and 6,479,700 were recorded globally.

Fig. 9.1: Ukrainian refugees living in selected countries, as % of population, Feb. 15, 2023 or latest available
Data: The Economist (2023a)



9.3 Assessing the Economic Costs of Refugee Protection in the CEE Region

As explained in the first section, navigating the distinction between economic migrants and refugees is a challenging task and, similarly, assessing the costs and benefits of migration – whether forced or voluntary – proves to be a complex endeavour. It largely depends on our units of analysis: we may consider the costs and benefits for people on the move, host communities, states, international institutions, local municipalities, or other actors. Additionally, the timeframe of assessment plays a crucial role – while short-term costs may appear substantial, benefits may unfold over time, or vice versa. In this section, we focus mainly on short-term demands on host society resources, such as public services, housing, infrastructure and social support programs. Before delving into the short-term costs of refugee protection in host societies of the CEE region, however, we should first consider the negotiation of burden-sharing between different actors in the 'refugee regime complex' (Betts, 2010) or 'refugee ecosystem'. In other words, the question is who bears the costs of refugee protection?

The answer to this question is not simple. We should remember that humanitarian relief is often interlinked with other sectors, particularly development aid and the security/peace complex. The actors involved in this space sometimes overlap, cooperate, run in parallel, or are in competition with one another (Betts, 2010). The Triple Nexus framework, which emerged from the 2016 UN Humanitarian Summit as a way of more effectively managing forced migration on a global scale, is based

on the idea of increased cooperation and coordination between the humanitarian, development, and peace sectors (UNDP, 2023). In economic terms, we can trace commitments in humanitarian, financial and military expenditures. States, charities, private donors, civil society organisations, corporations, international organisations (IOs), multilateral institutions, such as UN institutions (UNHCR, International Organisation for Migration /IOM/), the World Bank and the IMF all form part of the Triple Nexus ecosystem.

Let us crunch some numbers to illustrate the scale of support to Ukraine, taking the Triple Nexus framework as our reference. According to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, the EU Commission and Council have committed EUR 29.92 billion, in addition EUR 3.1 billion via the European Peace Facility, and EUR two billion through the European Investment Bank. Along with EUR 19.9 billion committed bilaterally by EU Member States, this brings the total EU commitments for the war effort to EUR 54.92 billion in the period between 24 January, 2022 and 15 January, 2023 (Trebesch et al., 2023). The authors of the report further note that “financial aid by multilateral organisations like the IMF, World Bank, UN and the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development add up to EUR 13.27 billion” (Trebesch et al., 2023). Zooming in on humanitarian aid, through Member State and donor support, the UNHCR distributed over USD 226 million in 2022 for the most urgent needs of displaced persons from Ukraine (UNHCR, 2022a). Since 24 February, 2022, the European Commission has spent EUR 685 million on humanitarian aid, up from EUR 350 million in the preceding period (European Commission, 2023a). Yet the burden of aiding refugees generally falls to individual hosting countries (Betts, 2010). According to data sourced in January-May 2023, Poland ranks highest in the world in terms of refugee costs in absolute numbers, totalling EUR 15.42 billion, followed by Germany with EUR 13.90 billion, and Czechia with EUR 3.85 billion (Kiel Institute for the World Economy, 2023b). CEE countries are the clear frontrunners if we calculate refugee costs as a percentage of the GDP: Poland (2.5%), Czechia (1.5%), Bulgaria (1.4%), and Slovakia (1.1%) rank in the first four places in the world as of 31 May, 2023 (Kiel Institute for the World Economy, 2023a). Bearing these numbers in mind, we should note that countries receive different forms of compensation for the costs incurred, including international donations, in-kind support, civil society mobilisation, and assistance by companies and private households. However, statistics on donations and costs undertaken by actors are notoriously difficult to track, as there is no standardised reporting or data, amounting to an unaccounted ‘hidden aid’ category (Trebesch et al., 2023). It is also worth considering where the costs are felt most acutely within the state structure. Research conducted by the Union of Polish Metropolises unequivocally points to local self-governments as bearing of the burden of hosting refugees, including the provision of housing, access to public services, education and healthcare (Wojdat & Cywiński, 2022). It is also important to underscore the costs that have been absorbed by private citizens. In a series of surveys conducted by the Polish Centre for Public Opinion Research, in April 2022, 63% of Poles declared that they or someone from their household was offering free voluntarily support to Ukrainian refugees. This percentage dropped to 41% by January

2023, and a further steady decrease is expected, given people's limited resources and soaring inflation (Centre, 2023).

9.3.1 Immediate 'On the Spot' Emergency Assistance

In the first days, weeks and months after the full-scale Russian aggression on Ukraine, emergency assistance to people fleeing the war was delivered by a range of actors in the hosting countries. As emerging research suggests, the first responders and frontrunners of assistance were largely local civil societies, including NGOs, religious organisations, grassroots initiatives, and private individuals (Cullen Dunn & Kaliszewska, 2023; Grzymała-Kazłowska, Downarowicz & Wydra, 2023); . With this in mind, it is important to underscore the role of Ukrainian organisations and private individuals already present in host societies in the mobilisation of assistance (Czerska-Shaw & Jacoby, 2023). Different levels of public authorities and self-governments were also involved, ranging from local public institutions, such as social services departments and cultural centres, to local and regional authorities, crisis management units, train station management teams, and others.

International charities and volunteers from Europe and beyond arrived on the scene within the first few months, bringing financial aid, often in cooperation with local NGOs, and crisis management know-how. However, more critical accounts of the humanitarian aid industry reveal major shortcomings in the collaboration and distribution of these resources (Cullen Dunn & Kaliszewska, 2023), alluding to important analyses such as the 'Crisis Caravan' (Polman, 2010), or the 'NGO game' (McMahon, 2017) that highlight the boom-and-bust economy of humanitarian aid and its neo-liberal underpinnings.

The on-the-spot aid ecosystem may be organised into six basic categories: (1) distribution of foodstuffs and basic material items, such as clothing, toiletries, off-the-counter medication and cleaning supplies, (2) provision of emergency shelters, (3) information and administrative points, sometimes with cash assistance programs, (4) support centres, including psychological aid, children's daycare zones, language classes and other cultural activities, (5) logistics hubs, including transport, relocation, warehouses for goods, and (6) coordination and communication networks (Czerska-Shaw, Krzyworzeka-Jelinowska & Mucha, 2022). As mentioned above, calculating the costs of these services is difficult due to the lack of standardisation and availability of data. We therefore focus on only a few examples for which there is reliable data.

Within the third category, the UNHCR set up 'Blue Dot' assistance points in collaboration with other UN agencies (IOM, UNICEF), as well as a host of local authorities and NGOs in major hubs of refugee arrivals in the region (UNHCR, 2022a). These Blue Dots serve as one-stop-shops where refugees from Ukraine can register their stay, obtain the information they require, as well sign up for cash assistance programmes. The UNHCR distributed over EUR 202 million through its cash assistance programme to refugees in surrounding states in 2022, of which EUR 79.3 million has been spent in Poland alone (UNHCR, 2022e). Some charities, such

as Save the Children, have provided cash assistance and voucher aid, and measure their work through how many people they have reached.

Via the Temporary Protection Directive, triggered on 4 March, 2022, Member States have been able to formulate national resolutions to respond to and assist those escaping the war in Ukraine. TPD provides those with temporary protection free access to essential public services, including medical care, social and welfare assistance, some housing provision, and education for children under 18. Each of these services will be discussed below. Additionally, at the start of the full-scale invasion a number of states and transport companies provided free transport (trains and local public transportation) for a limited time. In Hungary, Ukrainian refugees could use 'Solidarity tickets' to travel by train through the country; in Romania a similar 'ticket help Ukraine' scheme was introduced. In Poland, most municipalities offered free public transport to Ukrainian refugees for a period of three months (March-May 2022) (VisitUkraine, 2022).

