



Refugee girl in transit centre in Siret, Romania

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Europe and Central Asia Region (ECAR) – Ukraine Situation: Refugee Response in Neighbouring Countries

Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2 - 2022



Highlights

- As of 18 March, over three million refugees have crossed Ukraine’s western borders to neighbouring countries, with over 2 million in Poland, over 500,000 in Romania, over 359,000 in the Republic of Moldova, more than 299,000 in Hungary and over 500,000 in other countriesⁱ.
- The protection of children impacted by the war in Ukraine is at the core of UNICEF’s refugee response in neighboring countries. The response aims at addressing humanitarian needs in child protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health and nutrition, education and early childhood development and social protection in Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Hungary, the Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, Belarus, as well as surrounding countries.
- UNICEF is supporting refugee hosting countries to strengthen their national capacities to comply with the European Union (EU) Temporary Protection Directive which grants Ukrainians a residence permit, access to employment, access to education for minors, opportunities for family relocation, and social welfare.
- UNICEF has set up five “Blue Dot” safe spaces in Republic of Moldova and Romania to provide protection and services to refugee children and their families.
- Legal agreement to support service delivery signed on 18 March with the government of Poland allowing UNICEF to roll out humanitarian interventions with government authorities and civil society partners. The establishment of 20 Blue Dots and other emergency interventions are underway in Poland.

Situation in Numbers



3.3 millionⁱⁱ

Refugees who have crossed borders from Ukraine into neighboring countries since 24 February 2022



7 neighboring countries covered under UNICEF’s response in Europe

UNICEF Response Key areas



Provision of temporary water and sanitation services, distribution of critical hygiene and dignity products for families, women and children, support infection prevention and hygiene promotion.



Provision of education and recreational supplies for children and adolescents, facilitate access to temporary learning, recreational and early childhood development activities; support host-government in coordination and integration of children into national education systems.



Provision of essential health services for mothers and children, promotion of vaccination, infant and young child feeding, provision of essential commodities, including vaccines, health supplies, medicines, and micronutrient supplements.

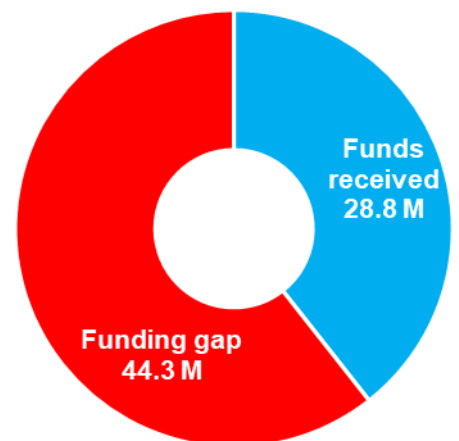


Establishment of ‘Blue Dots’ to provide critical support and protection services for children and families, provision of technical support for registration, screening, case management and referrals, including family tracing for unaccompanied children, psychosocial support and prevention and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Support multi-purpose cash interventions for vulnerable households with children, strengthen capacity of national social protection systems to integrate refugee children.

UNICEF Appeal 2022 US\$ 73.1 million*

Funding Status as of 16 March
(USD million)



^{i&ii} UNHCR. Operational Data Portal as of 16 March 2022.

<http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

* This reflects the requirement under Pillar 2 (Refugee Outflow) of UNICEF’s HAC appeal which covers cover interventions in Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Belarus, Hungary, the Slovak Republic and other surrounding countries

Regional Funding Overview & Partnerships

Under the interagency Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) UNICEF is appealing for US\$ 73.1 million over a six-month period to respond to the urgent, expanding humanitarian and protection needs of refugee children and their families crossing the borders to neighbouring countries in Europe. As the situation evolves and as country specific support requirements are being assessed, the funding requirements may require adjustment to address growing humanitarian needs in an increasing number of countries. In this volatile context, flexible contributions enable UNICEF and partners to adapt and respond immediately to ensure the safety and well-being of refugee children and families as well as the affected hosting communities in countries bordering Ukraine.

As of 16 March, UNICEF has received a total amount of USD 28.8 million against the HAC for the refugee response in neighbouring countries, out of which 65% is fully flexible. This funding will allow UNICEF to scale up the response rapidly to reach children most in need.

