DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

POLAND MOLDOVA AND ROMANIA

POLAND | Protection Monitoring Analysis

LOWER SILESIAN VOIVODESHIP

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This brief provides an overview of the key challenges faced by the population displaced due to the ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine, particularly now residing in the region of Lower Silesia. Based on existing research conducted by other humanitarian actors, the document focuses on topics related to access to safe accommodation, employment, documentation, social cohesion, and protection from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Throughout the document, these topics will be referred to as 'protection risks', which include the risk of labour exploitation, eviction, lack of tenure security, limited access to documentation, as well as hate speech and harassment. These issues are essential in understanding the obstacles to self-reliance, meeting basic needs, and integration. Additionally, they are equally important in shaping a humanitarian and durable solutions response that is adequate to the needs of the affected population and considerate of the existing services and support systems.

There are various reasons why conflict-affected persons choose to stay in small urban areas, but the main factor is the better availability or cheaper prices of accommodation compared to big cities. However, living in a smaller urban area also often results in a more limited job market and weaker job security, a lack of places at public childcare facilities, and reduced availability of language courses. The analysis of the key-informant interviews (KII) and focus-group discussions (FGD) collected outside of Wrocław between August and September 2023 shows that refugees are exposed to different forms of labour exploitation and deceptive recruitment practices. They feel insecure regarding the prospects of finding or maintaining accommodation, especially at the places of collective residence, and struggle to provide for their basic needs. The following chapters will present a description of the main manifestations of protection risks for refugees from Ukraine, the reasons why they occur, and how conflict-affected populations respond to these challenges.

The findings reveal that the respondents faced unwillingness from employers to offer official employment and employment contracts, incomplete or even lack of remuneration for work performed, including compensation for working during weekends or holidays.

Despite the comparatively cheaper rental costs, the uncertainty around accommodation is notable in small cities. Those residing in collective sites are usually the most vulnerable due to age, gender, health, or economic resources. They live under the threat of site closure and/or relocation and are afraid that they will not have the ability to cover their household's accommodation costs on their own. Some respondents also reported instances of abuse from homeowners participating in the programme of "40+"[1], or from collective accommodation site managers, with no effective reporting or complaint mechanisms known to them.

Several common drivers increase exposure to these risks. These include the language barrier, a lack of awareness among the affected population about their rights and legal and administrative processes, as well as limited access to free legal aid, unwillingness to report after encountering violence or rights violations, and lastly a scarcity of places for childcare and support for single mothers. Another prominent driver is the lack of opportunity to build social networks between the displaced communities and the host communities. This is important, as the fatigue with the war and fear of protraction of conflict, deteriorating economic conditions, and dividing political narratives may create a cumulative negative effect, whilst there are not enough conscious efforts to strengthen social cohesion, which could create the cumulative a positive feeling of social solidarity.

[1] The "40+ "programme is a financial assistance to provide accommodation and food for refugees from Ukraine, which is granted on the basis of Article 13 of the Law "On Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of this State".

To cope with the above-described risks, the affected persons most commonly resort to extensive use of social networks within their family, friends, and broader neighbourhood groups. If that is inefficient, people return to Ukraine, despite the immense danger to their lives. The latter coping strategy is used especially in cases of loss of accommodation or if persons become victims of fraud or violence. To avoid exposure to fraud or to get trusted information primarily on the job market, access to documents, and administrative procedures, respondents reach out to their social networks. Additionally, information was sourced through social media. In cases of labour exploitation, the most common response was to leave the exploitative job and find another one, often without formally filing complaints.

As highlighted by Key Informants in interviews, among those most exposed to the risks were single mothers with preschool or early-school-age children, the elderly, and persons with different disabilities. These groups are more likely to be affected by the abovementioned risks as they tend to accept dishonest recruitment schemes due to fewer options for employment. It is also harder for them to find accommodation, to travel to get the necessary documentation, and they face more obstacles in overcoming language barriers.

The next chapters will present a more detailed overview of the context and characteristics of each of the protection risks explored during the protection monitoring.

CONTEXT

Lower Silesian Voivodeship, after the Mazovian Voivodship, remains the second most frequently chosen destination by refugees from Ukraine, followed by Silesian and Greater Poland Voivodeships. The number of refugees from Ukraine with an active registration for temporary protection (holding PESEL -UKR) in Lower Silesia has reached 108,258[2]. Of displaced persons in this region, 49% reside in the city of Wrocław. Wrocław County shows a notable tendency toward refugee population centralisation, based on various pull factors. There is a perceivable disproportion in the services aimed at supporting refugees available in the voivodeship capital, in comparison to other towns of Lower Silesia. Third-country nationals living and working in Lower Silesia are Belarussians, Georgians, Russians, and recently a growing number of individuals from Latin American countries.

