

# Ukraine Refugee Response in Bulgaria

Factsheet - November 2022

unicef   
for every child



## KEY FIGURES



**144,251**  
people from Ukraine  
registered for temporary  
protection



**52,216**  
Children registered for  
temporary protection



**55,016**  
Ukrainian refugees  
in the country



**19,578**  
People in state-funded  
housing



**589**  
Unaccompanied or  
separated children

## RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS



**3.3 million**  
people reached through  
messaging on prevention  
and access to services



**35,815**  
people benefitted from  
access to safe spaces,  
protection and support  
hubs



**4,180**  
Refugee children  
accessing formal and  
non-formal education  
with UNICEF support

## Context

- since the beginning of the conflict, **144,251 Ukrainians** have been granted temporary protection (52,216 children, 71,969 women and 20,066 men). As of 1 November, there are **55,016 Ukrainian refugees**, including **19,578 hosted under a state accommodation program** (hotels and state-owned facilities) and **35,438 in private housing** – without known or registered address by national authorities. With the persistently volatile situation inside Ukraine, any escalation of fighting in the eastern and southern parts of the country might result in a new influx of refugees in Bulgaria.
- Refugees' ability to sustain themselves is shrinking with increasing challenges related to **accommodation, access to health care, education and childcare, as well as lack of financial means and job opportunities**. Further to the psychological stress from the war and displacement, the lack of clarity and prospects for the future cause more stress for children and women who face new challenges and are in even greater need of psychosocial support.
- **The onset of winter** is expected to induce further refugee flows from Ukraine and bring harsher conditions for refugee families, compounding challenges for these already vulnerable groups. With the **new relocation to state owned housing facilities** announced by the Government, new challenges arise to ensure adequate living conditions during the upcoming winter season.

## Humanitarian Response and Coordination

- Since the opening of its office in Sofia in 2005, UNICEF has been assisting the government in promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of every child in Bulgaria.
- UNICEF is now supporting the government to ensure access to services, protection and social assistance for Ukrainian children, their families and host communities.
- UNICEF participates in the inter-agency coordination mechanism together with UNHCR, WHO, IOM and IFRC, and contributes to the work of the technical working groups on "Education", "Children" and "Prevention of trafficking".
- UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and other national partners, such as the State Agency for Refugees, State Agency for Child Protection, district administrations and municipalities. UNICEF leverages its strategic partnerships with line ministries and local authorities to support a broader multi-sectoral humanitarian response and strengthen the capacities of national systems through technical and financial support, advice, policy advocacy and engagement for longer-term and sustainable results.
- To reach affected children and families from Ukraine, UNICEF is scaling up its humanitarian support, by providing supplies and services, building the capacity of frontline responders, and supporting national systems in close coordination with the government, UN agencies, donor community and civil society organizations.

