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SELECTED AID AND SUPPORT MEASURES PROVIDED TO WAR REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE IN POLAND. REVISION OF DATA THREE YEARS AFTER THE INVASION*

Introduction: This article synthesizes and exemplifies the current state of aid and support measures offered to war refugees from Ukraine. Readers are introduced to the forms of international protection granted to foreigners in Poland, and specific types of social assistance, educational support, medical care, and professional activity are characterized based on the review of statistical data and previously published studies. Throughout the Russo-Ukrainian war, statistics on the support offered have changed, sometimes leading to contradictory and inaccurate reports being released to the public.

Research Aim: This paper examines the situation of aid and social support measures offered to refugees from Ukraine after three years of the ongoing armed conflict from the perspective of the Polish State as a necessary entity satisfying social needs and expectations. Statistical data collected over time on expenditures and the number of people who, thanks to this data, were able to meet specific life needs, were analysed.

Evidence-based Facts: Poland has been one of the first European countries to take a series of aid and support measures for the refugees from Ukraine. The initial bottom-up social initiatives have transformed into an efficient aid scheme that has functioned despite the prolonged war until this day.

Summary: Despite the lack of experience, Polish state and non-state entities responsible for managing migration policy have attempted to avoid the negative consequences resulting from a large influx of people due to the competitiveness of Polish and Ukrainian nationals on the labour market, and overloading the health care or the education system. Thanks to learning Polish, educational activities, creating and gradually developing job offers on the market, many women have taken up employment.

Keywords: social assistance, support, refugees, migration, refugees from Ukraine, international protection

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INTRODUCTION

The twenty-fourth of February 2022 should be regarded as the onset of the Russian and Ukrainian conflict that has continued as a full-scale war until the present day (April 2025). Ukrainian Armed Forces, as well as organised national structures and the entire society have continued to oppose Russian attacks. Notwithstanding the above, significant numbers of Ukrainian nationals have fled their country fearing for their life, travelling to safer destinations, including in particular the neighbouring Poland. This has been relatively simple considering the official position of the Republic of Poland concerning refugees that clearly points to implementation of integration policies according to which it is important to be open to newcomers and employ a wide range of inclusive activities, enabling full participation of migrants in society (Gracz, 2007).

According to the official data of the Polish Office for Foreigners, after three years of the Russian aggression on Ukraine, more than 1.5 million Ukrainian nationals have been staying in the territory of Poland, and nearly one million Ukrainians have been granted temporary protection. Women account for about 61% of Ukrainian nationals, whereas in the group of people of age of majority, they account for 77%. Every second person registered according to provisions on temporary protection is a child. Territorial distribution of Ukrainians suggests that they mainly settle in provinces with considerable number of large agglomerations. Of these, the most popular are: the Mazowieckie Province with 22% of Ukrainian refugees, followed by Dolnośląskie Province – 12%, Wielkopolskie Province with 11% of refugees, and Małopolskie and Śląskie Provinces with 9% of refugees from behind the eastern border, respectively. It should also be noted that more than 462,000 Ukrainian nationals are holders of valid temporary residence permits. The rationale behind issuing of such permits has been primarily the fact of undertaking paid work by female refugees. Residence authorisations/Permanent residence permits or long-term resident permits in the European Union have been granted to 92,000 individuals (Office for Foreigners, 2025).

Due to the fact that the boundaries between meanings of such terms as social assistance and social support have become blurred (Winiarski, 2015), they are sometimes regarded as synonyms or near-synonyms. Despite ambiguities and variety of approaches, classically they have kept their distinct meanings. For purposes of this publication, definitions developed by Marynowicz-Hetka (2006) were adopted, therefore, in line with the proposed meaning, assistance “consists in accompanying, stimulating activity, support, being watchful, participation and helping the ward, or family to skilfully use the environmental impacts. Its characteristic is to assure that a ward is fully aware, active and responsible for himself or herself” (p. 510). Social support on the other hand, is defined as “a certain type of interaction that is established in order to help either or both interaction participants in solving a problem, overcome difficulties, reorganise a disturbed relationship with

the environment. It involves specific actions of some people (individuals, families, social groups) in relation to other people. It is focused on individuals, families, social groups (specific communities) that found themselves in a difficult situation. It pays attention to the significance of affective and self-help components in this relationship, not necessarily established on the professional level” (Marynowicz-Hetka, 2006, p. 516).