With numerous local and international organizations working with migrants and refugees, and the authorities promoting the city as multicultural, Wrocław is an active centre of public debate on local migration policy and integration of new inhabitants. In June 2022, the city hosted the Round Table on refugees from Ukraine, a Polish-nationwide event that concluded with the creation of a White Book of recommended law changes. After the Wrocław Strategy of Intercultural Dialogue 2018-2022 came to an end, the municipality of Wrocław has been engaged in a process of dialogue with the local actors on creating a new policy, conducting local studies, consultations, and networking meetings. Noteworthy are the initiatives of civil society organizations, such as the working group for migration, and the development of a model of migration policy in collaboration with the municipality. Since 2021, the city is also a member of the Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC).

This report outlines insights gathered during the first round of data collection for the Danish Refugee Council protection monitoring, conducted from August to October 2023 in partnership with Nomada Association. The data collection involved collaboration with the population displaced due to the Russian-led armed conflict in Ukraine, and with service providers from the public, private, and non-governmental sectors. Overall, 114 respondents from the affected population and 65 respondents from service providers were interviewed in five

[2] 1. “Number of Application for Temporary Protection (PESEL),” UNHCR Operational Data Portal (ODP), n.d., https://data2.unhcr.org/fr/dataviz/226.

cities: Wrocław, Dzierżoniów, Legnica, Bolesławiec and Pieszyce. Most of the data was collected outside of Wrocław, with around 40% of data being collected in the collective accommodation sites.

The main objective in carrying out protection monitoring is to conduct a thorough analysis of issues that the displaced men, women, boys, and girls currently face. This evidence-based approach informs the development of targeted protection programmes to address the needs of displacement-affected communities in the specified region. The data collection was community-focused, with KIIs and FGDs specifically tailored to areas beyond metropolitan cities, concentrating on the Lower Silesian voivodship. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the protection risks faced by the affected population in these locations.

It is crucial to acknowledge limitations in the data collection. The selection of interviewees, while indicative, may not definitively represent the diverse situations experienced by the affected population. Reliance on KIIs and FGDs at the community level introduces potential biases, and the temporal scope between August and October 2023 may not fully capture evolving protection challenges. The findings do not speak of the magnitude and prevalence of certain risks (i.e. the number of people affected) but aim to showcase the characteristics and dynamics of selected protection risks. Despite these constraints, the collected data provides evidence for targeted interventions, emphasizing the importance of regular monitoring of protection risks and needs, and adaptability in the approach to both individual and community-support mechanisms.

PROTECTION RISKS

Risk #1 - Labour exploitation and unfair treatment in the labour market

Labour exploitation denotes work situations that deviate significantly from standard working conditions as defined by legislation or other binding legal regulations, concerning in particular remuneration, working hours, leave entitlements, health and safety standards and decent treatment. [3]

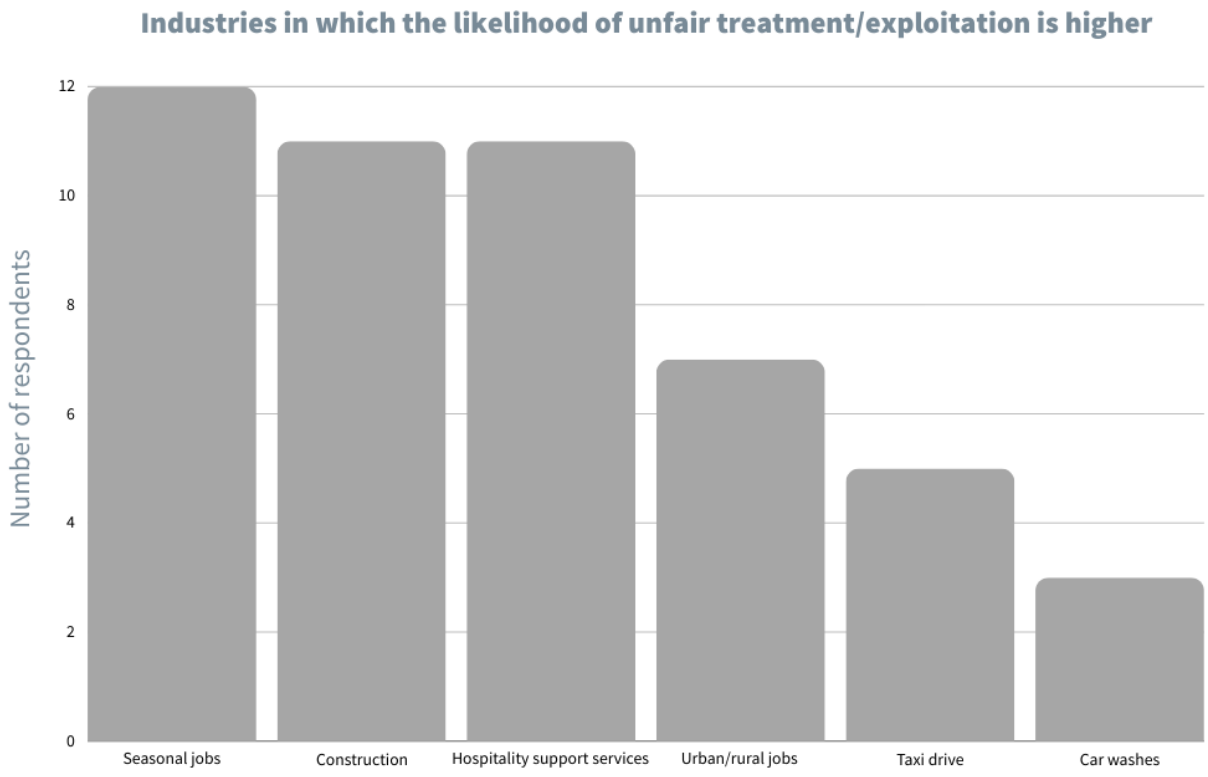
Almost two years after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Ukrainian refugees who have chosen to re-establish their lives in Poland continue to face significant hurdles in engaging in the labour market in ways aligned with their professional qualifications and on equal footing with Polish nationals. Data collected from individual interviews with both the affected population and service providers reveals a troubling pattern of labour exploitation and unjust treatment in the Polish job market, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable Ukrainian refugees – single women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, residing in Poland.