UNICEF acknowledges immediate contributions and pledges of support received against the overall HAC appeal¹, including from the Government of Austria, the Government of Denmark, the Government of Japan, the Government of the Republic of Korea, the Government of Italy, the Government of Poland, the Government of Liechtenstein, the US Bureau of Population (BPRM) and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), as well as the significant, ongoing fundraising campaigns by UNICEF National committees that have generated significant, timely and generous support from private sector and individual donors.

UNICEF is working closely with UNHCR and other UN Agencies as well as key humanitarian partners to rapidly scale up its multi-sectoral humanitarian response. UNICEF is leveraging its presence, experience and partnerships established through longstanding country programmes including those in the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Belarus as well as through relationships with government and a strong network of National Committees in Poland, Hungary, Slovak Republic and Czech Republic. UNICEF continues to build on and expand its close relationships with local government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to enable meaningful cooperation, and an effective use of existing systems as well as a coherent and context-specific response.

Regional Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

As the war in Ukraine continues to unfold, displacement dynamics and needs in neighbouring countries continue to grow exponentially. To date, over 3 million people, the vast majority children and women, have fled across Ukrainian borders in a refugee crisis that is, in terms of speed and scale, unprecedented in Europe since the Second World War, and showing no signs of slowing down. Over sixty percent of those fleeing (over 2 million people), have arrived in Poland, with significant caseloads (500,000) in Romania, followed by Republic of Moldova (359,000), Hungary (299,000), and Slovak Republic (240,000).²

Children are at the centre of this emergency, and it is estimated that over 1.5 million have fled the country, equating to more than 75,000 children becoming refugees, every day, since the start of the war on 24 February – a [particularly shocking statistic](#). Children arriving in neighbouring countries face significant risks of family separation, violence, sexual exploitation, and trafficking making it imperative to ensure safety, stability and minimum child protection standards and access to services in reception facilities across the region, especially for those who are unaccompanied or have been separated.

Significant movements of people have also put pressure on sanitation and hygiene services at border and reception points, strains on health systems, and expanded health risks, including the potential for disease outbreak due to low vaccination rates for measles, polio, and COVID-19 among the fleeing population. Minority groups face increased risk of discrimination while persons and children with disabilities face a lack of specialized support. Mental health needs of women, adolescents and children need to be more systematically addressed. Language barriers pose challenges to the utilization of national services in hosting countries and the integration of refugee children into national education systems will require that Ukrainian speaking facilitators are mobilized.

As per the European Union's (EU) Temporary Protection Directive, individuals who are fleeing Ukraine receive special protection and are eligible for a residence permit, access to employment, access to education for minors, opportunities for family relocation, and social welfare.³ This will require the strengthening and capacity building of national systems to provide equitable, quality access and services to the refugee population.

¹ Including Pillar 1 (Ukraine) and Pillar 2 (Refugee Outflow) of UNICEF's HAC appeal which covers cover interventions in Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Belarus, Hungary, the Slovak Republic and other surrounding countries

² UNHCR. Operational Data Portal as of 18 March 2022. <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/eu-invokes-temporary-protection-directive-help-those-fleeing-ukraine_en

Regional Humanitarian Leadership, Coordination and Strategy

UNICEF is working closely with UNHCR and humanitarian partners to respond to emerging humanitarian needs and expand its programmatic and advocacy support, for refugee children and their families in the affected neighbouring countries. Surge and technical support missions have been deployed to augment existing capacities and facilitate scaled up response in affected countries, including 49 deployments/missions to Poland, 15 to Romania, 13 to the Republic of Moldova, eight to Hungary and four each to the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. Assessments are ongoing and operational plans are being developed in a sequenced manner with other humanitarian partners.