9.3.2 Physical and Mental Health Services

Health care systems in receiving states undoubtedly face major strains with sudden influxes of patients in the system, particularly those who may have encountered trauma and mental health issues, the elderly, and those in need of specialised medical care. A study on Ukrainian refugees in Poland conducted by the World Health Organisation and Statistics Poland in 2022 found that 37.2% of respondents had health care needs in the 30 days prior to the interview, most often citing sudden illnesses (44%), chronic illnesses (40%), and dental needs (18%) (Organization & Poland, 2023). Of those, 68% used a public health facility in Poland to deal with their needs. Another study estimates that nearly 10% of the refugee population in Poland, comprising of the elderly, have a significant disease burden, the most frequent of which are cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, and respiratory diseases (Piotrowicz et al., 2022). These health-related issues require immediate and systemic solutions. In the 2022 OECD International Outlook, costs associated with assisting Ukrainian nationals under temporary protection within national health care systems were estimated at a total of EUR 4.4 billion. The figures reveal that Germany incurred the highest costs among OECD countries, totalling EUR 1.361 billion, followed by Poland with EUR 664 million, and Czechia in the third place with EUR 341 million (OECD, 2022b).

Amongst the barriers to accessing health care services for refugees are long waiting times for specialised care, information on how to navigate often opaque health care systems that are different from those in their home countries, language and communication difficulties, and costs of medication (Organization & Poland, 2023). One of the most acute problems is access to mental health services in welcoming states. This is in part because of disruptions to health care systems and rising mental health care needs in the wake of the COVID-19 global pandemic (Eurofound, 2021), gaps in provision as well as historically underdeveloped mental health care provision in Central and Eastern Europe (Winkler et al., 2017). The refugees' personal

circumstances, for example, caring for children or elderly relatives, also severely limits the possibilities of accessing these services. It is also important to note that there is a cultural taboo on asking for psychological help (Organization & Poland, 2023).

Nevertheless, there may be some benefits to the receiving states' health care systems. By the end of 2022, 1700 doctors and 860 nurses and midwives from Ukraine temporarily residing in Poland under the TPD applied for and received temporary medical licenses to work in Poland, thereby filling acute shortages in the medical profession (Jankowski et al., 2023). The critical situation has also engendered innovative solutions and inter-sectoral cooperation, such as the Health4Ukraine app, created by the Polish FinTech company Epruf in partnership with humanitarian donors providing funds for Ukrainian refugee-clients to cover the costs of their medicine purchases (Health4Ukraine, 2023). Other innovative solutions may trigger systemic changes to the receiving states' health care systems in general.

9.3.3 Social and Welfare Benefits

Under the TPD mechanism, receiving countries provide access to social and welfare benefits to those registered under this category with the same conditions as its own citizens. However, each EU Member State regulates the conditions under which benefits are given, which may account for differences between national systems. In Poland, Ukrainian nationals (as well as their spouses, regardless of their nationality) registered with the temporary protection status code 'UKR', have the same access as Polish nationals to the following: family benefits, child benefits, disability benefits, social assistance funds (unemployment insurance and crisis assistance, such as psychological help), as well as financial assistance for childcare for children up to three years of age (Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej, 2022). Additionally, before 1 March, 2023, the subsistence costs of those living in publicly run refugee shelters for Ukrainian nationals with temporary protection were fully covered. After 1 March, 2023, those living in shelters may need to cover up to 75% of these costs, although this is up to the discretion of public authorities (Ukrainian in Poland, 2023). Additionally, Ukrainians under the temporary protection mechanism in Poland were eligible for a one-off payment of PLN 300 (approx. EUR 65).

According to data provided by the Polish Ministry of Family and Social Policy, between 24 February, 2022 and July, 2023, the Polish state spent approximately EUR 540 million on child benefits alone (with the program 500+) for Ukrainians under the temporary protection mechanism (TVN24, 2023). Data from OECD statistics on social benefits falls in the 'living costs' category, which includes accommodation and other financial assistance (excluding education and health care), and is expected to amount to EUR 17.2 billion in OECD countries, as estimated for a 10-month period in 2022. The highest expected costs are estimated for Poland (EUR 6.2 billion), followed by Germany (EUR 4.42 billion), and Czechia (EUR 4.42 billion) (OECD, 2022b).

9.3.4 Housing and Accommodation

Access to affordable, liveable housing has been one of the most pressing needs for Ukrainian refugees in the CEE region since the full-scale invasion. According to research conducted by the UNHCR published in September 2022, Ukrainian refugees in Poland consistently rated housing as a top challenge, along with employment and cash assistance (UNHCR, 2022c). A study by the IOM published in April 2023 still highlighted the difficulty of finding affordable long-term accommodation (IOM, n.d.-a).

In January 2023, inflation in Poland skyrocketed to 17.2% and in Hungary to 21.9%, while the consensus forecast for 2023 had been 12.7% and 18.3% respectively, far above the eurozone projection (5.6%; Polish Economic Institute, 2023ab). Resulting high energy prices and hikes in interest rates meant that there were fewer buyers on the housing market, mortgage payments increased, and competition for rentals on the private market grew. The exorbitant rental prices on the housing market, especially in big cities such as Warsaw, have been widely reported on by media outlets (e.g.,Ciobanu, (2023)). The influx of more than 1.1 million refugees from Ukraine, close to half of whom rented on the private market (UNHCR, 2022c), made this housing crisis acute. Additionally, systematic underinvestment and a dramatic shrinking of accessible social housing in the transition period of the 1990s remains a wider issue for the CEE region (Hegedüs, Horváth, Somogyi, Reháková & Sendi, 2017). As a point of comparison, the share of social housing in the CEE region hovers at around 2-3%, whilst it ranges from 14 to 20% in Western and Northern European regions (Hegedüs et al., 2017; OECD, 2022a).

Against this backdrop, societal and state responses to the inflow of refugees from Ukraine into the CEE region were undeniably unique. The first novelty was the urban nature of accommodation, largely bypassing regular asylum-seeker reception centres. This is due primarily to the nature of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), which allowed for semi-automatic residency rights and the concomitant wide-scale private hosting that spontaneously emerged as a result. It is estimated that around 18% of all refugees in Poland were hosted by private households as of September 2022 (UNHCR, 2022c), particularly through the strong social networks of Ukrainian nationals already residing in Poland. Another 44% were estimated to be renting privately (ibid.). Those living in collective accommodation, defined as assisted longer-term solutions (usually up to 12 months), ranges from 13% by some statistics (ibid.), to 35% in others (IOM, n.d.-a). As of October 2022, the Polish government estimated that 85,000 people were being housed in collective sites supported by the state, with a total of 386,000 since the beginning of the war (Kacprzak, 2022).

The public cost of supporting the housing and subsistence for refugees, in particular the running and maintenance of collective sites and subsidies for private hosts, was estimated at 4,1 billion PLN in Poland by the third quarter of 2022 (Kacprzak, 2022). Other CEE states have also provided financial support to accommodating refugees, including to private hosting households, with Czechia and Slovakia among them (OECD, 2022b). Yet by 2023, states such as Poland started limiting housing support for Ukrainian refugees. As mentioned above, as of March 2023, a new law in Poland

stipulates that Ukrainian refugees residing in publicly funded collective centres will be liable for up to 75% of their costs of accommodation. This has met with substantial criticism from civil society and migration experts, particularly because people accommodated in collective centres are amongst the most vulnerable (Jarosz & Klaus, 2023) .

A second novelty in the housing sector has been the upsurge in private enterprise support, such as Airbnb's cooperation with IOM as well as with local NGOs. By November 2022, IOM's partnership with Airbnb had led to the provision of over 120,000 'safe nights' for over 5000 beneficiaries, which cost Airbnb approximately six million USD (IOM, n.d.-a). IOM's regional response plan foresees investments into repairs and renovations of collective centres and individual apartments, ongoing support for collective accommodation, as well as partnerships with social housing agencies.

Other costs also need to be considered, such as the emergency reception centres that were set up by civil society organisations and then closed, or ones set up by municipalities in association with NGOs or INGOs. While the response to the accommodation of refugees has been exceptionally agile, there are considerable hidden costs that are difficult to measure in the ad hoc, informal system in which they developed.

