

# **Legal Aid and Protection Needs of the People Displaced from Ukraine**

**Report on the results of the research in Poland**

**Warsaw 2023**



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## Executive Summary

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC), in collaboration with the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, undertook this study, executed by the DRC's office in Poland. The study's primary objective was to evaluate the need for protection services, encompassing legal assistance, of Ukrainian citizens who departed the country after 24 February 2022, in both Ukraine and the country of residence abroad.

Overall, the integration of displaced individuals into Polish society is generally assessed by respondents as positive, yet at the individual level, it often poses challenges. Factors hindering integration included a lack of employment, limited language proficiency, and a lack of interaction within the local community. Notably, housing emerged as a pressing concern affecting all segments of the population, irrespective of their geographic location. The political situation on the eve of the parliamentary elections in Poland has recently become a negative factor for integration.

The study focused on exploring the challenges faced by displaced individuals, specifically regarding their access to temporary protection, legal services, and documentation. Notably, the absence of regulations for extending temporary status beyond 4 March 2024 emerged as a major concern among both displaced persons and service providers interviewed during the surveys.

The feedback from displaced individuals and service providers regarding Poland's practice of granting temporary protection has been overwhelmingly positive. However, there have been notable challenges reported. The most prevalent issue revolves around the loss of UKR status (temporary protection confirmation) and the discontinuation of essential payments, particularly monthly childcare support, due to registration errors that mistakenly indicate exceeding the permitted 30-day stay abroad. Reinstating these payments, crucial for the financial stability of vulnerable groups, involves a lengthy process.

Moreover, obtaining a residence permit in the future presents a significant hurdle for those under temporary protection. Official Polish employment stands as the primary criterion, rendering it unattainable for pensioners, the unemployed, and mothers with young children. This limitation restricts their prospects of obtaining long-term stability in the country.

The influx of children unaccompanied by their parents into Poland necessitated proactive measures to safeguard their interests. To address this, Poland has introduced a distinctive form of guardianship known as 'temporary guardianship' within the scope of temporary protection, particularly tailored for displaced individuals from Ukraine. The legal process for this is both cost-free and comparatively expedited.

Some displaced persons arrived in Poland with only internal passports or birth certificates, restricting their ability to fully exercise their rights under temporary protection. This predicament is notably challenging for newborns, children from occupied territories, pensioners, and other vulnerable groups. Additionally, the substantial population of displaced individuals residing in Poland has intensified the demand for passport renewal and extension.

Despite the pre-existing network of Ukrainian consular offices in Poland, it was ill-prepared for the massive surge of Ukrainian citizens after Russia's full-fledged invasion, resulting in limited accessibility across numerous regions.

The introduction of SE 'Document' services provided a significant relief for consular offices by alleviating their workload. However, these services come at a higher cost, limiting accessibility, particularly for vulnerable groups. Until the summer of 2023, long queues were a prevalent issue at SE 'Document' offices, but this problem has now diminished in relevance. Respondents generally do not raise concerns about the quality of services offered by SE 'Document.'

For many individuals, the decision to travel to Ukraine for identity documents hinges on financial viability and the speed of document acquisition. Yet, due to several accessibility challenges, individuals who entered Poland from temporarily occupied territories through third countries find themselves compelled to travel to Ukraine.

During the survey period, some consular offices were unable to facilitate birth, death, and marriage registration services due to a lack of connection to the State Registry of Civil Status Acts. Difficulties with registering in the electronic queue and seeking consular advice are common issues.

Travelling to Ukraine serves a multitude of purposes for many, primarily focused on legal actions and receiving administrative services. Most frequently, these visits are concentrated in western Ukraine, driven by common needs such as accessing Administrative Service Centres (ASCs), exchanging driver's licenses and executing notarial acts.

Certain documents are to be restored or obtained exclusively in Ukraine. Namely, it poses challenges for individuals, notably those from temporarily occupied territories struggling to restore lost secondary school certificates for their children. Complexities surrounding divorce among Ukrainian citizens due to the excessively protracted process in Poland often prompt a decision to visit Ukraine. Additionally, some retirees find themselves compelled to journey to Ukraine to reinstate suspended pension payments.

Notwithstanding digital administrative services have become widespread in Poland and Ukraine their accessibility remains hindered by a lack of access to technologies and a level of digital literacy, especially among the elderly. According to service providers, displaced persons most often applied due to problems with the so-called trusted profile and the inability to register children under 13 in the travel app (Diia.pl).

A consensus prevails regarding the necessity of extending legal aid to displaced individuals, with a unanimous call for its expansion. Key areas requiring additional legal guidance include children's rights and guardianship, changing driving licenses and car registrations, obtaining residence permits, and addressing double taxation concerns, among others. Paid notary services and certified translation remain a problem.

The assessment of access to education showed that Polish education is generally accessible to Ukrainians. Currently, the Polish education system has adapted to the influx of Ukrainian children. At the same time, respondents note that the lack of places in kindergartens and schools is still noticeable in some places.