Forms of Employment for Ukrainian Refugees

The risk of labour exploitation most often stems from the absence of formal employment contracts. Most people interviewed experienced situations of agreeing to work based on verbal agreements without a written employment contract defining wages and remuneration terms. Regrettably, these verbal agreements are often disregarded resulting in refugees receiving less payment than originally agreed, or in some cases, not receiving any payment at all. Moreover, among those who do possess work contracts, despite performing jobs which meet the criteria of permanent employment, the majority fall under the 'umowa zlecenie' (civil contract) scheme, which offers very limited protection in comparison with the formal employment contract. The nature of civil contracts, governed by civil law rather than labour law, provides flexibility to both employers and employees but can be exploited by employers. Many among the affected population reported not receiving overtime pay or holiday compensation, largely due to the lack of knowledge and awareness of Polish labour

[3] 1. rep., *Severe Labour Exploitation: Workers Moving within or into the European Union* (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2015), https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2015-severe-labour-exploitation_en.pdf.

laws and employment policies, and employers not respecting verbal and written agreements. The language barrier is another significant factor contributing to a heightened risk of exploitation and unfair treatment, as well as the inability to obtain employment aligned with one's qualification, as the affected population often struggles to communicate effectively with employers, including to raise complaints or to remain fully informed about working conditions. Additionally, refugees are often unaware of the agreed terms and conditions as contracts are most often drafted in Polish only without any translation offered.



Role of Commercial Employment Agencies

Another facet of the threat of labour exploitation and unfair treatment is frequent instances of unequal treatment between Ukrainian and Polish employees. This discrepancy is attributed to differences in contract types, wages, and remuneration for similar job positions and skill levels between Ukrainian and Polish workers as reported by interviewees. 'They [affected population] drew attention to the fact that working in the same positions as Poles, Ukrainians have worse conditions (work schedule, attitude from management, without additional payment for work on a day off)'.[4]

To facilitate the employment process for Ukrainian refugees in Poland, commercial employment agencies, serving as intermediaries between the affected population and Polish employers, play a significant role. However, the responses gathered from both the affected population and service providers indicate that these agencies often offer employment where conditions do not meet the legal requirements, and in some cases, deduct unexpectedly high commissions from their clients' salaries and do not offer any support in case of discriminatory treatment.

[4] Focus Group Discussion, labour exploitation and unfair treatment, 18.08.2023

Impact on the most vulnerable

The groups most exposed to labour exploitation and unfair treatment include single parents, particularly women-headed households with two or more children, individuals with reduced mobility, and older people at risk. Single mothers without a support system are particularly exposed to the risk of labour exploitation due to the scarcity of job opportunities in rural areas and small towns, where they must meet the basic needs of a large household, including children. Single mothers have reported that the only work opportunities they can afford without jeopardizing their children's well-being are shift employment options offered under the civil contract scheme or through unofficial employment agreements. In some cases this results in young children being left unattended while their parents are at work, including at night. Older individuals at risk and those with specific needs are subjected to discrimination and exclusion from employment opportunities due to their age and health conditions. Respondents stated that most available jobs for Ukrainian refugees involve physical labour, which most vulnerable groups rely on to cover medical expenses and healthcare, but ultimately may further jeopardise their health.

Psychological and physical fatigue is increasing

The impact of the threat of labour exploitation on the most vulnerable groups, namely women with children, older individuals, and those with specific needs, is both tangible and psychological. Findings depict that psychological fatigue among the affected population arises from the challenges of meeting day-to-day needs which are closely linked to job security. Unfair treatment in the workplace offers little room for personal development, often leading to the reality of working in positions that fall below the professional qualifications of the affected population. This, in turn, results in psychological distress, depression, and episodes of demotivation. There is also a physical toll directly related to the nature of jobs that Ukrainian refugees are engaged in, particularly in industrial factories, agriculture, and myriad service industries such as domestic services, maintenance, transportation, food services, and hospitality. This has notably led to health issues such as joint pain, skin rashes, and burns. Minors aged 16 to 17 who are employed often suffer the consequences of dropping out of school and social isolation from their peers.