9.3.5 Local Services: the Case of Kraków

In 2022, it was estimated that 40,000 new residents from Ukraine with 'UKR' Temporary Protection status settled in Kraków and the surrounding areas. Before 24 February, 2022, there had been less than a hundred registered asylum seekers in the same geographical area (Pędziwiatr, Brzozowski & Stonawski, 2021). Kraków, just under 300 km from the Ukrainian border, was one of the main hubs for the transit of Ukrainian refugees, as well as a major destination point in Poland and the CEE region. The 'refugee regime complex' (Betts, 2010) began working on a local level from the first days of the full-scale Russian invasion on Ukraine, including a reception point at the main train station, operated by an ecosystem of municipal and regional authorities, train station management, informal groupings (like the grassroots 'Platform 4' volunteer group, or the 'Soup for Ukraine' group), the Polish scouting association, the Polish Red Cross, NGOs and countless private individuals offering their services (Czerska-Shaw et al., 2022).

In Kraków, the organisation of assistance has been largely decentralised, characterised by a high degree of informality and bottom-up structures with the support and participation of public institutions and municipal and regional authorities. A loose umbrella network named the 'Open Kraków Coalition', connecting over 70 social actors (NGOs, informal groupings, church organisations, INGOs, public authorities, private individuals, and academics) became a virtual communication hub particularly in the first stage of local assistance, mainly through Whatsapp and Slack channels (Czerska-Shaw et al., 2022). Services provided by the local refugee assistance eco-

system ranged from housing, distribution points, support centres and information hubs, education, health care, registration and administrative support, to logistics and relocation coordination. In short, the local level acted a microcosm of the refugee assistance ecosystem in its full complexity.

While it is impossible to estimate the costs of the short-term emergency shelters, distribution points, support centres which were opened and closed, some examples may offer a brief look at the scale of the assistance provided. At the height of refugee arrivals in the spring of 2022, the regional and municipal authorities, who were responsible for coordinating a database of trusted sites for the accommodation of refugees (hotels, student residences, and temporary shelters such as schools, stadiums), counted 32,000 beds in their database. According to the regional authorities, by September 2022 there were around 17,000 refugees from Ukraine using the collective accommodation options accessible through the database (Pędziwiatr et al., 2021). From information provided by the spokesperson of the Lesser Poland Voivodship Office, the region spent PLN 507 million from 24 February 24, to September, 2022 on aid to Ukrainian refugees, of which PLN 215 million (41% of the total expenditure) was paid to host families (Pędziwiatr et al., 2021). The municipal government in Kraków, particularly the Social Welfare Centre, was responsible for running five collective accommodation sites housing up to 1,500 people, and the city authorities opened several stadium-style emergency shelters for newcomers, albeit for very brief period.

We should consider that the rapid inflow of refugees implied a huge burden on the local educational services. From 24 February to October, 2022 almost 7,000 refugee children were enrolled in the public education system, including almost 2,000 in pre-schools and 4,000 in primary schools. Additionally, 98 preparatory classes were created in 58 schools in Kraków, providing educational services for 1,835 students. As for the 2022-2023 school year, the number of refugee children enrolled was smaller: slightly over six thousand, as some of the families decided to return home or migrate to other countries (Municipality of Kraków, 2023).

The bulk of the assistance in the first months of the war came in the form of the distribution of goods, such as clothing, off-the-counter medications, and household supplies, sometimes together with legal and psychological support. It is important to underscore the pivotal role of Ukrainian-led organisations in the provision of this support, along with the thousands of volunteers who helped in the daily running of reception and support centres. A case in point is the ‘Live in Kraków’ or ‘R3 Aid Point’ reception centre, operated jointly by two Ukrainian-led organisations, UA in Kraków and Zustricz, in conjunction with Salam Lab, with the support of the Jewish Community Centre, Internationaler Bund Polska, the Szlachetna Paczka organisation and the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre. The reception point gave shelter and assistance to over 3500 people and replied to over 17,000 phone calls for assistance between 24 February and May 2022, aided by over 600 volunteers and 30 employees (Salam Lab, 2023; UA in Krakow, 2023). During the first seven months of functioning, the ‘Goodwill Wardrobe’ (Szafa Dobra), operated by the NGO Internationaler Bund Polska, served a total of 80,000 people, a daily average of 480 (Otwarty Kraków, 2022). The Warehouse operated by Internationaler Bund Polska at Daszyńskiego Street

in Kraków provided refugees with basic food products and cosmetics: throughout 2022, more than 600,000 items were donated to 58,000 beneficiaries. Information points were located across the city, run in part by the municipality, such as the main registration point opened in Tauron Arena, the city's major mass event venue, or at the Information Point for Foreigners, a publicly-run project operated by Internationaler Bund Polska. The Information Point had served 18,000 people within 12 months (Internationaler Bund Polska, 2022). Local self-government support, international grants as well as partnerships with international non-governmental organisations have been key to the functioning of these centres.

9.3.6 Children and Schooling

In 2020, 19.6% of the Ukrainian population was 18 years old or younger, and 30.3% of households had one or more children under six years (State Statistic Service of Ukraine, 2021, p. 32).

Children either lived with their families or in some form of institutional care. In Ukraine, an extremely high number and proportion of children live in residential institutions (European Commission, 2022b, p. 13) A 10-year plan for 'deinstitutionalisation' was drawn up in 2007 and another in 2017, but not leading to much success. Contrary to the popular belief that orphans live in institutions, this is not the case in Ukraine, as about 90% of children living in institutions have at least one parent with parental rights who were unable to adequately care for their children due to the lack of financial resources or other family problems. Hope and Homes for Children, an international charity, published a comprehensive study of the Ukrainian child protection system based on qualitative and quantitative data collected in 2015-2016 (Hope and Homes for Children, 2023). According to the study, there were 99,915 children in institutional care in 663 children's homes in Ukraine, based on the data provided by the heads of the institutions, but only 9,291 children (9.3%) were orphans or deprived of parental care. The remaining 90,624 were placed in institutions by their parents or guardians mainly because of household poverty or other problems in the family.

As already highlighted above, the majority of Ukrainian refugees are women and children. According to a recent report by EUROCHILD, over 5.6 million children have been displaced since the war began. "While statistics are not comprehensive, there are significant numbers of children deprived of parental care, including unaccompanied and separated children, children who may have been trafficked, and Roma and stateless children, as well as groups of children evacuated from institutional care settings" (EUROCHILD, 2023).

The turmoil of the war has created a particularly precarious situation for displaced children, children living in institutions, and children with disabilities (UNICEF, 2023c).

Children fleeing Ukraine arrived in the host countries with relatives (mostly mothers) or unaccompanied. Especially in the first months of the war, emergency

reception centres were set up, in several of which basic living conditions were lacking. Men, women, the elderly, and children were housed in cramped quarters.

In the case of unaccompanied children, identification is often challenging for authorities, increasing the risk of children remaining in emergency centres for an extended period or being trafficked and left without sufficient protection.

National child protection systems bear responsibility for the care of unaccompanied children separated from their families. However, national legal provisions, forms of care, guardianship, and custody responsibilities vary. The joint discussion paper by the UNICEF, EUROCHILD, and Child Circle, published in May 2022 (UNICEF, 2022), highlights the potential conflict and lack of consensus on the applicability of different legal instruments.

As noted above, the TPD lists, among other things, the rights of people enjoying temporary protection. The most important rights in relation to children are getting residence permits, access to suitable housing, social protection, medical care, education, and family reunification (European Commission, 2022a).

However, in several countries, there is a lack of capacity of service providers and availability of legal guardians. In addition, adjusting legal instruments to take in unaccompanied refugee children could be a time-consuming process.

To reduce the risks to which children in institutions are exposed, Ukrainian authorities decided to send 39,000 children home and make local authorities responsible for monitoring their situation. However, authorities do not always have the appropriate resources and personnel to carry out this task. Due to the high threat, authorities have repeatedly ordered the evacuation of groups of children and caregivers in groups several times, asking them to stay together abroad. The Ukrainian government had started negotiations with 23 European governments that accept Ukrainian children from residential care, but without much success, at least until March 2023, as only Poland and Lithuania responded positively (Human Rights Council, 2023b).

International law treaties prohibit the forcible transfer of children between countries, but evidence is mounting that Russia is setting up a child-deportation program. It is almost impossible to identify the exact number of children affected: data published in various announcements and in the press range between wide extremes, and there are spectacular differences between Ukrainian and Russian figures. Nevertheless, according to the official reports of the Ukrainian authorities as of 31 July 2023, 19,546 children had been deported from Ukraine to Russia since 24 February 2022, but these were only the officially documented cases, when a parent, a caretaker or a witness reported it to the National Information Bureau of Ukraine (Pohorilov, 2022).