Recognizing the central role of host Governments in the response, particularly in light of their pledges of support to refugees, UNICEF is working with key sectoral counterparts to: strengthen existing systems, provide specialised technical assistance, support delivery of critical supplies and direct additional financial support to strengthen national and sub-national capacities to address immediate humanitarian needs and support the integration of refugee children their families into national social protection systems. UNICEF is also working closely with CSOs to leverage national networks and capacities for delivery of critical support services. UNICEF's overall framework of support is aligned with its Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) in Humanitarian Action, which outline a set of organizational, programmatic and operational commitments to monitor the situation of women and children and take appropriate response actions. An immediate analysis points to child safeguarding as a critical need. Given the unprecedented number of children among those fleeing Ukraine and the significant child protection dimensions, as well as risks for mothers travelling alone with children, Child Protection Sub-Working Groups are being established in hosting countries. These will be co-chaired by UNICEF and UNHCR, working under the umbrella of the Protection Working Group and collaborate with and support national authorities.

As a first measure of immediate support, UNICEF is establishing "Blue Dot" child-and family-support hubs to provide critical support and protection services for refugee children and their families in conjunction with local and key NGO and CSO partners. The Blue Dots provide key information to families, psychosocial support, safe spaces for mothers and children, and the ability to identify protection risks, including critical support to identify unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), support family reunification and provide mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and links to relevant social services. Blue Dots also provide a range of other social protection, health, education and early childhood development services, based on specific needs. The Blue Dots have become a recognizable modality of emergency assistance and sit under the umbrella of a joint Agenda for Action between UNICEF and UNHCR. They have proven to be a good example of collaboration between the two agencies, as well as with other partners, national and local authorities, and their statutory services.

UNICEF will also scale up health and nutrition support, focusing on the provision of essential services for children and their mothers, promotion of infant and young child feeding and prevention of disease outbreaks, including support to vaccination. Where required, UNICEF will support multi-purpose cash interventions for vulnerable households with children in transit and the integration of refugee caseloads into national social protection systems. Refugee children's continued access to education will be facilitated through support to temporary learning, recreational and early learning activities as well as through support to host-governments to facilitate inclusion of refugee children into the national education system. The Government of Ukraine learning platform, All Ukraine Online is functional also outside Ukraine and reports from several of the countries that students are following the Ukrainian curricula online.

Poland

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

As of 18 March, over 2 million refugees have entered Poland, the majority of whom are women and children. From the moment refugees arrived, the Government of Poland exercised the policy of open doors and expedited the movement of refugees away from the border. This enabled a rapid flow of people and reduced queues. However, as a result, there is little data about those arriving and their destination, subsequently increasing protection risks, including documenting unaccompanied and separated children. At border crossings, a significant number of volunteers are offering transport to European countries, including Germany, Italy, Spain, without vetting or registration. Authorities are now initiating registration of cars in several sites; however, these efforts are neither compulsory nor comprehensive and can still be bypassed.



Figure 1: Children on the border crossing area between Ukraine and Poland

A foster care coalition in Poland has estimated that at least 6,000 children have been transferred from residential care facilities in Ukraine. While child protection services have sought to place these children into family-based care, the transition has proven quite difficult for many children. In this context, Governments of Ukraine and Poland have reached an important agreement on the rules and minimum requirements related to the evacuation of children living in residential care facilities from Ukraine to Poland. These include registration of children upon arrival, exchange of data on evacuated children between the two governments and informing the responsible Ukrainian consulates. A hub in *Stalowa Wola* has been established to accommodate all new arrivals of evacuated children and is serving as a first point registration and referral to more permanent accommodation.

Volunteers consulted during a recent UNICEF and UNHCR joint assessment mission report that in recent days, arrivals from eastern Ukraine have increased, including of people who are visibly distressed. Current capacity to provide psychological support is severely hampered by a lack of Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking staff and volunteers. Once across the border, support for refugees at crossing points and transit facilities is overseen and coordinated by local authorities and county authorities (*voivodships*) with most services provided by volunteers, NGOs, and religious organizations. Lack of coordination and safeguarding protocols at reception and transit centres are a challenge, as is contingency planning for a prolonged crisis.