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND AIM

The main aim of this paper is to identify and provide a detailed description of aid and support measures offered to war refugees fleeing Ukraine over the three years of the Russian and Ukrainian armed conflict. Constitution of assistance-related assumptions and procedures as well as adoption of specific national crisis management policies, among other measures, have led to a situation where the Polish public was presented with different, sometimes contrary positions. Depending on the adopted strategy, the Polish State could, with a more or less restricted engagement, implement the aid-related claims, which either way depleted the government budget. The purpose of the deliberations is to present achievements in different aid areas and summary references of presented figures to the number of individuals who managed to satisfy their specific life needs.

Based on the analysis of selected documents, the author addressed the following research problems: 1. What are systemic solutions for providing aid and social support to refugees from Ukraine after three years of war? 2. What are the actual statistics on aid and social support measures provided to the war refugees from Ukraine?

Aims formulated in this manner result from the opinion present in the public debate about weakness and limited engagement of Poles in aid measures offered to persons from behind the eastern border in the long-term. What is more, political and social discussion as to whether to help or not has continued and the stance depends on the adopted approach to refugees – whether they have been defined as refugees (in need) or as economic migrants (producing violence), or as “good” or “bad” refugees (Podgórska et al., 2024).

EVIDENCE-BASED FACTS

Forms of international protection granted to foreigners in Poland

Displacement is a complex phenomenon analysed at different levels, starting from social, economic and political all the way to international. One of the most significant aspects has been the legal approach that determines principles of granting

legal protection. The Constitution of Poland, under its Article 38, guarantees preservation of life to every person. What is more, foreigners are ensured with a possibility to grant asylum in the territory of the Republic of Poland [Article 56(1)]. In the circumstances of seeking protection against persecution in Poland, pursuant to the binding international agreements [Article 56(2)], foreigners can be granted refugee status (Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997; J. of Laws No. 78, item 483 as amended). Displacement is an international phenomenon, as it essentially involves forced cross-border movements. Therefore, the most appropriate provisions are those included in intergovernmental arrangements, although these have to a large extent been determined by instruments of the international law the Republic of Poland was signing over a number of years. Principles of granting protection to refugees, or more broadly foreigners, as well as rights granted to them in the territory of the Republic of Poland result directly from international obligations adopted by our country. The Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951 adopted by the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries, and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees adopted on 31 January 1967 in New York by the United Nations General Assembly complementing the convention have been the cornerstone international documents governing the protection of refugees. The significance of these acts is particularly important in the face of rules and procedures for determining refugee status based on the generalised definition of a refugee, the fundamental rights and obligations of persons recognised as refugees, but also implementation of these acts by the ratifying states. Attention should be paid to the fact that pursuant to the Geneva Convention, protection can be granted only under strictly determined circumstances, which means that not all potential situations resulting in the need to flee the country of origin due to circumstances beyond the will of an individual provide grounds for granting protection (Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees done at Geneva on 28 July 1951; J. of Laws of 1991, No. 119, item 515).

Pursuant to Article 13 (1) of the Act on Granting Protection to Foreigners within the Territory of the Republic of Poland, “a foreigner is granted refugee status, if owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted in the country of origin for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership of a particular social group is unable or unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.” Article 13(3) of the Act offers a detailed provision that persecution must be recurrent or in its essence constitute a serious violation of human rights (Act of 13 June 2003 on Granting Protection to Foreigners within the Territory of the Republic of Poland; J. of Laws, item 680 as amended), in particular the rights referred to in Article 15(2) of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of November 4, 1950 done at Rome (J. of Laws of 1993, item 284 as amended). Persecutions should be a cumulation of various acts or omissions constituting the violation of human rights, and their consequences should

be equally as severe as the persecutions referred to in item 1. (Act of 13 June 2003 on Granting Protection...; J. of Laws of 2012, item 680 as amended). Defining the term persecution more precisely, it may consist in such practices as, for instance:

1. Acts of physical or mental violence, including acts of sexual violence;
2. Administrative, legal, police, and/or judicial measures which are in themselves discriminatory or which are implemented in a discriminatory manner;
3. Instigation or conducting criminal proceedings and, consequently, inflicting of disproportionate or discriminatory punishment on an individual;
4. Lack of possibility to appeal against a disproportionate or discriminatory punishment before the court;
5. Acts of a gender-specific or child-specific nature;
6. Instigation or conducting criminal proceedings and punishment for refusal to perform military service in a conflict, where performing military service would include crimes or acts set out in Article 19(1)(3) (Act of 13 June 2003 on Granting Protection...; J. of Laws of 2012, item 680 as amended).