In March 2023 the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for the ‘unlawful transfer’ of people (including children) from Ukrainian Russian-occupied territories into Russia and Russian-annexed Crimea (The Economist, 2023b). Researchers at Yale University published a report (Yale School of Public Health, 2023) about this in February 2023. Findings were based on the analysis of social media platforms, government announcements, local media reports, videos on camp websites, and satellite images. A network of 43 Russian facilities was uncovered where Ukrainian children had been moved since the beginning of the war. According to the researchers, at least 6,000 children had been transferred to those camps, but the

figure is probably far underestimated. Among them, there were children with families, children considered orphans, children from institutions and children without a clear status. Many of the facilities are in Crimea and southern Russia, close to Ukraine but some others are far from the border.

The Yale study states that Russian officials would introduce the facilities as recreational camps to gain parents' consent. Parents and guardians may accept the offer because they wish to send their children out of the war zones, and in addition feel the pressure from occupying forces. Some children do return, but the camps may refuse to send them home citing 'safety problems'. The OHCHR reported that some children were sent to summer camps in the Russian Federation with the consent of their parents but were not returned home at the end of the vacation or were delayed (Human Rights Council, 2023a).

The camps present a Russia-centric worldview to their young inmates. 'Re-education' may contribute to the Kremlin's propaganda campaign. Russian officials (many of whom openly 'celebrate' their participation in the transfers and may possibly see the Russian invasion as a liberation of Ukrainians from a Western-backed fascist regime) say that many of the children are orphans – which Ukraine denies – and that they will receive proper care in Russian families.

Schools, kindergartens, and other educational institutions serve not only to cater for education and develop children's skills, but also to provide friendship, entertainment, and sports, and are the sites of secondary socialisation. When life in educational institutions becomes impossible, not only education but the entire process of socialisation is interrupted, which is especially important for children with disabilities or from disadvantaged families. The disruption of the education system has long-term effects on children's personal lives and chances in adulthood and, in addition, may lead to the underdevelopment of human resources for the economy. As Afshan Khan, the UNICEF's Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia formulated at the 2023 International Day of Education: "There is no pause button. It is not an option to simply postpone children's education and come back to it once other priorities have been addressed, without risking the future of an entire generation" (UNICEF, 2023a).

The Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science reported that by February 2023, 441 educational institutions had been destroyed and 3,121 damaged, burdening the education of 5.3 million children, in addition to the two lost years caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (EUROCHILD, 2023).

Ukrainian education authorities have organised online learning opportunities to help not only children living in Ukraine but also refugee children. Unfortunately, military attacks and destruction of info-communication infrastructure have been blocking online education solutions, leaving millions of children without education. Lower family incomes, poverty, and the lack of appropriate electronic devices and Internet access also hinder children's participation in online learning. Ukrainian government agencies, UNICEF, the EU, and other official and charity organisations have helped by providing laptops and tablets (UNICEF, 2023b).

Adequate education for refugee children is extremely important but rather complicated to provide. According to UNICEF estimates, two-thirds of refugee children

did not participate in education in their host country. According to the UNHCR's April 2023 report on the situation in Hungary, Poland, Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia, 44% of children were not formally enrolled at a school. The main reasons are language barriers, the hope of soon returning to their home country, differences in curricula and trying to use online education services from Ukraine. In several cases, children have participated in both Ukrainian online courses and the host country's face-to-face classes because attendance is mandatory for children of a certain age (UNHCR, 2023a).

In addition, guidelines for education in the occupied territories have changed significantly. "Restrictions on the exercise of the right to freedom of expression particularly affected teachers in Crimea. They were pressured to actively endorse the Russian armed attack on Ukraine, to cultivate a positive attitude among schoolchildren towards the military operations against Ukraine, and to generally refrain from criticizing the Russian authorities. Teaching staff who refused to follow these guidelines faced retaliation and sanctions" (United Nations Human Rights Office, 2023).

From the perspective of CEE countries, the massive influx of children resulted in an increased pressure on public education, including preschools, primary and secondary schools. Most young children were enrolled in schools poorly prepared for multicultural education. As seen in this interview with a war refugee from Nowy Sacz (city in Southern Poland):

"Only two schools are known to employ assistants to teach Ukrainian children. But these were not full assistants, but rather an attempt to hire Ukrainian teachers. They conducted extra classes in schools. During extracurricular activities. But there were no teaching assistants. The local authorities decided not to organize preparatory, integration classes, so that children could be faster included in the general educational process. Theoretically, there is such a program, but it does not work here." (Independent Research Team, 2023, interview with a war refugee from Ukraine)

Yet, due to the language and cultural similarity between Poles and Ukrainians, young refugee children usually integrated quite well in Polish schools:

"And these children are always with us, their parents assist them, so they integrate very well. Of course, they also have additional Polish language classes here several times a week, so they make up for it (...) they are getting better and better at learning. You know, they have no problems with math. Well, (some) with Polish, but I am already in constant cooperation with their parents. I say that they should read as much as possible in Polish, that they should try to speak Polish, considering that they simply want to stay here in Poland, continue their studies here from September. Parents have registered themselves here, they are very happy, so I am happy that children can stay here."(Independent Research Team, 2023, interview with a teacher of primary education)

Yet, Ukrainian teenagers' position is truly problematic. Many are still enrolled in online teaching conducted from Ukraine, which means that they do not socialise much with their Polish peers:

"There is a problem with teenagers. Many of them did not start their education in a Polish school because they studied online in Ukrainian school. Those who went to a Polish school were downgraded and [do not] feel comfortable. In life outside school, mom works hard, dad is away, and growing up is very hard. Children gather in large groups and go out all night. Those children who do not want to study make a negative impact on those who study with Ukrainian children. These children walk around the city like a herd." (Independent Research Team, 2023, interview with Ukrainian economic migrant)

This problem is likely to become much more pronounced in the future if the war does not end in the upcoming months, as these teenagers might be socially marginalised, with limited possibilities of further education (including also tertiary level) in Poland.

Since the invasion of Ukraine, there have been massive violations of children's rights, including guarantees of protection of children against all forms of physical or psychological violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation by caregivers, the right to identity, access to housing, medical and social services, and education, as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. An entire generation of Ukrainian youths is deprived of a peaceful childhood. Their visible and invisible physical and mental injuries will have long-term effects on their adulthood and the future of Ukrainian society.

9.4 Economic Benefits

In this section potential or already observed benefits of the Ukrainian refugee wave are discussed, focusing on Poland where the number of Ukrainian refugees is the highest. The world 'benefits' may sound cynical in this dire war situation, but for the sake of accuracy we should consider them as well. Moral judgment is made more complicated by the fact that a disadvantage for some refugees may be advantageous from the hosts' point of view. There are some (sometimes mutual) benefits, but their legality or ethics may be questioned, while fortunately there are positive examples in all respects. The benefits may appear in several ways and forms: local companies may have access to skilled workers, refugees may start businesses independently or in association with locals, along with the refugees capital may flow into the country, consumption by refugees may generate demand for local products and services, thus, local people may be both suppliers and consumers of local and international support programs, and so on. It is very difficult to show the exact size of benefits, but there are many practical examples of their appearance. Some of them are presented below. Most examples cited in this section are related to work and employment, a topic discussed in detail in Chapter 8. Situations of decision-making and action are not easy for those involved, the utilisation of possible benefits may be hindered by several factors. The economic situation in the major countries receiving Ukrainian refugees in 2021, the year before the war started in February 2022, was mostly positive: the EU's economy was rebounding from the COVID-19 crisis and most CEE economies

and the Baltic States showed healthy economic growth, while unemployment rates were relatively low (Table 9.7).

Table 9.7: Economic growth and unemployment in CEE countries (2021)
Data: World Bank (2023)

Coutry	GDP growth rate 2021 (%)	Unemployment rate 2021 (%)
Austria	4.6	6.5
Bulgaria	7.6	5.3
Czechia	3.6	2.8
Estonia	8.0	6.2
Hungary	7.2	4.1
Latvia	4.1	7.5
Lithuania	6.0	7.1
Poland	6.8	3.4
Romania	5.8	5.6
Slovakia	4.9	6.9
Slovenia	8.2	4.7

Another important characteristic of the CEE countries was the relatively large population of Ukrainian immigrants who arrived mostly as economic migrants.[2]. Before 2022, the largest Ukrainian diaspora was located in Poland, followed by Czechia, Romania, Latvia and Hungary (Table 9.8.) These pre-war immigrants were relatively well integrated into the host countries' societies and economy.