In a near-unanimous decision, Polish Members of Parliament (MPs) have approved legislation that will put in place greater support for the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians who have fled to Poland. According to the new law, among others, Ukrainians who arrive to Poland can legalise their stay for 18 months and receive a national identity (PESEL) number, as well as have access to labour market, healthcare, education, and other benefits. The legislation also provides payments of 40-zloty (USD 9.5) per day to people and entities in Poland that provide accommodation to Ukrainians, as well as a one-off 300-zloty (USD 70) payment to each Ukrainian arriving in Poland. A special fund to finance aid for Ukrainians will also be established.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

UNICEF has been closely coordinating with UNHCR, WHO, and IOM on the refugee response and OCHA in coordination across the border. UNICEF is playing a lead role in the child protection and education sector coordination meetings and collaborating with WHO in the health (particularly for immunization) and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) coordination meetings. A legal agreement to support service delivery was signed on 18 March with the government of Poland allowing UNICEF to roll out humanitarian interventions with government authorities and civil society partners.

Child Protection: Two rounds of monitoring visits for rapid needs assessments along the border crossing points as well as other reception and concentration areas were conducted, one jointly with UNHCR. Evidence gathered at during the assessments informed the mapping of services and identification of protection risks to identify priority responses. UNICEF held initial conversations with MHPSS actors to explore potential for collaborations to identify existing capacity and resources; strengthen capacity in best practice MHPSS approaches for humanitarian response; integrate child protection and PSEA into existing MHPSS programming; increase MHPSS capacity of education providers; maintain quality and supervision while scaling up MHPSS activities in response to the increased need.

UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Family and Social Policy (MFSP) on the Child Guarantee to strengthen national systems and services to ensure access of refugee children to basic rights, comply with the EU Temporary Protection Directive and be able to integrate the refugee population, including children, who choose to stay in Poland as envisaged within the law recently adopted. Recently adopted law will enable refugees to have same rights as citizens of Poland. Upon the Government's requested for technical assistance in finalization of the National Action Plan for Child Guarantee and integration of measures that would further support protection and inclusion of refugee children, UNICEF developed a proposal and initiated discussions with MFSP. Proposal include sets of activities aimed at system strengthening to ensure that refugee children can benefit from targeted interventions in the area of access to adequate nutrition, health care, education, decent social housing and protection services. Currently there is no data on the population leaving the country into other EU member states and beyond. Upon arrival Ukrainian citizens are instructed to register at a municipality where they intend to stay within 15 days.

The strategy and rollout plan for the Blue Dot approach has been developed jointly with UNHCR and training materials have been compiled. UNICEF has already procured and received key supplies including rapid tests, masks, surgical gloves, and thermometers, education, recreational and ECD kits for the 20 planned Blue Dots. In addition, the identification of partners to implement a program that identifies those children at risk in border areas with a focus on UASC and other at-risk children and families with specific vulnerabilities is ongoing. UNICEF has liaised with the governments of Ukraine and Poland to support government to government exchanges and information sharing and will prioritize setting up a Blue Dot in the *Stalowa Wola* hub.

Health and Nutrition: UNICEF met with the *Rzeszow Voivodship* to establish relations and explore potential collaboration, and as part of a joint assessment (with UNHCR) of border crossings and reception centres, identified and mapped immediate health needs. Furthermore, UNICEF is engaging in the Health Coordination led by WHO and in Interagency Coordination led by OCHA to ensure a coordinated response across UN agencies.

UNICEF and WHO held a meeting with the Ministry of Health (MoH) to coordinate joint response. With disease outbreak prevention identified as an immediate need, especially for COVID-19, measles, and polio, UNICEF and WHO are supporting prevention and response by assessing needs and procuring adequate vaccines.

Education: UNICEF convened the first Education Sector Coordination group meeting to identify partners, share plans, and areas of concern for support. UNICEF has been requested to support the coordination and cooperation between the Ministry and NGOS/INGOS to support a collaborative approach. Platforms for sharing of resources between partners are being established.

An initial mapping of partners has been conducted to identify who is operating where and in what thematic area and scale to support coordination. Meetings with the *Rzeszow* and *Lublin Voivodships* were held to identify education sector needs and gaps. Major challenges have been noted around educational integration and the creation of parallel Ukrainian classes as well as severe shortage of spaces in municipalities and funding for education and ECD. Discussions are ongoing in the sector group to find practical solutions to support the government to align with the EU directive of including children into the national system within three months, including the provision of preparatory and language classes. The first refugee children are being enrolled and Ukraine teachers are being identified. A partnership with the Comenius Foundation for Child Development is also in development to support municipalities with provision of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services and to provide quality ECEC in longer-stay transit centres as well as parenting groups.