Lack of information on employment policies and reporting mechanisms

Ukrainian refugees are increasingly turning to available services to confront the threat of labour exploitation and unfair treatment. Nevertheless, the majority of those interviewed among the affected population have expressed that the available resources and support are insufficient to effectively mitigate the threat of exploitation. Ukrainian refugees in Poland often rely on social media to gather information and seek support in finding job opportunities and understanding the Polish labour market. Unfortunately, this coping strategy results in inconsistent and unreliable information from unofficial sources, which can further expose the most vulnerable to the risk of labour exploitation. Mothers with children depend on their support networks to care for their children in their absence due to the lack of safe spaces and facilities for child supervision. Of those interviewed, the majority of single mothers reported that they are compelled to accept shift work and low-wage jobs to provide for their families and to ensure their children's safety. In the highly competitive job market, employers, particularly those in small-scale businesses, have been noted to exploit this situation to impose unfair working conditions, taking advantage of the lack of oversight and the limited choices available to Ukrainian refugees, who are forced to accept any job or conditions, to meet their basic needs.

Most Ukrainian refugees interviewed shared that there is no clear information regarding workplace reporting mechanisms for disclosing work violations and mistreatment. Additionally, they are hesitant to report employers due to fears of job loss, fear of negative impact on their legal status, or social repercussions. Consequently, the preferred coping mechanism is to change jobs, as procedural steps are perceived as time-

consuming and ineffective. There is also a reluctance to engage with public administrations to access due process. Ukrainian refugees who face the threat of labour exploitation and unfair treatment often prefer to seek legal advice from social media groups or non-government actors offering legal aid services. The latter however is primarily only available in large cities.

Risk #2 - Lack of Tenure Security

Lack of tenure security refers to barriers to accessing housing and safe accommodation. While most refugees live in privately rented accommodation, a substantial number still reside in collective accommodation sites.

Access to safe accommodation in collective sites

Those experiencing protection risks related to security of tenure and safe accommodation are exposed to continuously deteriorating conditions in collective accommodation sites due to decreasing resources, and lengthy and poorly communicated processes to consolidate minimum standards, resulting in site closures and relocation of residents to accommodation of lower standards. These risks, combined with limited opportunities for professional development of those in charge of site management - especially in areas related to accountability to affected persons, conflict management, and safeguarding - contribute to limited abilities in mitigating, preventing, and responding to protection risks.

Protection monitoring findings reveal that after the amendment to the Special Act on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that country in January 2023, there were no recorded cases of forced eviction from collective accommodation. However, the absence of a clearly defined implementation directive specifying the criteria and processes for exemption from payment for staying in these sites resulted in an escalation of push factors, impacting individuals residing in collective accommodation sites. Those primarily affected are individuals with the fewest resources and coping capacities, who still could not be exempted from payment based on age or disability, and so fell through the so-called protection gap. As a result, many felt they had no other alternative but to move back to Ukraine, as reported by key informants.

"Refugees who cannot find work, or have run out of savings, return to Ukraine, even to the front-line territory, where there are battles and frequent shelling. I also know about cases when refugees return to the occupied part of Ukraine for these reasons, putting themselves and children at risk."[5]