A representative survey carried out just before the Russian invasion for the FUME H2020 project (November 2021-January 2022) revealed that Ukrainian immigrants in Poland were predominantly young males (59%), relatively young individuals (the 18-29 age group comprised 37.7% of respondents, whilst the 30-39 group constituted an additional 31.8%), were employed full-time (78.2%), were satisfied with their economic situation (89.4%), and assessed their work-qualification match positively (64.7%). Moreover, many of them considered Poland as their 'new home' (87.8%), and most of them expressed a willingness to permanently stay in Poland (81%, Cf. Pędziwiatr, Brzozowski and Nahorniuk (2022)).

Naturally, many people changed their plans because of the outbreak of the full-scale war with Russia. Exact numbers are unknown, but it is estimated that about 200 to 300 thousand Ukrainian males returned from Poland to fight for their home country. Yet, a vast majority has remained, opting for family reunification: they simply brought their partners, children and even distant family members to Poland. On the other hand,

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[2] Although, as mentioned before, many of these individuals had been internally displaced in Ukraine due to military conflict with Russia from 2014 onwards.

Table 9.8: Pre-war Ukrainian immigrant population in CEE countries
Data: FUME (2023)

Country	Ukrainian population (head)	Year
Austria	16,500	2021
Bulgaria	7,500	2019
Czechia	165,000	2020
Estonia	2,191	2020
Hungary	27,380	2021
Latvia	31,745	2021
Lithuania	6,224	2021
Poland	1,300,000	2020
Romania	37,600	2019
Slovakia	17,013	2021
Slovenia	222	2021

there were other types of forced migrants as well: displaced persons who fled the war at home and had few or no social contacts in Poland. As a result of this rapid inflow of forced migrants, the Ukrainian population in Poland reached 2.1 to 2.3 million persons by the end of 2022, including 1.1 to 1.2 million Ukrainians who arrived before 24 February 2022 (mostly economic migrants, but also internally displaced persons from Crimea and Donbas) and one to 1.1 million war refugees (Duszczyk, Górny, Kaczmarczyk & Kubisiak, 2023). In this second sub-population there were mostly mothers with children, sometimes accompanied by elderly parents.[3]

A survey carried out jointly in Vienna (Austria) and Kraków (Poland) between April and June 2022 reveals the phenomenon of refugees' self-selection, outlined at the beginning of this chapter: Vienna as a more distant location attracted a higher proportion of highly skilled individuals than Kraków. As for refugees surveyed in Vienna, 83% had tertiary education, and in Ukraine 61.5% performed skilled occupations,[4] whereas in Kraków this share was 66% and 45,2% respectively (Kohlenberger et al., 2022). Consequently, the potential economic benefits stemming from a rapid inflow of Ukrainian refugees was not equally distributed in the EU: while some countries, such as Poland, Romania or Slovakia accepted forced migrants mostly due to humanitarian reasons, in the case of Western European countries humanitarian motivations were mixed with economic ones. For instance, even right-wing populist parties in Nordic countries welcomed Ukrainian refugees, and Ukrainians were

[3] It is important to mention that Ukrainian males aged 18-60 are not allowed to leave Ukrainian territory – some exceptions apply for fathers of 3+ children, single fathers, males with disability or fathers of children with disabilities.

[4] ISCO categories 1, 2 and 3 (managers, professionals, technicians, associate professionals).

"granted the right to work and participate in the receiving societies without having to endure year-long asylum processes" (Näre, Abdelhady & Irastorza, 2022).

Table 9.9: Ukrainian refugee population in Poland (July 2023)
Data: Gov.pl (2023)

Age	Male (head)	Female (head)	% Female
0-4	37,593	36,217	49.1%
5-9	60,758	59,310	49.4%
10-14	65,189	64,386	49.7%
15-18	48,413	42,847	47.0%
19-24	24,707	52,777	68.1%
25-34	31,517	95,680	75.2%
35-44	36,222	125,17	77.6%
45-54	16,637	72,600	81.4%
55-64	10,841	43,053	79.9%
65+	9,853	33,402	77.2%
Total	341,730	625,44	64.7%

When it comes to labour market issues,[5] it is important to mention that Ukrainian females who arrived in Poland after 24 February, 2022 (Table 9.9) frequently experience 'brain waste', i.e. they are usually forced to accept jobs below their qualifications. In spite of the fact that Polish and Ukrainian are similar, language competences are the main obstacles in the labour market, as illustrated by the following interview excerpt:

"Well, there was no choice here, I mean conversations with these people – there was not choice of the jobs they would like, but rather we tried to tell what jobs they could do. Bearing in mind some kind of limitations related to the language barrier. Paradoxically, it was easier for people without professional qualifications or those who performed those professions that were scarce on the labour market.." (Independent Research Team, 2023, interview with a worker in the Public Employment Service)

In this aspect, the Ukrainian refugees who were in highly skilled occupations at home were in a disadvantaged position in the host country:

"A big problem for Ukrainians is the lack of jobs corresponding to their level of education and profession. (. . .) It is usually difficult for Ukrainians to find a job. Usually, it is women with higher education that are not ready to work in a much lower position." (Independent Research Team, 2023, interview with a war refugee from Ukraine)

[5] For a more detailed analysis of the labour market see Chapter 8.

For instance, a worker from public employment service describes the problem of a Ukrainian young female physician:

“. . . a client says that she graduated with honours, has a specialisation at the age of 27, is a general surgeon and is already experienced ... and nobody wants her! And now we... I’m thinking to myself, what’s the problem. We call the hospital and only when we hear that the health service needs such specialists... She will probably be quickly absorbed by this market. It turns out that it’s not that simple... The first barrier is language. Above all. She must have a qualification, knowledge of the language, and later, when it comes to the recognition of degrees ... There was also a matter ... Well, in fact, imagine that ... Well, we felt very sorry for this person ... And we it worked out so that she went on an internship... Because wanted to do anything. (. . .) She was happy that she got such an internship offer from us. And she went into production... You could say she did... She sorted fruit. And what’s even better, she proved herself in this and he later stayed at work after this internship.” (Independent Research Team, 2023, interview with a worker in the Public Employment Service)

Naturally, this story does not imply that all Ukrainian doctors who come as refugees are bound to have the same fate. Yet, there are severe obstacles on the way: poor command of language skills, the procedure of diploma recognition (‘nostrification’), work required at a Polish hospital under an experienced doctor’s supervision, and finally the comprehensive medical exam (‘Lekarski Egzamin Końcowy’ in Polish), a public exam for physicians who wish to conduct an independent medical practice. These issues are manageable, but many refugees do not know whether they want to stay in Poland for long, although they lack financial resources and need some source of regular income.

Another issue is the precarity of work and the question of legality. Ukrainian refugees in Poland and other CEE countries are legally under the temporary protection regime, which implies that they have a legal status for residence until March 2024 (which might be prolonged in the future), and the full right to take any form of employment. Nevertheless, many females are in disadvantaged position on the labour market not only due to a qualification mismatch, but also because of their family/childcare obligations. Thus, they often take part-time employment only, which in turn favours semi-legal employment and – in some instances – also the exploitations of workers’ rights:

“Now it’s very hard to work, it’s hard in our district. First of all, a lot of work is done here without contracts, they don’t want to give them, employers, Poles don’t want to give them. (...) I don’t know why they don’t pay them. They don’t want to pay taxes. He kept the Ukrainian woman for two or three weeks, and goodbye. (. . .) Why did they work here? Because they knew that they had to support themselves, because of the children, these little ones.” (Independent Research Team, 2023, interview with a Ukrainian economic migrant)

Concerning the positive effects of the recent inflow of refugees, one definite advantage is that they can launch ventures. According to the aforementioned survey on Ukrainian refugees in Kraków, around 14% of respondents had been self-employed in Ukraine, and many of them expressed their willingness to start a business in Poland. This is a very positive phenomenon, as before the war the level of self-employment

among Ukrainian immigrants was very low (3.6%), even compared with other foreigners in Poland (10.4%, Cf. Pędziwiatr et al. (2021)).