WASH: Assessments of WASH facilities have been conducted at all border crossings and associated reception centres. Gaps were identified in the provision and maintenance of chemical toilets as well as a need for showers in reception centres and support with solid waste management. UNICEF is exploring solutions to address these, in coordination with municipal authorities. UNICEF participated in the first Basic Needs Coordination meeting.

Social Protection: Preliminary discussions were held with national and subnational authorities to define key programmatic needs and gaps to integrate a refugee child caseload into the national social protection system. The special act on support to Ukrainian refugees, signed on 12 March, provides an opening for issuance of a PESEL national identification number, which serves as the basis for receipt of entitlements and access to key services, including social protection. Challenges that need to be addressed include issues related to the budget as well as processes to support effective registration, such as grievance redressal.

UNICEF met with the *Lublin Voivodship* and the MFSP to define key programmatic needs and gaps to integrate a refugee child caseload into the national social protection system. UNICEF is participating in ongoing Cash Working Group (CWG) meetings, contributing to the development of targeting criteria, registration criteria and common benefit levels.

The Republic of Moldova

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

As of 18 March, there were 359,000 refugees from Ukraine in the Republic of Moldova.⁴ 91 per cent of the refugees are women and children (43 per cent women, 24 per cent girls, 24 per cent boys).

As of 11 March, 93 centres authorized by the Government to host refugees were functional – with a capacity of 8,636 people, currently occupied at 56% (4,848). The Moldovan government has launched a new information source, www.dopomoga.gov.md, which synchronizes all relevant information on the country's refugee crisis. In addition, it provides information on the most active social media groups that can assist refugees in Ukraine, as well as Moldovan citizens who want to assist them.



Figure 1: Afshan Khan, UNICEF Regional Director for ECA, and Special Coordinator for the Refugee and Migrant Response in Europe visiting the child friendly spaces at the Blue Dot in Moldexpo

⁴ For the latest figures, please refer to the: [Summary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for March 15, 2022, at 09:00 | Ministry of Internal Affairs \(gov.md\)](https://www.gov.md/en/actualitati/2022/03/15/summary-of-the-ministry-of-internal-affairs-for-march-15-2022-at-09:00)

The Government has expressed concerns over its own capacities to support the increasing number of refugees, quoting a daily expenditure of approximately USD 900,000 to manage the current case load. The increasing number of vulnerable families from Ukraine entering the Republic of Moldova will further exacerbate economic difficulties.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Health and Nutrition: UNICEF provided age appropriate, ready-to-use food for about 3,000 children (aged 6-25 months). In addition, UNICEF procured 40 basic medical kits that are supporting 5,000 children's health-related needs in placement centres, as well as antibiotics for about 9,000 children. Taking into consideration the high number of refugees, UNICEF will continue to provide infant and young child nutritional support.

UNICEF and WHO supported the MoH in issuing an order for routine immunization of refugee children, ensuring access to vaccination in health facilities and through mobile teams. Intervention will be complemented by information, communication materials, and counselling with UNICEF support, to clarify procedures and promote implementation of the order. UNICEF will support capacity building of front-line health workers to provide basic health services (specifically IYCF, immunization, new-born health) to refugees.

In addition, UNICEF will establish Mother-Baby Corners in placement centres. communication materials on health and nutrition topics have been prepared with WHO, printed, and disseminated.

Child Protection: Within the first 10 days of the start of the crisis, UNICEF set up three Blue Dots (children and family protection support hubs), at the Southern and Northern border crossings with Ukraine, where the vast majority of the refugees are entering the country, and one in the largest refugee center at Moldexpo, in the capital Chisinau. The Blue Dots were set up in partnership with national CSOs and with additional support from UNHCR who provided tents and internet connectivity. These safe hubs provide essential information, immediate care, and support for children and their caregivers, child-friendly spaces, psychosocial support, and referral services. UNICEF is working closely with other partners to both expand, the list of provided services as well as the number of Blue Dots, adding an additional four in the coming weeks.