## Health and Early Childhood Development

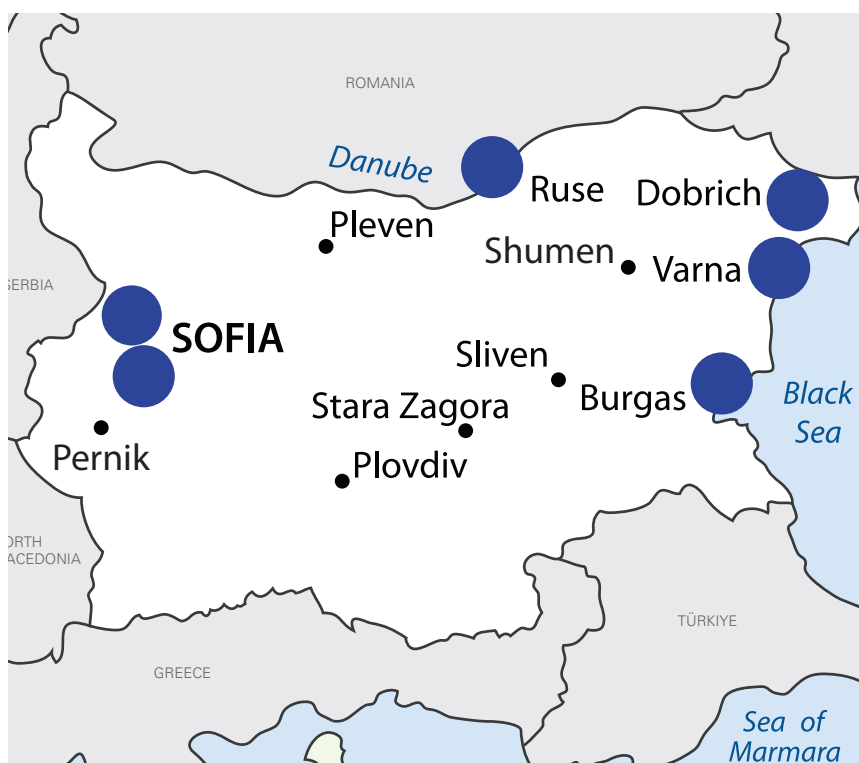
- UNICEF's response is focused on provision of information to caregivers, training of healthcare workers and support to vaccination activities.
- To address the lack of access to primary health care and administrative bottlenecks, UNICEF will facilitate access to essential health services for children and women in major hosting areas by supporting mobile health services provided by local health authorities and building capacity of health professionals.
- Parenting counseling for families with young children, including children with developmental difficulties and disabilities, has been provided through digital tools and face-to-face counseling.

## Child protection

- UNICEF supports **child protection interventions**, including the Safe spaces, Child and Family Protection and Support Hubs "Blue Dots," have reached more than 35,815 children and adults, with mental health and psychosocial support, legal aid and counseling, gender-based violence mitigation response, and information on prevention and access to services.
- UNICEF focuses on **strengthening the systems** to ensure that all children have access to appropriate care, protection, and support services. The organization has invested in trainings, supervision, and other initiatives to improve the capacity of frontline workers, exchange of good practices and co-ordination of the support.
- UNICEF has contributed to developing national Guidance on **working with unaccompanied and separated children (UASC)**, the Rules for placement of UASC in social services adopted by the State Agency for Refugee in October 2022 and is a member of the Permanent Expert Working Group set up to monitor the coordination and joint work in this area.
- UNICEF is also working with the State Agency for Child Protection to promote the **National Child Help Line** as a resource for mental health and psycho-social support and a first contact point to share information about children at risk, including unaccompanied Ukrainian children.
- UNICEF continues to support the national and local authorities' capacity to provide appropriate **protection and care to refugee and migrant children** with a focus on asylum seeking children and families.


## Blue Dots


Six Blue Dots were established jointly by UNICEF and UNHCR in Bulgaria, in collaboration with local authorities and partners. They provide safe spaces for children and families, enabling access to cross sectoral services, identification, registration, and connection to protection services for children travelling on their own. They also offer referral services for women, including for support on gender-based violence, legal aid, mental health support, provision of information and support to access social services in Bulgaria




The map does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers.

**Ruse** (Border Crossing Point with Romania)

 **Address:** 10 General Gurko Str. Ruse


 **Services:** Information and Advice Desk, Family and Child Friendly Space, and Psychosocial support (PSS)

**Sofia Central Train Station**

 Information and Advice Desk


**Sofia /BRC Headquarters**

 **Address:** 76 James Bouchier Blvd;


 **Services:** Full service Blue Dot (Information and Advice Desk, Family and Child Friendly Space, Legal Aid and Psychosocial support)