Another form of protection offered to foreigners is subsidiary protection. It is granted when a foreigner fails to meet the requirements resulting from conditions establishing an entitlement to a refugee status. To be more specific, this may happen when returning to their country of origin runs the risk of suffering a serious harm due to possible sentencing of the foreigner to a death penalty, or his or her execution. Another instance is a possibility of suffering torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, or punishment. Subsidiary protection can also be obtained in the face of a serious and individualised threat to human life or health resulting from widespread use of violence against civilians during an international or domestic armed conflict.

Asylum is the third form of protection. Pursuant to Article 90 of the Act on Protection of Foreigners, – “[a] foreigner can, upon his or her request, be granted the asylum in the Republic of Poland, when it is necessary to provide him/her with protection and when a vital interest of the Republic of Poland so requires” (Act of 13 June 2003 on Granting Protection...; J. of Laws of 2012, item 680 as amended). It is important that making decisions related to granting asylum is purely discretionary; however, such decisions can solely be granted by the state. A relatively popular form of protection among foreigners in our country has been the so-called temporary protection referred to in Article 106(1) of the Act on Protection of Foreigners. It can be obtained in case of invasion, civil war, war, ethnic conflicts, or flagrant violations of human rights. It is not important whether arrival in the Republic of Poland was spontaneous, or aided by a state or by an international community. Temporary protection is granted until it is possible for a foreigner to return to their previous place of residence, subject to a reservation that it cannot last longer than one year. If despite the elapsing time, the risk shall continue to exist, the previously

existing hindrances to their safe return to their own country shall not cease, temporary protection can be extended by a period of subsequent 6 months, ultimately not more than twice (Act of 13 June 2003 on Granting Protection...; J. of Laws of 2012, item 680 as amended). Decisions concerning granting of such protection are issued by the Council of the European Union, whereas the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland may grant temporary protection to foreigners by way of a regulation, if no decision in this respect is granted by the Council of the European Union. It should be stressed that all forms of protection are related to some form of direct or indirect coercion which provides grounds for abandoning one's previous place of residence. Economic reasons, however, cannot lead to granting the protection (Baran-Kurasiewicz, 2021).

Aid having a social character

The attack of the Russian troops on Ukraine triggered the largest migration crisis worldwide in recent years. About 15 million people fled the Ukrainian territory, with the prevailing number of women, children, and the elderly (Lisowska & Łojko, 2023). It should be reminded that men aged 18 to 60 years old are forbidden to leave the country; therefore, the migrating group of war refugees has been highly female-dominated. At the end of March 2024, about 5.9 million refugees from Ukraine moved to Europe, whereas 952,106 refugees were recorded in Poland (International Rescue Committee, 2024). Currently, Ukrainian nationals have comprised the largest group of foreigners legally residing in the territory of the Republic of Poland (Office for Foreigners, 2025). One of the greatest challenges for a receiving country has by far been offering end-to-end aid and support related to welfare and language but also education or health. Social aid is undoubtedly a priority for state institutions engaged in securing proper conditions for Ukrainians. It should be emphasized that the draft Act on aiding Ukrainian nationals in connection with an armed conflict adopted by the Council of Ministers was already prepared on March 8, 2022, whereas the special purpose act was adopted by the Lower House of the Polish Parliament on March 12, 2022, and the proposed actions came into effect as of February 24, 2022. In the initial phase of the war and crisis, the supply of the basic goods and aid to war refugees was primarily conducted through bottom-up citizens' initiatives, operations of public benefit purpose entities supported by the government-supervised mechanism of coordinating humanitarian aid. It should be mentioned that funds for Ukrainian nationals mainly come from the special-purpose support fund created at Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego (BGK). It has been supplied, among others, by cash deposited by entities in the public finances sector, through public budget appropriation, issues of treasury bonds, donations and loans, as well as non-reimbursable foreign funds (Act of March 12, 2022 on Aid for Ukrainian nationals in connection with an armed conflict in Ukraine; J. of Laws of 2022, item 583). Widespread initiatives super-

vised by social assistance centres included creation of commodity aid centres and at the same time mobilising the society to donate essential foodstuffs, personal care products, clothes or footwear. Special points (shops), where refugees could collect clothes, footwear, cosmetics, or cleaning agents donated by other people, free of charge were an innovative bottom-up form of assistance. Examples of such venues include:

- Take & Go free shop – created in Gdańsk, owing to coordination of the City of Gdańsk, Inicjowanie Rozwoju [*Initiating Development*] Foundation and Madison Shopping Centre;
- Free Ukraina Shop – a collection and distribution point located at the Rembertów district in Warsaw, commodity aid point created upon the initiative of a local Facebook group. It was a private company that allocated the premises in a shopping centre for commercial purposes and was staffed with volunteers;
- Szafa Dobra [*Wardrobe of Goodness*], a free shop situated in the building of a former Plaza Shopping Centre in Kraków, initiated by the Internationaler Bund Polska foundation, Strabag Polska, operator of Centrum Wielkokulturowe [*Multicultural Centre*] in Kraków, as well as Diverse and Ikea retail chains;
- a free shop called Półki Dobra [*Shelves of Goodness*] located in Rybnik, in the rooms of the Our Lady of Sorrows parish church. Female Ukrainians residing in Rybnik were the working staff at the store; they participated in the “28th district” project and acted to the benefit of Ukrainians dwelling in this city (Ołdak, 2022).

Similar points were also established in Tychy, Katowice, Tczew, and Mysłenice (Ołdak, 2022).

Initial, non-professional forms of assistance offered to refugees were supported by state-based activities, mainly implemented by social assistance centres. By June 30, 2024, binding regulations provided support for natural persons and other entities ensuring shelter and meals for the refugees in the amount of PLN 40 per day for the period of 120 days calculated as from the date of Ukrainian national's arrival in Poland, with a reservation that in justified cases this period may be extended. This kind of assistance and support in the face of mass emergency, with simultaneous pressure on self-help, stimulation of self-reliance and sense of community and responsibility for the fate of others, in this case of Ukrainian nationals, revealed strong points of such practices pursued by Polish nationals. What should be stressed is: 1. Fast response that effectively satisfied the essential needs; 2. Integration of the Polish community with the group of war refugees that contributed to proper co-existence of many individuals; 3. Use of material resources, including housing available to citizens, and 4. Use of citizens' creative capacity filling the gap in the insufficient public support (Pytel, 2023). Thus, it may be assumed that

offering assistance to refugees has become a form of support for Polish nationals who would receive funds necessary to make ends meet, and owing to obtained financial resources, some have used it as a way of earning income. Moreover, as part of highly extensive assistance offered to citizens of Ukraine, social welfare centres have implemented the following tasks:

1. Accepting applications and implementation of assistance related to cash benefits for the organisation of board and lodging for the refugees staying in Poland in connection with the war in the territory of Ukraine;
2. Accepting applications and implementation of assistance in the form of a one-time cash benefit of PLN 300 per person. The purpose of the benefit is to ensure maintenance in the territory of the Republic of Poland, it is mainly intended to cover the cost of housing, footwear, food, clothing, and personal care products;
3. Providing assistance in the form of serving meals, and in the case of children attending teaching establishments – of school lunches;
4. Provision of financial assistance – in the form of a permanent benefit. The following is a condition for granting the benefit: being self-reliant and running a household, age of majority, incapacity to work and income lower than the income criterion of a person of full legal age staying with a family or a person running a household alone; alternatively, a person unfit to work due to advanced age. It is possible to obtain a permanent benefit, if the person was totally unable to work and income of such a person or per capita income in the family is lower than the income criterion per capita in the family. Another form of assistance is granting material aid in the form of a temporary benefit to which individuals are entitled due to long-term disease, disability, unemployment, possibility to maintain or become eligible for benefits under other social security schemes (...) (Lisowska & Łojko, 2023).

Data presented by Statistics Poland show that already in 2022 social benefits were used by 1,111,000 Ukrainian nationals and 612,000 families, and the total amount allocated for payment of these benefits amounted to PLN 364.8 million. Social assistance funds paid out to refugees from Ukraine were divided, for statistical purposes, into three categories: cash benefits of PLN 300 per capita (the so-called 300+ benefit), assistance in the form of meals, and other benefits. The number of PLN-300 payments was 1,070,300. Total expenses related to payment of this benefit amounted to PLN 321.1 million. The number of Ukrainian households eligible for that benefit was 596,400. In 2022, benefits in the form of meals were addressed to 97,700 people, and the number granted was 2,705,000 for the total amount of PLN 26.5 million. The number of people eligible for other benefits amounted to 33,300 persons, which translated into 67,900 of granted benefits with the total value of PLN 17.2 million. Temporary benefit represented the highest

percentage in these benefits and the amount paid was PLN 9 million (Statistics Poland, 2023).