Education: UNICEF engaged with UN partners and the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) to develop the immediate and long-term refugee response plan. The plan encompasses a number of initiatives that are currently at the inception phase, specifically, 50,000 refugee children and adolescents will be supported to have equitable access to inclusive and quality education and safe and protective learning environments and opportunities (formal and non-formal), with equal opportunity access to educational supplies and school, hot meals, and mental health and psychosocial services (for students, teachers and other education personnel). Teachers and staff will receive orientation to engage with refugee children. Using Ukrainian teachers, supporting the continuation of learning for refugee children in formal and informal settings and bridging Romanian language courses will be an important component of the response provided for refugee children, including asylum seekers.

WASH: UNICEF continued to assess needs and coordinate its response with other humanitarian actors within the Accommodation and Transport Sector Group, chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) and UNHCR, as well as bilaterally, to ensure access to WASH to Ukrainian refugees. UNICEF has provided hygiene, cleaning, and disinfection supplies to the refugee accommodation centres in *Palanca*, *Calaraseuca*, and *Chisinau*. In addition, 20 mobile toilets were provided to the refugee accommodation center *Manej* in *Chisinau* to ensure access to safe sanitation facilities. Baby and children hygiene kits are under procurement and will be ready for distribution this week. As consumables are most needed and have to be constantly replenished, UNICEF will continue the procurement of hygiene and cleaning supplies, both locally (as available) and through UNICEF procurement from neighbouring countries.

Social Protection: UNICEF, in close partnership with UNHCR, has put in place plans to support 20,000 children and families with emergency cash transfers. The initial location for registering beneficiaries and issuing payment ATM cards has been identified, and additional locations, including near child friendly spaces and Blue Dots, are being assessed. An important milestone was achieved by identifying the national financial institution that will execute the transactions, as well as an agreement with the MLSP on the number and amount of payments, categories of beneficiaries, and other details.

Social Behavior: UNICEF has produced a series of leaflets in Russian and Ukrainian on psychosocial support, breastfeeding, the services available at Blue Dots, as well as an early childhood development (ECD) brochure to be used in child friendly spaces at the Blue Dots. Jointly with sister UN agencies, a health leaflet was produced and distributed at the border crossing points.

Romania

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

Since the beginning of the crisis, over 500,000 Ukrainian citizens entered Romania and 76,000 are still in the country. Nearly 4,000 requested a form of protection (asylum or refugee status).⁵ Most are women with children, including children from the Ukrainian protection system (residential care centres, orphanages, etc.).

The majority of people are in transit, being met at the border by family and/or friends with transportation means and traveling further west to Hungary, the Slovak Republic, and Poland. However, some refugees have to find their own way out or need accommodation. The latter give rise to urgent needs ranging from health services to protection from violence, abuse, exploitation, and trafficking, family-tracing and reunification as well as psycho-social care. A basic needs assessment is ongoing, in close collaboration with Governmental and CSO partners, while a multi-sector needs assessment will be conducted by UNCHR and other partners.



Figure 3: 2-year-old traveling with his mother and little brother through Romania to unite with family in Bulgaria

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Nearly 10,000 women and children have received services at the two UNICEF Blue Dot Hubs, including the following:

Health and Nutrition: Refugees at the Blue Dots benefit from dedicated mother and baby/toddler spaces, where women can breastfeed and clean their babies/toddler in private areas, receive relevant information on infant and young child nutrition (IYCN), and access safe drinking water for formula and Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS), including mixing containers. Medical and psychosocial first aid are also provided.

Child Protection: At the Blue Dots, services which enable to restore and maintain contact with family members, including providing information on how to best prevent separation of families, are provided. Family reunifications are using agreed verification standards for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), including to ensure the safety of children and their relationship to the adults with whom they are traveling.

The provision of child friendly spaces allows children to rest and play and have separate spaces and specific interventions for adolescent girls and boys, as per respective IASC Guidelines and standards. There is also private space for psychosocial support, hygiene, health and nutrition as well as basic legal counselling. The Blue Dots host psychologists, social workers and/or trained professionals able to identify children, especially UASC, who might need further support, including family reunification. The professionals run Best Interest Assessments (BIAs) and engage with these children, and if relevant their parents, regarding the most appropriate way to provide that support. In addition, referral services are provided for survivors of violence, people with disabilities, or people with health conditions and other circumstances requiring specialized support.