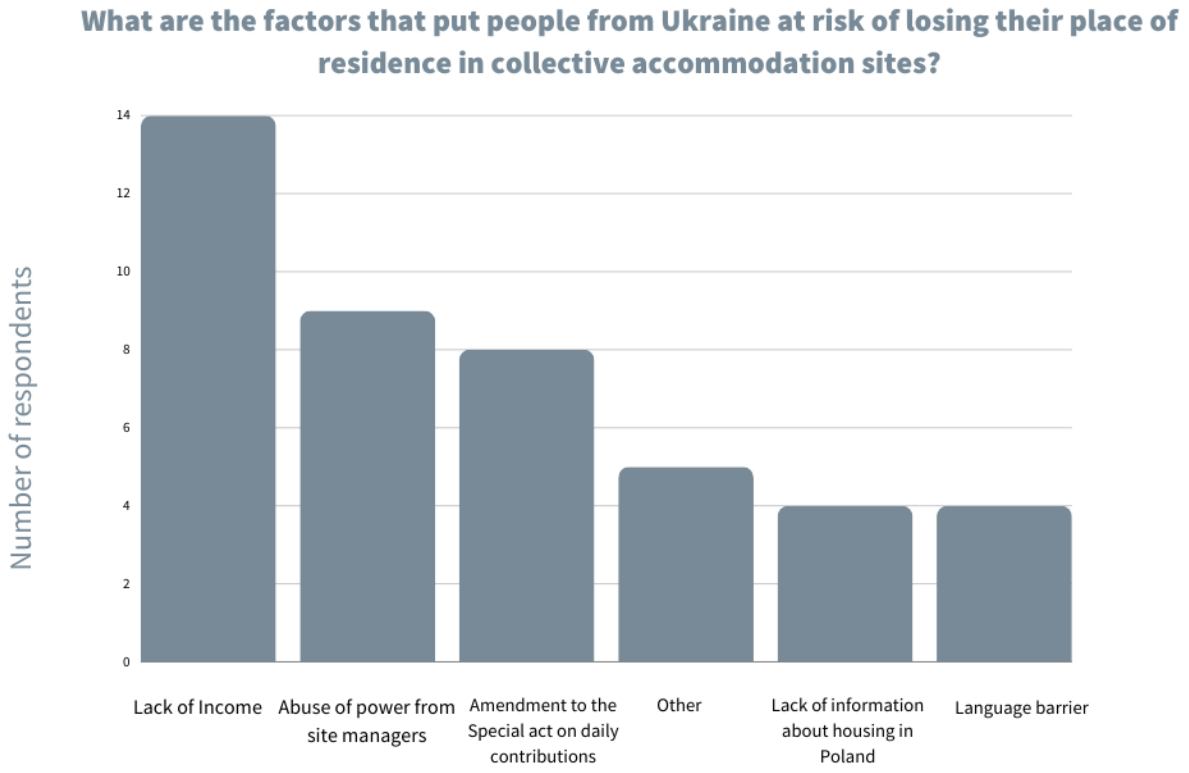
Another risk identified during protection monitoring is related to the power imbalance between residents and managers of collective accommodation sites, which in some instances led to the misuse of authority. While site managers very often play a key protective role and support the residents of collective sites to navigate through administrative procedures and find private accommodation, there are reported situations when those in charge of collective sites disrespect people's dignity and resort to threats of eviction when complaints are expressed, or conflicts occur. Prevailing the lack of complaint and feedback mechanisms, agreed code of conduct or safeguarding reporting mechanisms in collective sites, limits the ability to report and address such situations. Relations between site managers and residents are inherently imbalanced due to differences of power and are additionally affected by assistance fatigue, systemic challenges, and limited opportunities for professional development of site managers. These risks are further aggravated by the limited oversight over the sites managed by private individuals. An exception is sites dedicated to specific groups of people (for example, persons with disabilities).

[5] Key Informant Interview on Eviction Risk and tenure security – 08.08.2023

The uncertainty surrounding continued access to safe accommodation has a substantial impact on the mental health of residents. As expressed by one of the service providers "*People are shaken, very stressed, they worry all the time whether they will have a place to live, especially after the introduction of participatory fees, they were very worried that they would not be able to cover these costs"*[6]

Access to the rental market

While access to affordable housing is a systemic challenge in Poland, displaced persons face additional barriers in accessing the rental market are related not only to limited financial means but also prejudice against non-Polish tenants. With a rental market where demand substantially exceeds supply and communal or social housing options are limited, the rental prices are high – lack of stable employment and predictable income create barriers for many. The demand-driven rental market also allows landlords to easily choose who they wish to rent their property to. According to the protection monitoring findings single parents with children, large families, and those who do not speak fluent Polish face the most challenges in finding accommodation or even being invited to view the property. Roma families face substantial barriers due to prejudice, discrimination and limited financial means to cover accommodation appropriate to host large families. The so-called occasional lease agreement, seen by many landlords as their legal protection in case of lack of rent payment, creates room for fraudulent and abusive practices. Some agencies offer 'formal addresses' and supporting documentation to be provided for those occasional lease agreements for a relatively high fee (up to 800 PLN), however, there is no clarification as to the verification, validity, or use of these addresses. While it allows us to meet the formal expectations of an occasional lease agreement no actual protection in case of eviction follows. Other issues that were mentioned by respondents pertain to legal frameworks in the form of unfair practices of private landlords and include increasing rent, non-return of deposit, and refusal to repair broken equipment. While such situations may also affect Polish tenants, contracts drafted in Polish only, and a limited understanding of the Polish legal system, coupled with very limited access to free legal aid in smaller cities and towns, make refugees in already vulnerable situations more exposed to such practices.



"The owner of the apartment, taking advantage of the fact that she did not know Polish, did not want to return the deposit, said that the contract was incorrectly drafted, so you can use it in the toilet, and I will not return the deposit"[7]

KIIS discussing risks related to tenure security were the only interviews in which respondents explicitly mentioned the risk of SGBV particularly sexual exploitation and abuse, specifically transaction sex attempted/perpetrated by landlords against Ukrainian women.