Medical care has become an important component of this support; in particular, in the context of war and continued armed aggression. War refugees staying in Poland are eligible for healthcare services. Relevant rules and procedures have been laid out in the Act of August 27, 2004 on healthcare services financed from public funds (Notice of the Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament of the Republic of Poland of November 24, 2022 on the announcement of a consolidated text of the Act on healthcare services financed from public funds; J. of Laws of 2022, item 2561 as amended) with a certain exclusion. What is involved here is spa treatment and spa rehabilitation, as well as administration of medicinal products distributed to benefit holders under healthcare schemes supervised by the Minister of Health (Pytel, 2023). Legal regulations, therefore, provide access to healthcare without the need of meeting specific conditions. The analysis of data concerning refugee access to healthcare shows that more than 42.5% of respondents failed to encounter any difficulties in this respect. However, nearly 50% of refugees reported problems with availability of services provided by specialists and general practitioners. Moreover, in the first quarter of 2024, about 48% of refugees left for Ukraine to use their local medical services, and difficulties with access to and quality of such services in Poland that involved long waiting times were listed among the reasons for this status quo. In addition, 23.5% of refugees would leave Poland to buy medicine (International Rescue Committee, 2024). Therefore, irrespective of the reasons, it can be stated that despite offered opportunities, refugees failed to significantly overload the healthcare system in Poland.

In parallel to social welfare activities to the benefit of refugees taken by state authorities, a considerable number of third-sector organisations have operated across the country. Non-governmental institutions have undertaken a number of aid and support measures in Poland which should be regarded as highly important. Among these, special recognition should be given to Caritas Polska, Polish Red Cross (PCK), Polska Akcja Humanitarna [*PAH - Polish Humanitarian Action*], Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ukrainy [*Society of the Friends of Ukraine*], Fundacja Ocalenie [*Salvation Foundation*], Fundacja Centrum Pomocy Międzynarodowej (FCPM) [*International Aid Center Foundation*], Fundacja SOS Wioski Dziecięce [*Children's Homes SOS Foundation*], the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights or UNICEF Polska, and many others (Grabowska & Pięta-Szawara, 2023). Third sector (NGO) activities were highly diversified and initially poorly coordinated. However, it is possible to classify the following groups of undertakings:

1. organisation of safe place of refuge for asylum seekers (Refugees Welcome programme – Fundacja Ocalenie, Ukraiński Dom w Warszawie [*Ukrainian House in Warsaw*] – Fundacja “Nasz Wybór” [*“Our Choice” Foundation*], Fundacja Polska Gościnność “Chlebem i Solą” [*“With Bread and*

- Salt” Polish Hospitality Foundation*], *sosua.help* portal – PAH, Fundacja Stocznia [*The Shipyard Foundation*], or Polskie Forum Migracyjne [*Polish Migration Forum*]);
2. caring for the welfare of people offering housing to migrants (Human-Doc Foundation released a Guide for individuals hosting refugees from Ukraine);
 3. offering of psychological support for the persons in need (Nagle Sami [*Suddenly Alone*] Foundation, Polskie Forum Migracyjne, Edukacja Społeczna RAZEM [*TOGETHER – Social Education*]);
 4. support for people with disabilities and impairments (Stowarzyszenie Mudita [*Mudita Association*], Fundacja Akademia Młodych Głuchych [*The Young Deaf Foundation Academy*], Fundacja SMA [*SMA Foundation*], Stowarzyszenie Fizjoterapia Polska [*Polish Physical Therapy Association*]);
 5. offering legal counselling (among others, Fundacja Ocalenie, Fundacja Polskie Forum Migracyjne);
 6. coordination of voluntary activities (among others, PAH);
 7. assistance and support in learning Polish and educational guidance (among others, Fundacja Polska Gościnność “Chlebem i Solą”);
 8. support in transporting refugees from war stricken areas (among others, Stowarzyszenie SOS Wioski Dziecięce);
 9. assistance to LGBT+ persons (among others, Grupa Stonewall [*Stonewall Group*], Queer Tour, Lambda Warszawa [*Lambda Warsaw*]);
 10. aiding and rescuing animals (among others, Benek Foundation, “ADA” pet clinic in Przemyśl);
 11. organisation of commodity collections and fund-raising events (UNICEF, Polish Red Cross);
 12. organisation of blood donation events (among others, *krwiod@wcy.org*) (Dudkiewicz, 2022).

The diversity and scope of aid activities, but primarily their scale, showed that the Polish society responded to the migration crisis caused by refugees from Ukraine in a firm and accurate, and yet spontaneous manner.