To ensure continued **education**, UNICEF is in dialogue with the Ministry of Education to identify ways to operationalize the inclusion policy (ministerial order and in accordance with EU Directive) and define appropriate interventions. In the context of **WASH**, UNICEF distributed 1,000 locally procured hygiene kits to those in need. To improve awareness and **social behaviour**, 17,000 handouts and flyers were developed, printed, and distributed on infection prevention and control as well as breastfeeding and age-specific nutrition.

Other Countries

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

As of 16 March, 299,000 refugees have entered **Hungary** and the number is expected to continue increasing. New arrivals come directly from war affected areas with more immediate needs for support, especially mental health and psychosocial.

Almost all arrivals move on to the capital Budapest or continue onward to other European countries. Given the free movement within the Schengen area, it is difficult to estimate the size of the population currently in Hungary. General registration of the refugee population is done at the border points, while Help Centres providing food, clothes, rest areas and other basic non-food items, have been established by major faith-based organisations which are part of a

⁵ UNHCR Data

government led Charity Council. Refugees without identification documents are referred to registration points that are set up by police authorities where they are given temporary identification documents, provided with the opportunity to request protection, and referred to shelters if in need of accommodation. Most refugees staying in Hungary are accommodated in Budapest municipality, where several temporary shelters have been set up. There have been 12 cases of unidentified minors officially identified, however, it is estimated that the actual number is larger.

The Government leads the humanitarian response to the refugee situation through a National Humanitarian Coordination Council (Charity Council), presided by the State Secretary for Religious Affairs and National Minorities. An inter-agency Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF), led by UNHCR, has been established at country level to complement the efforts of the Government.

The Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia visited the border crossing areas and met with high-level government representatives in the Ministries of Human Capacities, Foreign Affairs and Interior. The Government has welcomed UNICEF's commitment to support the government-led response and UNICEF has scaled up its presence inside Hungary. The first blue dots should be operational in the coming week. UNICEF also emphasized the importance of identifying and supporting the most vulnerable and at-risk children and families including the Roma population as well as children with disabilities. To gain a more holistic picture of the overall network of protective services in the country, UNICEF has engaged in consultations with local authorities and civil society organizations with the aim of providing complementary support to national and local initiatives.

The **Czech Republic** has been in a state of emergency since 4 March and the Ministry of Interior declared a limit of 250,000 people for whom the country can provide basic standards of living. This is in addition to accommodation provided by the Ukrainian community in the country. UASC above the age of 9 are placed in residential care, while children under the age of 9 are usually placed with foster families. However, there are limited NGO capacities to respond to the refugee influx, and limited capacities of the statutory social services and child protection services, including to provide adequate and sufficient family support services once the refugee families are accommodated. UNICEF is monitoring the situation closely to identify needs and entry points for support and the Deputy Regional Director is undertaking a mission to the areas close to the border in collaboration with the National Committee.

As of 18 March, 240,000 refugees have entered the **Slovak Republic**. The government has moved the main response from the borders (*Vyčne Nemeske and Velke Selemenze*) to the centralized hubs in the larger towns (*Michalovce, Humene, Kosic*). Following an initial triage at the border, people who do not have accommodation are transported from the border to these hubs by shuttle buses, where they will be registered and provided with access to basic services, food, and Non-Food Items (NFIs). Support for refugees at the reception hubs and transit facilities is being overseen and coordinated by local authorities with the bulk of services provided by volunteers, NGOs, and faith-based organisations. On 16 March, the Government approved a resolution to request humanitarian aid from international organizations and non-EU countries.

In **Belarus**, 2,548 refugees have arrived so far. An increase in arrival numbers can be expected if the security situation on the Ukrainian side of the border changes so that it allows people to move to Belarus relatively safely. The arrival numbers may also increase if some of the refugees who have fled Ukraine to the Russian Federation or to Poland decide to move onwards to Belarus to reconnect with family. The Government leads the response to the refugee situation. An inter-agency Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF), led by UNHCR, has been established at country level to complement the efforts of the Government. The Ministry of Interior's Department for Citizenship and Migration (DCM) has informed all partners that the Government of Belarus has the capacity to respond to an influx of Ukrainian refugees. UN agencies and partners will step in when the arrival numbers increase, and the Government asks for filling identified gaps.