Instances of abuse related to programme "40+"

The protection monitoring findings also pointed to instances of abuse related to the so-called '40+' allowance provided via public funding to private persons hosting Ukrainian refugees to compensate for utilities and food expenses. However, during the interviews and FGDs, many persons mentioned that while tenants are hosted within these arrangements, they are also charged extra for both stay and food and are often asked to leave the premises once the maximum number of 120 days, after which the allowance expires. There is no mechanism for monitoring the use of the 40+ allowance that refugees are aware of, nor ways through which complaints can be channelled.

Risk #3 - Lack of Access to Documentation

Compared to last year, the needs relating to obtaining personal documents have become more complex. If a year ago, the question of PESEL registration was among the top priority needs, this year the integration process demanded the production of more specific documentation from Polish as well as Ukrainian authorities. The needs for documentation, access to basic needs, access to accommodation, and safe and equal employment, are intertwined.

Access to documents issued by Polish Administrations

The most common problems related to access to documentation reported by respondents were the lengthy processes and lack of language support in administrations. It was marked that getting PESEL is a fast and easy procedure but when it comes to the disability confirmation process, nostrification[8] of diplomas or getting temporary residency it is very time-consuming, and respondents were lacking clear and concise information about the eligibility and application procedure.

There are also obstacles to gaining access to services within the public administrations. Reportedly it becomes increasingly common for some civil servants to refuse to respond or assist unless requested in Polish language. *"They pretend they do not understand me"*, and *"They ignore me"* – are the frequent citations across the dataset. In the small cities, refugees do not have the same level of language support or legal support from NGOs compared to those provided in Wrocław. In some administrations there used to be volunteers or translators at the initial stage of response but now they have not been replaced by any systemic solutions. The basic level of the Polish language which people manage to obtain does not always enable communication involving legal or bureaucratic terminology.

Another respondent reported issues related to the time availability of services. Single mothers who rely on neighbours to supervise their children while they go to work cannot get permission to leave their workplace for the time needed to visit the administration. Thus, they face difficulties juggling the necessity to provide for

[7] Key Informant Interview on Eviction Risk and tenure security – 5.08.2023

[8] **Nostrification** is a procedure leading to the determination of a Polish equivalent of a foreign diploma

children, caring for them outside of education hours, and resolving bureaucratic issues. The paid supervision for children that could create spare time to resolve bureaucratic issues was not affordable for respondents.

Nostrification of higher education diplomas

The long and costly procedures of the verification of diplomas are now one of the biggest challenges to inclusion into the labour market. Doctors, lawyers, and other high-skilled specialists state that they can only work at low-paid unskilled jobs due to the costly and long procedures of recognition of the diploma. Without recognition of their skills and education, people find themselves entrapped in a vicious circle. People seeking to have their professional qualifications recognized, need money to pay for the procedure of the nostrification of the diploma. Yet, the only accessible jobs for them are unskilled positions in the agriculture sector, factories, hospitality sector, etc. The remuneration they receive does not generate enough income to save for the nostrification procedure or any educational courses needed for the improvement of their qualification, or upgrading the level of language, which, in turn, is indispensable to be competitive for the jobs with higher remuneration.

Suspension of Temporary Protection Status (PESEL UKR)

In the individual interviews, service providers reported that their clients had to deal with the problem of suspension of status UKR.

According to the Polish legislation, those holders of Temporary Protection status whose absence in Poland exceeds 30 days will lose the status, and consequently the social benefits granted by it.

In some cases, the suspension of the status was arbitrary, i.e. refugees who did not leave Poland at all lost their status and could know about it only when the payment of social benefits was halted. On more numerous instances, the refugees who were travelling to Ukraine and returning before the expiry of 30 days, upon crossing of border were registered in the wrong database and their status UKR and social benefits were withdrawn. Though, it was relatively fast and easy to renew the status, it was much harder to renew the payment of social benefits, in particular "500+" which could take up to several months.

Access to documents issued by Ukrainian Administrations

The most frequently mentioned documents that the respondents needed from Ukraine were biometric passports for travelling abroad.

Refugees who were fleeing from war in the first months of the full-scale invasion could enter Poland using only an internal Ukrainian passport or national ID card. Although the national ID was sufficient to cross the border into Poland, the absence of the biometric passport limits the exercise of freedom of movement and enjoyment of some benefits granted under Temporary Protection status and impedes a lot of bureaucratic processes. Firstly, the national Ukrainian passport (if it is not the ID card), that most of the Ukrainian citizens above 25 y.o. possess, do not have the Latin transliteration of the name and surname which is required to apply for any documents in Poland. Apart from that, the national passport does not have the expiry date which is a compulsory field in different application forms. Lastly, those willing to leave Ukraine can do so only with a valid biometric passport.