Aiding vocational and educational development

Data presented by the National Bank of Poland (2024) shows that work was the basic source of income of immigrants from Ukraine, and that they have been highly active on the Polish labour market. Due to the need for vocational development and integration of foreigners from Ukraine, Polish social assistance and labour market institutions, as well as non-governmental organisations undertook to implement the “Razem możemy więcej” [*We can do more together*] aid scheme. Its primary goal was to aid vocational development, integration, as well as social activity of foreigners legally staying in the territory of the Republic of Poland. Im-

plicitly, foreigners who found themselves in an emergency situation in the face of evacuation from war-stricken areas in the territory of Ukraine were especially welcome to take part in the Scheme. Other individuals included those evacuated to Poland in 2021 in connection with implementation of governmental initiatives supporting allies coming from Afghanistan. As reported by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, by the end of December 2023 as part of the Scheme, each Polish province implemented 112 projects, the target group of which were children and women from Ukraine. The projects mainly included vocational or language training, aid measures helping them to find a job, professional legal or psychological support, educational activities or initiatives for migrants' children, as well as undertakings intended to integrate them with Polish nationals. Considering the number of agreements entered into by the Ministry, it should be pointed out that between 2022 and 2023, it allocated financial resources from the Labour Fund to public financial entities amounting to PLN 43,250,956.98, whereas entities from outside the public finance sector received an amount exceeding PLN 58,550,247. For the entire period of the first Scheme, aid measures were offered to more than 73,000 foreigners. Statistics of successfully implemented projects have shown that 15% (2,300) of children from Ukraine and 24% of people of legal age (8.4%) were learning Polish, psychological support was offered to 22% of minors (3,500) and 15% of adults (amounting to 5,400), legal counselling services were offered to 16% of refugees (5.6%), vocational trainings were attended by 9% (3,100), job agency services were used by 23% of adults (8,200) 2,600 of whom got a job (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, 2024).

When quoting data presented by Statistics Poland, it should be stressed that in the structure of all foreigners working in Poland at the end of September 2024, the largest group of foreigners were in fact Ukrainian nationals amounting to 707,900 individuals, and their share in the overall number of foreigners was 67.2%, which means that it got reduced when compared to January 2022 by 6.1 percentage points (Statistics Poland, 2025). Research conducted by the National Bank of Poland (2024) found that immigrants from Ukraine have done much less basic jobs, but increasingly often performed qualified work. When comparing this data with the year 2023, percentage of immigrants doing basic jobs decreased from 53% to 44%, and in the same period the percentage of immigrants doing skilled jobs with qualifications not related to higher education increased from 33% to 38%, although the percentage of immigrants demonstrating higher education while working in Poland went up from 10% to 14%. It should be stressed that the employment rate of immigrants depends on the date of their arrival in Poland. About one-fourth of immigrants in Poland have worked in industry. Immigrants who had arrived before the invasion have been more often employed in transport, construction industry, administration, or office jobs. Refugees, that is people fleeing the war since 2022, have more often been employed in the services, that is personal services –

hairdresser's, beauty specialists, hotel, and restaurant staff, and services provided directly in households, that is cleaning or care of the elderly. Relatively more often than among immigrants, refugees engage in services requiring high qualifications (e.g., medical care, finances or IT). This may be the result of quite a rapid process of assimilation of the arriving refugees with Polish nationals.