**Dobrich**

 **Address:** 19 Otets Paisii Str. Dobrich,


 **Services:** Information and Advice Desk, Family and Child Friendly Space, and Psychosocial support.

**Burgas Railway Station Service**

 **Services:** Information and Advice Desk, Family and Child Friendly Space, Legal Aid and Psychosocial support

**Varna, BRC**

 **Address:** 3 Bratya Shkorpil, Str. Varna

 **Services:** Information and Advice Desk, Family and Child Friendly Space, legal Aid and Psychosocial support.



## Education

- UNICEF in partnership with local authorities **promotes the continuity of education for Ukrainian refugee children**, through their inclusion in Bulgarian schools and the establishment of learning hubs for children.
- UNICEF reached 4,180 Ukrainian refugee children with informal education and learning opportunities by supporting Ukrainian refugee teachers and educators, providing learning materials, improving access to the internet, and providing additional catch-up support for primary grade students.
- **Summer programmes** including Bulgarian language classes, support for school enrolment, non-formal learning workshops, psychosocial support arts and sports activities reached 1,246 children.
- In August and September 2022, UNICEF and UNHCR in partnership with the Access to Rights Foundation, the Astra Forum Foundation, the Bulgarian Red Cross and the Dobro Foundation launched **the Welcome to School campaign** to promote the enrollment of Ukrainian children in Bulgarian schools, through information sessions at accommodation facilities and Blue Dots, media and digital outreach.
- UNICEF continues to work closely with the Ministry of Education and Science and municipalities to **expand opportunities for refugee children to be enrolled in school and pre-school education**. This includes access to an online education curriculum and building the capacity and skills of teachers and early childhood educators to create welcoming, inclusive learning environments that address all children's learning and developmental needs.



Refugee children participate in the informal learning sessions organized by UNICEF and partners to ensure continuous access to formal and non-formal education.

In August and September 2022, UNICEF and UNHCR in partnership with the Access to Rights Foundation, the Astra Forum Foundation, the Bulgarian Red Cross, and the Dobro Foundation launched the Welcome to School campaign to promote enrollment of Ukrainian children in Bulgarian schools.

Over 2 million people in Bulgaria were reached by the information campaign in online and traditional media.



## Social protection and cash assistance

- **To support the provision of adequate and timely assistance, UNICEF is scaling up its** cash assistance programmes through the provision of vouchers for food and non-food items to vulnerable families with children.
- Building on the initiative of the European Child Guarantee, UNICEF is designing new **partnerships with municipalities** to support their efforts in the provision of social services to Ukrainian refugees.



## Promoting social and behaviour change

- Over 3.3 million people were **reached through messaging on prevention and access to services**. Furthermore, 36,769 people participated in engagement actions for social and behavioral change.
- UNICEF Bulgaria supported the development of the **national communication strategy on vaccination**, focusing on increasing immunization rates among the Ukrainian refugees and host community. Together with the Ministry of Health and the Astra Forum Foundation, UNICEF organized the first series of online trainings "Vaccines School" for over 2,000 healthcare workers.
- To assist Ukrainian mothers and primary caregivers in providing the best care for their young children, UNICEF adapted and translated **the Bebbio application**, a free mobile application, now available in Bulgarian, Ukrainian and Russian, benefitting over 23,000 caregivers in Bulgaria, including refugees from Ukraine.
- UNICEF Bulgaria is launching **online programme for social listening and social cohesion** to address misinformation and properly assess people's evolving needs for further adjustment of programme planning. The programme will also help to identify and promote inspiring stories of inclusion, integration, and solidarity.



## Engagement of youth and adolescents

- UNICEF is **mobilizing adolescents and young people as partners and engage** with both refugee and local youth to build their competence, confidence, and resilience and to strengthen social cohesion and solidarity within communities. UNICEF is also strengthening sustainable mechanisms for youth participation in local decision making.
- UNICEF supported over 200 Ukrainian adolescent through “Kruta Za Dobroto” a summer camp with psycho-social interventions, non-formal education and leisure activities.
- UNICEF and Junior Achievement Europe launched a **new partnership, called UPLIFT Youth**, to equip the most vulnerable Ukrainian youth and adolescents, with employability skills and mindset to build thriving communities. Local disadvantaged youth will also be part of the project, to foster integration and social cohesion among young people, while also giving them a chance to transition from learning to earning. In Bulgaria, the project will empower over 4,000 young refugees, migrants and local disadvantaged youth until the end of 2023.
- UNICEF is strengthening **the U-Report Europe chatbot** to engage young Ukrainian refugees and provide up-to-date critical information on services in Bulgaria. UNICEF plans to extend digital opportunities for resilience building, self-care and online counseling to Ukrainian adolescents and parents via locally developed innovations like the “Razkazhi Mi” mobile app, will be also available for Ukrainian users.