Considering the abovementioned findings, obtaining a biometric passport became of vital necessity for both adults and children who did not have one. For respondents who lived outside of Wrocław, this proved to be a challenging task. Travelling to Wrocław is associated with additional costs that respondents, especially pensioners and single mothers, did not have. A subsequent barrier to accessing documentation is also the high cost of obtaining those in Poland in comparison to Ukraine. Thus, many people choose to travel back to Ukraine to get the documentation processed in a more economical and faster fashion, even though this is associated with substantial safety and security risks. People who are recourse to such decisions state that they were circumstantially forced to do so and were afraid for their lives and the lives of their children. The overwhelming majority of respondents stated that single mothers are the most vulnerable in this regard. It is hard for them to

travel either to Wrocław or to Ukraine as they cannot leave their children alone, or if they are to take children with them it would imply additional travel costs.

Another vulnerable group which faces multiple barriers are those people who arrive in Poland from the occupied territories. They arrive in a state of deep traumatisation and tired from a long trip in which they could potentially suffer humiliating experiences at the Russian checkpoints and border crossing points. For them, it is impossible to restore documents like employment record books or medical documents. One woman stated that she could not be accepted to a job in Poland without proof that she was terminated from her previous job in Ukraine, and it was simply impossible for her to get this document. Even harder is to get the documents which prove one's identity (national or biometric passports) should they be either lost or destroyed.

Risk #4 - Hate Speech and Harassment

In the last six months, there has been a discernible decline in the level of social cohesion between the host community and the displaced communities, who also constitute diverse groups with conflicting internal dynamics. In all the cities where data has been collected, there have been reported cases of hate speech in the form of verbal aggression, negative comments in response to communication in the Ukrainian/Russian language, bullying at schools, and more. Most often the respondents were facing hate speech on the streets, in public places (e.g. public transport), at workplaces and in schools.

The drivers for the increasing instances of hate speech should be divided into explicit and implicit ones and can be as complex as the phenomenon of social cohesion. To the explicit drivers, we can refer to (1) the language barrier; (2) the public narratives that *"refugees only rely on social benefits which are funded by Polish taxpayers"* (3) the deterioration of economic relations between Poland and Ukraine within the last months, and (4) anti-refugee rhetoric applied by most political parties during the recent election campaign. This set of drivers is called explicit as it is clearly articulated in the responses of interviewees and usually acquires a particular form, e.g. aggressive calls to speak Polish in Poland, accusations of "drawing upon" social benefits in public places, mutual accusations of Ukrainian and Polish politicians in the news which are then reproduced in the form of hate speech towards the displaced communities particularly strongly observed in schools.

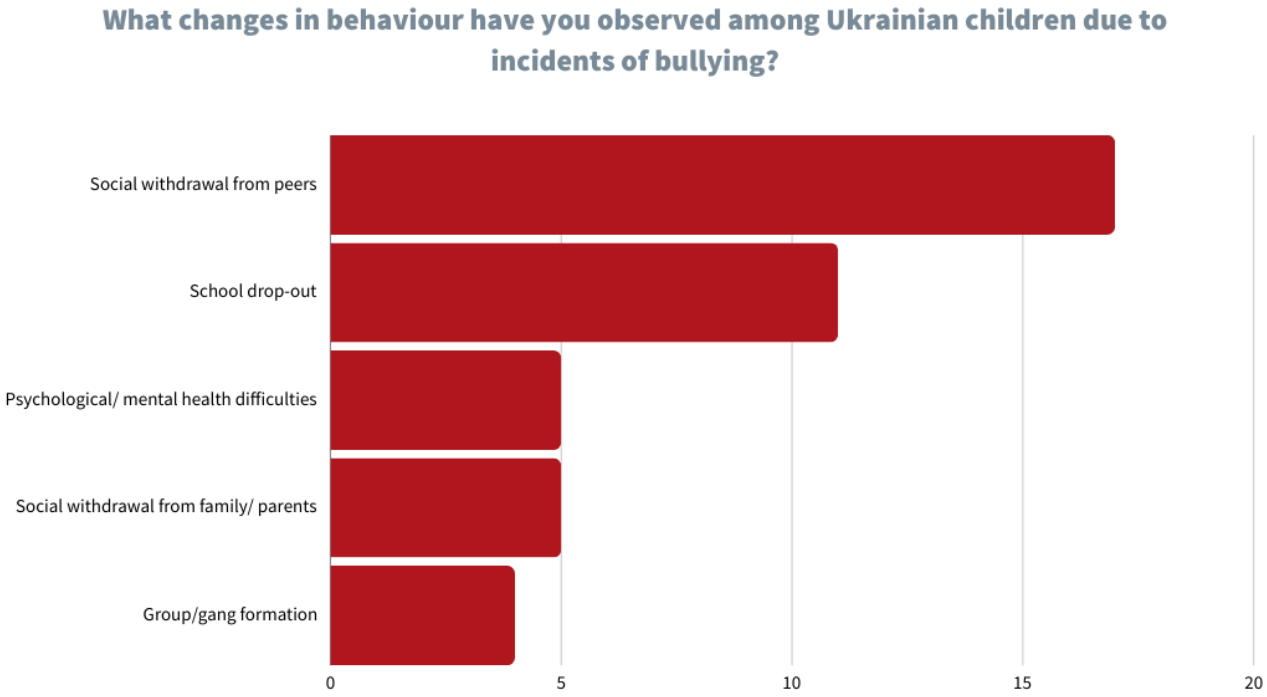
The implicit drivers comprise the following; (1) weakening of social and trust capital; (2) fatigue of the host community, (3) increasing competition in the labour market, and (4) the impact of a protracted conflict. The weakening of social and trust capital means that, especially in small cities, there are not many opportunities for social interaction and bonding between displaced communities and the host community. The current research shows that a high level of trust and civic engagement promotes cooperation, and has a positive impact on economic growth and the prevention of upheavals in negative social dynamics.