Education is a key aspect of supporting war refugees from Ukraine related to employment is. There is no denying that organisation of education for Ukrainian nationals has been a difficult task for the Polish system of education. Legal grounds making refugees from Ukraine eligible for the use of education and care in schools and nurseries are laid down in Article 165(1) of the Act of 14 December 2016 – Law on Education (Notice of the Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament of the Republic of Poland of 10 March 2023 on the announcement of a consolidated text of the Act – Law on Education; J. of Laws of 2023, item 900, as amended). The same Act also governs the right of persons other than Ukrainians having no sufficient command of Polish, to use a free of charge extra Polish language courses organised and conducted by schools. This may last for a maximum period of 24 months. The Act of March 12, 2022 on Assistance for Ukrainian nationals in connection with war facilitated the question of employing a support teacher, that is a person with a proficient command of the language of a foreigner's origin, who would be employed by school authorities as teacher's assistant for the period not longer than 12 months [J. of Laws of 2023, item 900 as amended, Article 165(8)]. It offers a possibility to employ a non-Polish national who has a sufficient command of written and spoken Polish that enables provision of assistance to a pupil with elimination of the need to confirm the command of Polish with a relevant document (J. of Laws of 2023, item 103 as amended, Article 57). Citing data from the System of Educational Information, in April 2024, the registered number of refugees from Ukraine who attended different types of educational institutions amounted to 180,000 persons. Of these, there were 134,000 of school-aged children and adolescents. Moreover, about 50,000 pupils are migrants from the East who arrived in Poland before the escalation of warfare in 2022. In 2024, Social Insurance Institution [in Polish: ZUS] paid out the 800+ benefit to as many as 218,000 children aged 0 to 17 years coming from behind the eastern border, and estimates show that there are 155,000 school-aged children from Ukraine in this age group. The statistics reveal that 12,000 pupils being Ukrainian nationals attend 21,000 schools in Poland – those refugees account for 3% of all pupils learning in Polish schools. To illustrate the situation, it may be stated that every fourth grade across all Polish schools is composed of Polish and Ukrainian pupils. The largest number of young refugees attend primary schools (8,000), then general secondary schools (1,500 refugees), technical secondary schools (1,400), and sectoral vocational schools (900 Ukrainian nationals). About 60% of pupils – war refugees – have used additional, free Polish classes conducted in schools (Chrostowska, 2024). Emphasized difficulties

encountered by Ukrainian children in the Polish system of education include pupil overloading which results from linking the systems of education with extra classes in Polish schools and from absence of a sufficient number of intercultural assistants and supporting staff during classes in preparatory grades. Equally significant are challenges related to child rotation and their continued relocation. The reported technical inconveniences include problems with transition from the eight to ninth grade, and nuisance related to the preparation of essential teaching materials for children, especially in the light of transformations provided for in the existing laws (International Rescue Committee, 2024).

SUMMARY

Aid and support measures offered in Poland to refugees from Ukraine have been implemented pursuant to the Act of 12.03.2022 (J. of Laws of 2023, item 103, as amended), under which every Ukrainian national can receive a cash or non-cash benefit as part of the support for foreigners. "In case of extremely difficult experiences, provision of support to the victims is not only a task for institutions but also an obligation of persons becoming witnesses of the problems" (Oliwa-Ciesielska, 2023, p. 90). Current assistance for the refugees must be provided in the context of prevention, intervention and integration. All of these areas appear to be essential to strengthen their sense of security, and consequently, independent self-determination in a new reality of a foreign country. The diversity of experiences, actions, and instruments should be versatile enough to be able to respond to the needs of people staying in our country in a relevant manner and at a proper level. The dedicated aid and support should cover both legal issues – related to the rights and obligations faced by the refugees, but also maintenance and, more broadly, social issues – related not only to the fundamental needs (i.e., shelter, health or education), but also cultural aspects manifested in finding their own place to live and integration with the Polish society. Professional activity confirmed by numerous examples of good practices and collaboration between Ukrainian and Polish nationals is also significant.

CONCLUSIONS

The scale and character of challenges related to offering assistance and support to war refugees from Ukraine requires designing of a multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral system, as "influx of refugees from Ukraine has caused probably the largest mobilisation of Polish society in the 21st century, in some ways comparable to the activity revealed in the crucial political moments in the last decades: the

mass “Solidarity” movement in the years 1980 to 1981 and political transformations in 1989. Without civic engagement, aid offered in Poland to the refugees would be much less effective, and in many aspects surely impossible” (Żołędowski, 2023, p. 8). Among recommendations that come to mind in connection with war displacement, it appears that the most important one is to develop procedures that will prevent the authorities from calculation of political interests – from negation of aid and support to selective engagement in aid activities, use of force at the border, to altruistic solutions, and thus selective aid solutions for war refugees. It should also be noted that the extent of assistance and social support initiated by spontaneous and self-organised, bottom-up activities of the society launched a debate about immigration, refugees, national border in the context of safety of Poland and Polish nationals. The present situation poses a challenge and at the same an opportunity for designing a necessary migration policy which, as exemplified by war refugees from Ukraine, may be based on the bottom-up activity of Polish nationals, non-governmental organisations, and engagement of local governments. Organisation of aid in the face of the Russian and Ukrainian war, to some extent necessitated effective collaboration between public institutions and non-governmental organizations with the nationals. However, effective assistance would not be possible were it not for the engagement of entities having specific competences, undertaking specific tasks, and pursuing the fundamental objective that determined an effective support system in case of emergency, that is war. The present situation has forced the decision-makers to stand up to challenges of elaborating systemic integration policy solutions, which pertains to numerous life areas, such as language learning, education, housing, culture, or general social relationships, among others. We must act in the long-term, according to a specific plan, work in many directions, with no chaos and ill-considered actions which cannot be retreated from, as the atmosphere of the debates in this respect influences the public moods. Polish administration and non-government organisations should stand up to a challenge of preparing integration policies (...) providing a framework for building cohesive and multi-cultural communities (Wyligąła, 2022).