As the crisis continues, other countries in the region have also experienced inflows of refugees from Ukraine. In Bulgaria, 81,671 entries have been reported as of 15 March (72,738 from Romania, 8,933 from all other borders including airports) and, while 50 percent were transiting and have left the country, the majority towards Turkey, then Greece, nearly 40,000 people remain in Bulgaria. An estimated 20,000 people have arrived in Turkey since the beginning of war, including people arriving through land border-crossings in the North-West provinces of *Edirne* and *Kirklareli*. Over 200 refugees have also reached Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNICEF Country Offices are closely monitoring the situation to provide support as required and scale up response if the situation deteriorates.⁶

⁶ Numbers in Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Turkey have been reported by Country Offices, based on local information.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Health and Nutrition: In **Belarus**, a meeting with the UNCT and the Minister of Health (MoH) was held on 14 March discussing the issue of the polio and measles outbreak in Ukraine. The MoH is ready to vaccinate Ukrainian children who are not vaccinated and came from the affected areas, engaging their parents or guardianships to provide consent.

Child Protection: In **Hungary**, a strategy for rolling out the Blue Dots is under development and is being discussed with UNHCR. The strategy includes a two-pronged approach: Blue Dots in areas where the refugee population is residing with potential for longer-term support and referrals, and Blue Dots near border crossing areas where the services will adapt to the needs of the population which moves constantly. A mapping of the areas where Blue Dots will be established, and potential partners has already taken place in the municipality of Budapest.

In the **Slovak Republic**, the strategy and rollout plan for the Blue Dot approach is under development, in cooperation with UNHCR, which included the compilation of training material. Initial conversations with the Ministry of Interior for support have been established and discussions with the MOLSAF to further define the support framework in relation to UASC and children being evacuated from the orphanages are ongoing. A mapping of child protection actors, including MHPSS actors, has been initiated to enhance coordination and identify potential partners. Partners will also be identified to implement modalities of alternative care arrangements, with a focus on UASC, and other services for at-risk children and families with specific vulnerabilities.

In **Belarus**, a Blue Dot plan is developed and will be activated in coordination with the Red Cross, complementing services they are already providing in *Homiel Oblast*.

Education: In the **Slovak Republic**, the ministry of education has communicated on the right to education for refugee children, how to register and enrol them in national systems, and is creating access to online platforms to ensure continuous learning opportunities. UNICEF supports access to education under the Working Group of Child Protection.

WASH: In **Belarus**, a warehouse for humanitarian assistance supplies has been secured, 2,600 basic hygiene kits have been procured locally and pre-positioned, for women and children on the move, as well as 1,000 family hygiene kits for families in temporary shelters. Local procurement has been cost-effective and faster, especially considering transportation difficulties.

Social Protection: In the **Slovak Republic**, UNICEF participated in first meeting of the Cash Working Group and in meetings with national authorities and CSO partners to identify needs and gaps in financial support for refugee populations and integration of the refugee caseload into the national social protection system. In parallel, UNICEF has engaged with the European Child Guarantee coordinator, Ministry of MOLSAF, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other key partners to plan a social protection response.

Social Behavior: In **Belarus**, 1,000 copies of first psychological aid informational materials on dealing with stress and assisting children in situations of anxiety, including support available in Belarus, have been produced to be distributed with hygiene kits.

External Media

UNICEF Romania Article: [First shipment of UNICEF humanitarian aid arrives in Ukraine as conflict escalates](#)

UNICEF Romania Article: [Blue Dot - Providing Critical Support To Refugees From Ukraine](#)

UNICEF Romania Article: [Unaccompanied and separated children fleeing escalating conflict in Ukraine must be protected](#)

UNICEF Moldova Press Release: [UNICEF activates the „Blue Dot” in Moldova](#)

UNICEF Moldova Article: [How to talk to your children about conflict and war?](#)

UNICEF ECARO Statement: [Particularly Shocking. Every single minute, 55 children have fled their country. A Ukrainian child has become a refugee almost every single second since the start of the war.](#)

Next Sitrep: 25 March 2022

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