There are at least three factors that boost businesses creation. First, the legal framework has been amended: just like other foreign citizens, before 24 February 2022, only under certain conditions (for instance when being simultaneously a student of a local tertiary education institution) were Ukrainians in Poland allowed to be self-employed. This had been a requirement that greatly hindered business activity.[6] Since March 2022, by implementing a special law on Ukrainian refugees, self-employment has been allowed without any restrictions. Second, the large Ukrainian diaspora in Poland and smaller ones in Czechia, Romania and Slovakia provide a fertile ecosystem for the development of Ukrainian enterprises that may serve Ukrainian co-nationals. Finally, there is also a push factor towards entrepreneurship: many female refugees prefer to start a business to avoid working below their formal qualifications. In such cases, entrepreneurship could serve as a way to create better employment conditions for themselves. It is not surprising that recently the number of refugee enterprises has been growing in Poland: most of them are active in the field of services, including hairdressing and fitness training. As one of our respondents said:

“Talking about Ukrainian business in Nowy Sacz, there is a pizzeria, a massage parlour and a hairdresser. Many Ukrainians conduct unregistered activities within the limits of the tax-free amount.” (Independent Research Team, 2023, interview with a Ukrainian economic migrant)

Indeed, numerous companies are in the early stages of their development, and Polish law allows unregistered small-scale business activity, provided monthly sales do not exceed 2,700 PLN (ca. EUR 450). In this case, formalities are minimal: accounting is simple, and taxes are paid according to a yearly tax declaration. Yet, based on our interviews with refugee entrepreneurs, even such formalities are not pursued by many small-scale or even ‘ad hoc’ entrepreneurs: for instance, many female refugees bake Ukrainian cakes and sell them online, promoting their products through their social networks. The activity is illegal, but the income is marginal, mostly just supplementing other earnings.

According to the analysis of the Polish Economic Institute, in the first nine months of 2022, 14,000 new ventures were established by Ukrainian refugees, most of whom registered their business as sole proprietors. This meant about 3,600 new companies and more than ten thousand sole proprietorships, plus significant Ukrainian capital investment in international companies (Notes from Poland, 2023).

Finally, we should address the problem of economic inactivity, which affects many refugees. This is not only due to the war trauma, but also to the traditional family role models in the home country. According to a survey conducted among the refugee population in Kraków between April and June 2022, prior to the Russian aggression, only 53% of female respondents had participated actively in the Ukrainian labour

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[6] This was also connected to the legal framework of residence permits. Foreigners from third countries (i.e. outside the EU) could launch businesses, but only in the form of limited companies. However, this type of firm needed to exhibit a relatively high (taxed) income in order to provide legitimacy for the residence permit of a foreigner, which in the case of small firms in the early phases of development was extremely difficult.

market (Pędziwiatr et al., 2022). In many Ukrainian families, the husband earns the money, and the wife stays at home with the children and runs the household. At the moment of the survey, 20% of the females surveyed claimed that their plan for the nearest future was to wait for the war to end, while covering their daily expenses from savings, transfers from Ukraine and social benefits. The exact size of savings and transfers is unknown, moreover it is difficult to predict how safely they will arrive and how long they will last, but that money is spent in Poland where it increases demand for products and services. It is important to add that in Poland the social benefits granted to Ukrainian refugees are relatively modest: the monthly allowance after each child is PLN 500+ (EUR 110), supplemented by and additional three-month allowance from the UNHCR (maximum USD 600 per family), plus free accommodation in refugee shelters and hostels for the first months of stay (Pędziwiatr et al., 2022).

Case study: influx of Russians to Georgia

The special problems of refugees, the complexity and contradictions of the economic, social and political situations are well illustrated by the example of Georgia.

In the middle of February 2023 (one year after the war in Ukraine had started) an International Monetary Fund (IMF) team visited Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, a country with 3.7 million inhabitants, to discuss with government officials recent economic and financial developments and reform ideas. The end-of-mission press releases IMF (2023) reported that in 2022 the country's economic growth was strong at around 10%. That high figure reflected adverse spillovers from the war between Russia and Ukraine, a phenomenon influenced by such factors as growth in war-related migrant and financial inflows, buoyant tourism, and a rise in transit trade through the Caucasus country. These factors supported the local currency called Lari, boosted fiscal revenues, and narrowed the current account deficit. In 2023 growth is expected to drop to around 4%.

The UNHCR Operational Data Portal reported 27,000 refugees from Ukraine at the end of July 2023 (UNHCR, 2023b). 1,145 applied for asylum or similar national protection schemes. Many had been forcibly deported by the Russian armed forces that were occupying territories in eastern Ukraine, did not have travel documents but received moral and material support from local people. For a period of three months, Ukrainians fleeing the war received social assistance from the Georgian government: 45 Lari (around $16) per person per month with an additional one-time payment of 300 Lari (approximately $108) per family. Accommodation was provided by the local authorities from July 2022 onwards as part of a special assistance program for Ukrainian refugees (Khasaia, 2023).

When the war broke out, refugees did not come to Georgia only from Ukraine: the invasion prompted tens of thousands, mainly middle-class Russians to leave their increasingly isolated homeland. Many Russian citizens went to countries where visas were not required, such as Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Georgia. Turkey was a top destination not only because of its visa-free regime but also because of its large

Russian-speaking community. The exact number of Russian émigrés is unknown, but by some estimates at the beginning of the war it was approx. 200,000 (Najibullah, 2022). According to official data, about 1.5 million Russian citizens crossed the Russia-Georgia border in the first year of the war but reportedly many have left (Bolkvadze, 2023). The number of those who have stayed is not known, but their presence is evident. The fast rise of one-way airline tickets was a good indicator of people's movement.

The influx is worrying many Georgians. Georgia's position as a destination is unique: it is a post-Soviet country, but has introduced a series of economic and democratic reforms aimed at joining the European Union and NATO, an orientation which had worsened relations with Russia, a process leading to a war in 2008 and the Russian occupation of a part of the country. Many of its citizens, especially the older generation are connected to the Soviet regime, while many others, especially the young have strong pro-European sentiments. The government is trying to manoeuvre between the two conflicting orientations. Many Georgians watched the arrival of Russians with concern and anger, thinking that it could be the prelude to an invasion.

In the same way as their reception, Russians' motivations were fairly mixed. Some left their country in protest, others because of persecution, and many were afraid of the consequences of the international sanctions against Russia. It is highly probable that many of them are well-educated freelancers or 'digital nomads' who can set up shop anywhere with Internet access.

The Russian mass exodus caused an economic shock in Georgia. Locals and cab drivers sold bicycles and seats in cars to the escaping crowds. Prices of accommodation in Tbilisi increased to the extent that it was difficult to find a home or rent a room. The influx of Russian migrants, businesspeople and tourists has in fact mobilised some sectors of the Georgian economy and helped balance the economic pressures generated by the war. At the same time, many refugees struggle for work or have to accept jobs and wages below their skill level. Most Georgians speak or at least understand Russian but a growing number of them refuse to speak it. As a consequence, many Russians have started to build their own communities, e.g., by opening their restaurants and cafés (Harlan, 2022). The average Russian is wealthier than the average Georgian, which explains the economic impact of the influx of foreign money, as observed by the IMF delegation referred to above.

9.5 The Main Policy Dilemma: Integration or Returning Home?

What are the general lessons to be learnt and suggestions regarding the management of the refugee crisis? Answering this question is a bold undertaking for several reasons. On the one hand, early 2024, when this chapter was finalised, the Russian-Ukrainian war had not yet ended, and there were no signs of any kind of peace or agreement, so the refugee problem was still unresolved. On the other hand, the case of Ukrainian refugees cannot be discussed in complete isolation: apart from Ukrainians, members of other ethnic groups have been emerging in large numbers in many countries of the

world. Considering these facts, following a short summary of the situation, we can only attempt to formulate some general requirements. We conclude the chapter with a sectoral case study, which shows how the fate and opportunities of refugees are influenced by business organisations and their resilience.

The war in Ukraine has generated the largest and fastest flow of refugees since the end of the Cold War. At the beginning of 2024, conditions were far from being ripe for a negotiated settlement. Instead, the most likely outcome was a bloody stalemate.