## Winterization and WASH

- In close collaboration with UNHCR, UNICEF **plans to reach 15,000 children this winter** with blankets, winter clothes and hygiene kits through community centers, schools, learning hubs and municipalities.
- Additionally, UNICEF with partners will **preposition supplies and increase capacities of local responders** for the provision of accommodation, meals, legal assistance, and protection for another 10,000 people in case of a massive influx of Ukrainian refugees from Romania.
- Ahead of the winter season, UNICEF will distribute 500 vouchers for food and non-food items by end of the year to the most vulnerable refugee families.

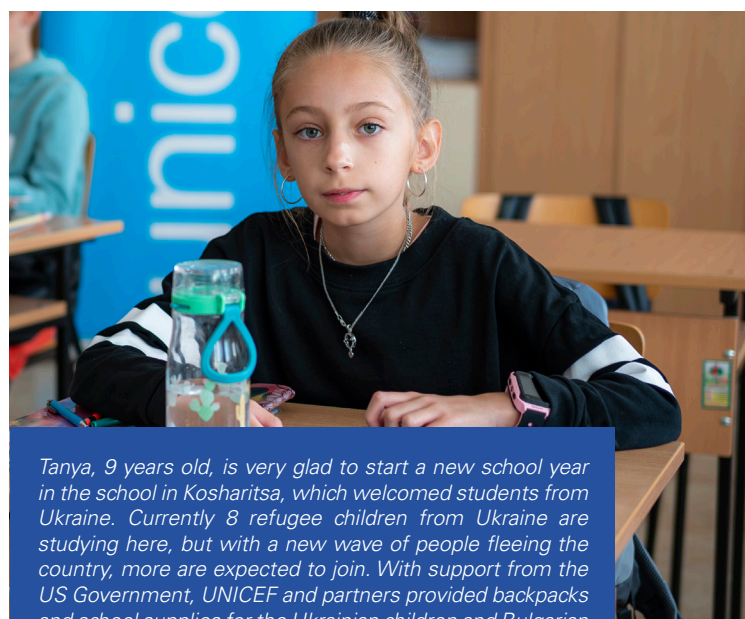
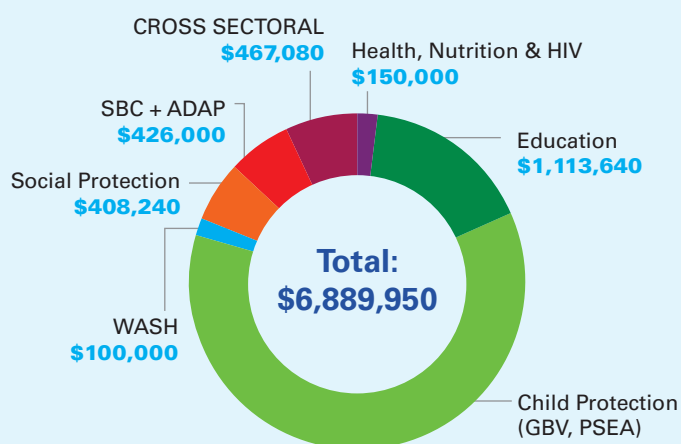


## Accountability to affected populations

- To ensure refugees can provide feedback on received services, UNICEF supports the development of complaints and feedback mechanisms. To date, nearly 1,000 people have shared their concerns and questions with UNICEF and partners on existing refugee response programmes.

## UNICEF Appeal 2022 for Bulgaria

Funding requested against sector (USD)



*Tanya, 9 years old, is very glad to start a new school year in the school in Kosharitsa, which welcomed students from Ukraine. Currently 8 refugee children from Ukraine are studying here, but with a new wave of people fleeing the country, more are expected to join. With support from the US Government, UNICEF and partners provided backpacks and school supplies for the Ukrainian children and Bulgarian children from vulnerable groups, learning in this school.*

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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