To conclude, issues related to the broad question of aiding refugees should be included in systemic national schemes likely to be reflected in the pragmatic activities at the provincial, voivodeship, and district levels. It appears essential to coordinate the collaboration between different sectors, institutions, and local communities. The applied inclusive model, differing from the one prevailing in other countries and the UNHCR model of building refugee “camps” near border crossings, turns out to be effective and well-grounded. As pointed out by Fir-lit-Fesnak (2022), it is open to all refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine, it provides for solidarity in action of the Polish nation and state, integration of the refugees to the Polish society, as well as discontinuing relocation. Adoption of this model of assistance, meaning acquisition by Ukrainian nationals of the same social and eco-

conomic rights as Polish nationals, significantly increases public spending and scope of tasks of all entities engaged in providing support. Thus, it is recommended and/or necessary, to ensure the ongoing control of the adopted rules and principles, with simultaneous elimination of difficulties entailed in the adopted procedures, both in aiding governmental entities, non-governmental organisations, and social circumstances. Long-term engagement in aid activities also requires caring for the scheme of incentives referring to the varied attitudes and employee motivations from many sectors of social life, making an effort to build friendly relations with Ukrainian nationals. All activities referred to the above in practice should contribute to stepping beyond the idea of maximising individual profits to the benefit of building an open multi-cultural society. From the scientific point of view, the discussed phenomenon needs to be further explored, as transformation of migration policies developed by the state appears to be unavoidable.

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WYBRANE DZIAŁANIA POMOCOWE I WSPIERAJĄCE UKRAIŃSKICH UCHODźCÓW WOJENNYCH W POLSCE – PRZEGLĄD DANYCH PO TRZECH LATACH OD INWAZJI

Wprowadzenie: Artykuł stanowi syntetyzujący i egzemplifikujący opis działań pomocowych oraz wspierających wobec sytuacji ukraińskich uchodźców wojennych. Czytelnikom przybliżo-



no zagadnienia dotyczące form ochrony międzynarodowej udzielanej cudzoziemcom na terenie Polski oraz scharakteryzowano konkretne rodzaje pomocy socjalnej, wsparcia edukacyjnego, opieki medycznej oraz aktywności zawodowej na podstawie przeglądu danych statystycznych i dotychczas opublikowanych opracowań. Na przestrzeni czasu trwania wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej statystyki dotyczące oferowanego wsparcia zmieniały się, wprowadzając do wiadomości publicznej niekiedy sprzeczne i nieprawdziwe doniesienia.

Cel badań: Perspektywa badawcza przyjęta w niniejszej pracy jest oglądem sytuacji niesienia pomocy i wsparcia społecznego uchodźcom z Ukrainy po trzech latach trwania konfliktu zbrojnego z punktu widzenia Polski jako koniecznego podmiotu prawa zaspokajającego potrzeby oraz społeczne oczekiwania. Analizowane są zgromadzone na przestrzeni czasu dane statystyczne dotyczące wydatków oraz liczba osób, którym dzięki nim zaspokajano określone potrzeby życiowe.

Stan wiedzy: Polska jest jednym z pierwszych krajów Europy, która podjęła szereg działań pomocowych na rzecz uchodźców z Ukrainy. Początkowy oddolny charakter inicjatyw społecznych przerodził się w sprawny system pomocowy, który funkcjonuje pomimo przedłużającej się wojny po dziś dzień.

Podsumowanie: Mimo braku doświadczenia, polskie podmioty państwowe i pozapaństwowe odpowiedzialne za zarządzanie polityką migracyjną starają się unikać negatywnych konsekwencji wynikających z dużego napływu ludności w związku z konkurencyjnością obywateli obu narodów na rynku pracy, przeciążeniem opieki zdrowotnej czy systemu oświaty. Dzięki nauce języka polskiego, działaniom edukacyjnym, tworzeniu i sukcesywnemu rozwojowi ofert na rynku pracy wiele kobiet podjęło zatrudnienie.

Słowa kluczowe: pomoc społeczna, wsparcie, uchodźcy, migracje, ukraińscy uchodźcy, ochrona międzynarodowa