According to data collected and published regularly by the UNHCR, in the first year of the war, more than eight million people have been displaced from Ukraine into other countries. This extremely large number corresponds to about one fifth of the Ukrainian population. Border crossing is frequent and intensive, many displaced persons are staying abroad while many others have returned home or commute between home and other countries. Data are often patchy and are likely to underestimate the true number of people affected. Anyway, as shown in Table 9.6 and Figure 9.1, it appears that the burden of hosting and supporting refugees is distributed unevenly and unfairly. Europe hosts more refugees now than any other region, and it is possible that forced displacement will be a fundamental challenge in many parts of the world in the 21st century. Europe as a whole cannot simply free ride on the generosity of some countries within it (Betts, 2022).

The progress of the war is unpredictable. However, more than two years after the immediate emergency situation caused by the military invasion, refugees, hosting governments, international support organisations and other stakeholders must think long term and compare their options. However, solving dilemmas and making long-term decisions is not easy in the fog of war.

In the first half of 2023, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), a UN agency that provides advice and services to migrants and governments, conducted a series of surveys on the refugees' status, needs and intentions in some countries (see e.g., IOM, 2023 on Hungary, or IOM, n.d.-b). Although the study samples were small, the uncertainty of the refugees' plans is clear from the interviews. Humanly, it is completely understandable that many people do not want to return to war zones, but try to find a new homeland, but these intentions may quickly change if there is a turn in the course of the war, and there is a good chance of lasting peace and the reconstruction of their country.

The biggest dilemma for refugees is whether to build a new life in a foreign county and stay there, or to try to return home as soon as possible. The same question from the perspective of the host countries is whether to invest in the long-term integration of displaced persons or to provide only temporary protection, and help (and motivate) the refugees to return home. Ukrainian refugees are frequently surveyed and interviewed (see e. g. The Economist, 2023a) and it is obvious that many of them hope to go back, but it is impossible to predict when and how. Long term integration is expensive and arduous for both sides, and while it may be beneficial for the labour market of the host countries, it will destroy Ukraine's demographics and the country may lose a generation of young women with children and a major part of its workforce that is vital for the country's economic reconstruction and development.

It is absolutely understandable that in this situation many displaced persons feel to be caught between two basic options and two different worlds: they are unable to return home now or in the near future but are averse to building a new life in an unfamiliar environment. Calculations change over time as the war proceeds, and people are accustomed to new conditions, they adapt and learn, build contacts, or try to live double lives.

Beyond the peculiarities of the Ukrainian refugee situation, this cruel war raging at the borders of the EU, the dimensions of forced displacement, and the whole new reality have important implications for the EU's refugee policy: although it is impossible to predict the future of the war in Ukraine, the organisation must develop the capacity to receive large numbers of refugees and allocate the related costs and burden fairly, taking into account the differences between refugee groups.

The EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum, adopted by the European Commission in September 2020, declares that no Member State should shoulder a disproportionate responsibility and that all Member States should contribute to solidarity on a constant basis (European Commission, 2023b). The uncontrolled arrival of migrants in 2015 exposed the weaknesses of the so-called Dublin System that allocates primary responsibility for refugees and asylum seekers to the first country they arrive in. In 2016, the European Parliament opened negotiations about replacing the criterion of first entry with an allocation system where the applicant would be allowed to choose to be allocated to some Member States with the fewest applications. After unsuccessful negotiations the process of introducing a new system was stalled, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia blocked the reform (Betts, 2022).

At the start of the war in Ukraine, the EU temporarily provided a limited form of sanctuary allowing Ukrainian refugees to stay for at least three years. The new situation caused by the war, and the present acts of solidarity and humanitarian aid may provide a special opportunity for the EU to introduce fairer refugee regulations and its Members States to reconsider their position, while newly arriving refugee groups and their diasporas can lobby for more progressive solutions. Nevertheless, encouraging member countries to embrace a universal, non-discriminatory and cordial approach to refugees is a real challenge.

Reforming the EU's refugee system is not easy because of the obvious discrepancy in the treatment of refugee groups arriving from different regions, countries, ethnic, and religious background. Ukrainian refugees received a warm welcome in Poland and other European countries, but unlike the way African and Asian refugees have been received in recent years. When people speak about their experiences with Ukrainian refugees we frequently hear or read that 'they are European and civilised', 'they are white and Christian', 'they pray like us', 'they are middle class', and that 'they are dressed like us'. Psychologists know this phenomenon well and call it the 'racial-empathy gap', and 'identity economics' may also provide some explanations (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000). Cultural proximity and social cohesion between refugees and host communities are important factors in accepting and supporting refugees, but it is very difficult to separate natural human solidarity and neighbourhood help based on cultural proximity from nationalism, chauvinism and racism (Bayoumi, 2022).

Supporting refugees from allied countries may also feel comfortable especially when the leaders of a country provide moral clarity and guidance for the dilemmas.

The European response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis has been cordial and generous so far, but that might change if governments do not manage well the reception and integration of refugees, and disillusionment and fatigue take over. There is a real danger that the governments of slowing economies may fail to provide refugees jobs, housing and services. As a result, solidarity may exhaust itself and generate a backlash. In the recent past, Europe has seen instances of this phenomenon.

Humanitarian aid based on local people's willingness to help refugees may be essential in an emergency situation, but it may become problematic as economic, social and political costs are growing, if 'emergency' endures over a longer period or indefinitely. As refugee numbers grow, increasing stress is placed on healthcare, schooling, transport and other public services, more jobs are displaced, and social tensions may increase. The political situation in Europe and the U.S. is so sensitive now that even a minor shift in public mood may cause a landslide. Advocating ethically 'ideal' solutions which ignore the social and political reality and lack the support of main stakeholders may only increase the tension and drive the situation to a tipping point. The issue of migration obviously dominates politics, and people may easily put forcibly displaced refugees and economic migrants in one basket. In May 2023, the Polish Economic Institute reported that in Poland and elsewhere in the region the social acceptance of receiving and supporting Ukrainian refugees was still high, although decreasing over time, and Poland and Hungary were among the countries where the drop was the highest (Polish Economic Institute, 2023aa).

The ideal solution for migration problems in general and the Ukrainian refugee crisis in particular would be to address the underlying causes. If this does not work, sustainable long-term solutions must be found. The basic requirements of sustainability are that the model used should maintain political support at local, national, and international levels, and should be able to function at scale and endure over time (Betts, 2021, p. 6). An ideal model aids displaced people in helping themselves, provides opportunities for refugees to utilise their own capabilities and contribute to the local economy, considers the long-term interests of the country the refugees arrive from, and fulfil general ethical obligations. Providing protection, shelter, services, and jobs for refugees is expensive and requires massive investments. If political support is needed, investments should benefit both refugees, and importantly, host communities. Such 'ideal solutions' are easy to imagine but extremely difficult to implement. Literature sources are not of much help because of the absence of rigorous and interdisciplinary research on the economics of refugees, especially on what appears to work well and what does not.

Case study: the Ukrainian IT industry

The arrival of war shocked organisations, even the most prepared ones, but many of them adapted fast to the new reality. Obviously, technical, organisational and mental adaptation was needed. New workspaces had to be set up quickly equipped with

generators and satellite internet when the Russian army started to attack Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Large numbers of employees had to be relocated, displaced persons needed work equipment, financial support, and various forms of personal help. Organisational resilience was a key issue, business recovery and continuity plans, kept in hidden drawers for a long time, had to be dusted off and implemented. People had to learn to work from anywhere, living with their children and the elderly. Managers had to learn new human skills e.g., treating burned-out workers, providing mental support, or simply listening to colleagues with empathy.

The war highlighted the importance of the tech sector and its potential role in such emergency situations. Coders and engineers of IT companies using distributed cloud-based systems can work anywhere at home or abroad where internet is available, while many 'physical' industries were disrupted by war damages. The Ukrainian technology sector grew by 36% in exports in 2021 (IT Ukraine Report, 2021), and the growth trend seems stable. It employs about 300 thousand professionals and generates more than 4% of Ukraine's GDP. Many large global tech companies have built centres of outsourced services, development and research organisations in the country, but it also has a vivid startup ecosystem with some high-flying unicorns. The largest foreign customer is the United States. Ukraine is one of the largest exporters of IT services in Europe, maintaining constant growth despite the Russian invasion. Thanks to high-quality formal and informal education and personal motivation the Ukrainian IT talent pool is truly unique.