Impact on Wellbeing and Social Inclusion

Hate speech yields profound adverse effects on the displaced community. The biggest impact is on mental health for those facing repeated hate speech at workplaces or schools. Another immediate consequence is social withdrawal: residents of the collective sites are reluctant to leave their place of residence fearing that they will experience hate speech again; respondents started avoiding speaking in Ukrainian or Russian on the streets and in public spaces, etc.

To respond to this risk, people tend to recourse to their family, friends from the Ukrainian community, friends from the Polish community and NGOs if they are available in the location. In such cases, they usually seek emotional support but very rarely report the cases of hate speech or try to find legal consultations. Usually,

there are no free legal aid or MHPSS services outside of big urban areas, so KII respondents living in collective sites suggest they simply try to consult with the managers of collective sites (MZZ). The managers try to help if they can, but in the majority of cases, respondents said no solutions to these problems were identified.



Peer-conflicts, bullying at schools and its effect on children

The most affected by manifestations of hate speech are children - especially teenagers. Cases of bullying have been reported by an overwhelming majority of respondents. The reasons for bullying vary across the responses, but it was repeatedly reiterated that bullying is more prevalent in schools, yet teachers and principals often do not address the issue. On some rare occasions, it was reported that teachers themselves contribute to, or perpetrate hate speech.

Key informants disclosed that children who experience bullying suffer from emotional distress, self-isolation and social withdrawal from family and peers. They demonstrate unwillingness to attend Polish schools and have worse educational performance. Parents are reluctant to report the cases as they hope such action will protect their child from potential further negative repercussions. On some occasions, they prefer to return their children to online studying at Ukrainian schools.

Though, as was mentioned by various respondents, conflicts can be a natural part of growing up for children and teenagers, it is not counter-intuitive that more effort is required from school authorities and parents to bridge the gaps and build stronger ties between children. No effective mechanisms for mediation between peers or complaint mechanisms have been reported throughout the protection monitoring.

Impact of threats on children

Protection monitoring efforts also analysed the repercussions on children stemming from risks monitored predominantly in adults. While the primary focus of the research revolves around adult experiences, the exposure to risks among adults has profound consequences for children, both direct and indirect. One prominent direct consequence manifest in the form of bullying within educational institutions. Protection monitoring findings reveal a disconcerting prevalence of bullying incidents, exerting a detrimental influence on the mental and physical health of affected children.

Furthermore, the pervasive uncertainty surrounding stable accommodation emerges as a dual-edged sword, impacting both adults and children. The stress endured by parents or legal guardians grappling with housing instability resonates in the psychological well-being of their children. It becomes imperative to recognize and address the interconnectedness of housing stability and the mental health of children within protection monitoring frameworks.

The indirect consequences, woven into the fabric of family dynamics, arise from the struggles faced by adults to provide basic needs. The necessity to work extra shifts or long hours due to the limited availability of low-paid jobs often leads to unintended child neglect. In some responses it was mentioned that the minors between 16 and 18 from big families need to work to help their parents, sometimes at the expense of studying.

As such, our research underscores the importance of not only addressing immediate risks, but also comprehensively understanding the far-reaching implications on children, to mitigate and prevent against such negative consequences.

SGBV

Assessing the risk of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) is challenging in humanitarian contexts, including the Ukrainian refugee crisis in Poland. However, nuances related to the risk emerged during assessments of tenure security, hate speech, harassment, and social cohesion.

Protection monitoring found the risk of SGBV is linked to tenure security and exists in collective accommodation sites, private housing, and the 40+ programme. Cases of demands for sexual favours or sexual harassment from Ukrainian women hosted within the 40+ programme were referred to by respondents.

SGBV risks often go unrecognized by the affected population, as evidenced by responses from focus group discussions and key informant interviews, highlighting a lack of awareness about GBV, especially its psychological and socio-economic dimensions, as such behaviour is normalized, especially when perpetrated by intimate partners or family members. Respondents faintly discern the full understanding of what SGBV entails, whereas protection monitoring efforts faced little engagement from service providers to discuss this risk at community level.

The report is developed by Danish Refugee Council in Poland, Moldova and Romania. Readers affected by this report may contact the following email address for further information and support c.o.conduct@drc.ngo

Danish Refugee Council in Poland, Moldova and Romania