There are about 5000 IT companies in Ukraine. According to the report cited above, most ventures provide services in fintech, banking and e-commerce. The number of professionals working on cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence, machine learning, blockchain and robotics is growing continuously.

For Ukrainian IT professionals, remote work was common long before the COVID-19 pandemic. By 2021, the large majority of companies had decided to switch completely to a hybrid work mode. Working remotely for foreign companies is widespread. Remote experience allows IT personnel to provide continuous quality services and maintain productivity. The size of the export market and regular cooperation with foreign customers helps to stabilize the market. In the 2014-2016 period, after the Russian occupation of Crimea, the sector proved that it can adapt and recover very fast.

For many international IT companies recruiting from Ukraine was simply smart practice. The positive legacy of the decades in the Soviet Union is strong science and tech education. When the war started in February 2022, the IT talent pool proved to be highly mobile. Men of military age had to stay at home, but many others crossed the borders and the country's tech diaspora exploded: tens of thousands moved to the West, mainly to Poland, Germany, Spain, Czechia and the Netherlands and continued servicing their clients remotely.

One of the large IT internationals directly hit by the war in Ukraine was EPAM Systems, an American company, founded in the USA and Belarus, traded on the NYSE now, currently headquartered in Pennsylvania. Its portfolio consists of software engineering services, digital product design, and digital platform engineering. When the military invasion began, EPAM had 14,000 staff in Ukraine and 18,000 more

in Belarus and Russia. The company was facing a real existential risk; its stock dropped by 50% in a few days. The question was how fast it would execute personnel relocation, replace many employees with new ones hired in India, Central Europe, and Asia-Pacific.

At the end of February 2022, the company reported to the SEC that its business continuity plan was executed, and it was actively monitoring the security of its people and equipment. EPAM started to reallocate work to other geographies within its global footprint. It issued a press release announcing that it was withdrawing its financial outlook due to heightened uncertainties. On 4 March it announced that it would discontinue services to Russia-based customers. The transition was accelerated by active employee relocation. Many Russia-based employees were moved to delivery locations outside of the country. It was also announced that EPAM would continue to support its Ukrainian employees and their families, offering assistance and mobility as needed, backed with a $100 million humanitarian commitment. In April 2023, EPAM's recruitment website advertised more than 2,000 job openings all over the world. (For the EPAM story, only publicly available sources were used including the company's SEC reports from the beginning of 2022. SEC filings can be accessed on the website of the company.)

9.6 Conclusion

Before making any proposals regarding refugees from Ukraine, we should have a stand on how to measure success.

The number of refugees is several millions, but EU countries are struggling with demographic problems and labour shortages in many areas and could take in a large number of people from Ukraine without major difficulties. Most Ukrainian refugees are young, relatively well-educated, want to work, have experience abroad, many have acquaintances in host countries, and have no particular communication and cultural problems with the locals. It is considered short-term success if their integration is successful during the war, they have access to work, learning and entrepreneurship opportunities, live under safe and acceptable conditions. Long-term success, however, mostly means a safe return home, and participation in the reconstruction and the development of Ukraine. Refugee policies and projects should support these two simultaneous goals (short-term and long-term success), maintaining balance between them.

Overall, one of the most important lessons of this migration wave is that to be able to successfully deal with it, we should get local communities on board. They should be given financial, administrative, psychological, moral, logistical and other support. They should feel that they are making a positive impact in a crisis situation and that they receive wide ranging support. The positive attitude of local migrant-receiving communities is the key to success. Effective, sustainable solutions require mutual benefits: refugees should be supported and helped, but the supporting communities should also experience that they are gaining something, be it in terms of financial

benefits (e.g., labour, business partners, services, or state support) or a moral feeling (we helped someone, we did something good). Therefore, policies and projects should be based on comprehensive stakeholder analysis.

Positive government attitude, the conscious and methodical development of business relations, the search for mutually beneficial solutions, and the establishment of a supportive advisory and administrative system may yield fruit. Facilitating the support of refugees which provides benefits to the host country, to professional and to local communities seems the best approach.

It also seems important to ease communication for migrants, to get in touch with their families and friends at home, and to obtain reliable first-hand information about their situation. Access to the digital infrastructure (network and personal devices) is required. This, on the one hand, may decrease the stress and anxiety of migrants, and on the other may help them make informed decisions about their future. In addition, this may assist local authorities in guiding migrants in the administrative maze. It is also important to provide the local and broader community with reliable, continuously updated information so they feel that they worries and anxiety are addressed as well.

The lack of reliable, continuously updated data, using consistently the same definitions and methodology may hamper quick and efficient action. Currently conflicting data just add to the confusion and makes the realistic evaluation of the current situation harder.

Due the special demographic structure of Ukrainian refugee communities, and because men between the ages of 18 and 60 can only leave the country with a permit, in the host countries new businesses or new corporate shared support units have been started mostly by Ukrainian women. These women-led ventures may need special attention, unbiased venture investors and focused accelerator programs.

To deal with children is also of paramount importance. Their schooling is a must, as neither Ukraine (if eventually the children return home) nor the hosting countries (if these children stay) can afford to lose a generation. Schooling is crucial in building a sense of perspective and future for teenagers who should not get disillusioned and depressed. In addition, studying keeps them occupied and out of trouble. These efforts should be balanced: on the one hand, young people should not feel detached from home, on the other, they should get to know their new host, the language and the culture.

In the given situation, it seems evident that advanced online education solutions are needed at all levels of training. This can give a new impetus to the development of online education, and the emergence of new solutions and businesses. Experience shows that blended learning, which includes both online and offline components, is more effective than online education. It requires the cooperation of local schools, which should be motivated and supported to participate.

All the above requires coordination among different actors: state administration, NGOs, the private sector and international organisations. It must be made clear, however, that the main coordinators should be the hosting state and local authorities, otherwise unnecessary and unhelpful conflicts will arise. International aid should also be distributed more evenly within the EU. Here as well, coordination is vital. Different donors should not act separately, creating states-in-the-state, as this will

inevitably result in a loss of efficiency and serious conflicts. The extreme wave of refugees is the problem not only of specific affected countries, but of the entire European Union. To such a European problem, a coordinated European response must be given. The management of the refugee crisis is an instructive test of the cooperation, decision-making and action system of the European countries.

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At the end of the chapter, we must say a few words about the data we relied upon. Finding reliable data in times of an ongoing violent war is a daunting task. As already pointed out at the beginning of the chapter some factors of uncertainty in addition to the war, are also at play, such as the ethnic, linguistic and political diversity in the Central and Eastern European region, the twists and turns of recent history, the potential political intentions behind the publication (or non-publication) of data, the deliberately deployed toolbox of disinformation warfare, the travel and residence rules within the Schengen area that allows the free movement of citizens, the characteristics of the EU labour market, the presence and dimensions of the grey economy, the uncertainty around the interpretation of definitions regarding the status of refugees and guest workers, the sheer dimensions of the rapid movement of masses of people, and the high degree of uncertainty of refugees' motivations and intentions.

When collecting the data, we tried to use primarily reliable sources (e.g., EUROSTAT, OECD, UNICEF, and mainly the UNHCR), international databases that were collected on the basis of a uniform methodology as far as possible, and where metadata and necessary explanations are available. Due to the given chaotic situation, however, the accuracy and up-to-datedness of all information cannot be fully guaranteed. Since it takes time to publish peer-reviewed articles and peer-reviewed studies, we have also used numerous online 'on the fly' sources, more than usual in academic circles. Those sources contain important, interesting and fresh data, but their reliability is not perfect. Thus, in some cases we had to choose between freshness and reliability, and more than once we went for the former. In the course of events, it was sometimes difficult to decide whether we should include in the text individual sentences or paragraphs in the present or past tense.

Being a refugee is not only an official status, but also a state of mind. Photos and the words of those involved can be telling, sometimes even more telling than statistics. We could not include photographs in the volume (although by following the links, the reader will find abundant material); instead, for personal touch, we have included a few statements and short interview excerpts.

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