Adaptation of children in pre-schools and primary schools tends to be smooth, particularly when they are surrounded by other Ukrainian peers. The linguistic proximity facilitates understanding with other children and teachers. However, challenges arise as children grow older, lacking a structured adaptation period and often face language barriers of higher level. Psychological factors significantly influence their adaptation.

Most school-age children are encompassed within either the Polish or Ukrainian education system. Discussions with service providers highlighted the specific problem of some children not being covered by education existing in the Roma community due to systemic discrimination, parental reluctance or disinterest.

Diverse approaches in assessing educational needs, especially for children with disabilities like autism spectrum disorder, have led to exclusion from the educational process in some cases.

Instances of Ukrainian children leaving Polish schools are primarily tied to parental relocation or transferring due to bullying or difficulties in adapting to the Polish language curriculum.

The study found a large amount of information about both very positive attitudes towards Ukrainian children at school and numerous cases of bullying. Bullying, predominantly verbal and occasionally ethnically motivated, becomes more prominent post-5th grade. Regrettably, as reported, some Polish teachers are also implicated in instances of bullying.

Ukrainian parents' responses to bullying vary. While some fear further harm to their child or lack awareness of legal recourse, some engage with teachers, school psychologists, and administration. If resolution attempts fail, parents often opt to change schools.

Despite a decrease, a significant number of Ukrainian pupils still study online, driven by various factors such as families' unwillingness to integrate, curriculum disparities, language proficiency goals, or concerns

about bullying. It should be noted that limited access to necessary study equipment, often restricted to smartphones, remains an issue.

Numerous children attend both Polish and Ukrainian schools concurrently, as parents aspire for their children to receive a dual education. For many, preserving proficiency in the Ukrainian language and history holds significant importance, yet such opportunities are notably constrained in Poland. The main problem for these children is the increased workload.

Compared to other levels of education, higher education requires more language adaptation. However, university admission is relatively easy for Ukrainian citizens. At the same time, it is noted that Ukrainian applicants often lack educational documents that remain in Ukraine. The problem becomes more complicated if the applicant lived in the occupied territories.

In adult education, older individuals and those with disabilities often encounter hurdles in language acquisition. Lack of money, free time and having children are serious obstacles to self-education.

Language courses serve as a pivotal tool for integrating the Ukrainian population into Polish society. The demand for Polish language proficiency is exceedingly high. However, individuals frequently encounter challenges accessing courses or face prolonged waits for suitable group formations. Both beneficiaries and service providers raise concerns regarding the inadequate quality of these language programmes, which fall short in preparing individuals for well-compensated employment opportunities or further studies at higher educational institutions.

The examination of healthcare access for individuals under temporary protection reveals that they are entitled to the same cost-free medical services as Polish citizens. A significant challenge lies in lengthy queues and extended waiting periods for appointments specifically to specialized healthcare professionals. While seeking solutions, many resort to private clinics or consider travelling to Ukraine, yet not everyone can afford these options or is willing to undertake associated risks.

Temporary protection doesn't encompass access to additional services such as rehabilitation or sanatorium treatments. This creates some hurdles for older adults, the unemployed, and those facing financial hardship.

Overall, the quality of healthcare services rendered receives minimal complaints, with individuals often expressing gratitude towards Polish medical practitioners. Particularly in critical cases, many have received commendable professional assistance.

Among the prevalent barriers to access, language barriers and disparities in diagnostic methods and treatment approaches pose significant challenges. Specifically, in severe medical conditions, despite possessing diagnoses from Ukrainian doctors, patients are required to validate their condition in line with Polish medical protocols.

While medical records from Ukraine are generally accepted by Polish healthcare providers, the hurdle often lies in their translation, which might be financially burdensome—especially when a certified translation is necessary.

Humanitarian organisations supporting vulnerable Ukrainian refugees in Poland face a significant hurdle in confirming disabilities. The sudden influx of individuals with disabilities overwhelmed the Polish social protection system, unprepared for this rapid demographic shift. Disparities between the Polish and Ukrainian social security and diagnostic systems complicate the process of confirming disabilities, the same as in severe illness cases. Presently, disability decisions on Ukrainian citizens' cases adhere to the same regulations as those of Polish citizens, leading to a protracted 4-5 month wait.

Proximity to the border has spurred a prevalent practice of seeking medical services in Ukraine among refugees. Online consultations with Ukrainian doctors and importing medicines from Ukraine are commonplace. The most popular are dental services, which are much more accessible and cheaper in Ukraine, but there is also a constant demand for a wide range of medical services.

Observations reveal pregnant women cross the border in both directions, but most of them prefer to give birth in Poland. The decision to give birth in Ukraine may be driven by attachment to certain doctors, the desire to receive services in an understandable language, faster legal procedures and paperwork, and differences in certain medical procedures.

The war and staying abroad have largely changed the attitude of the Ukrainian population towards receiving psychological assistance. Most respondents from the displaced population received such assistance in person or online. The overwhelming majority of respondents are convinced that the supply of psychological services is currently sufficient. However, some of these projects are being suspended or are uncertain about future funding.

Finding a safe place to live was the main reason for Ukrainians to leave Ukraine. Many of them opted for Poland, which they considered to offer a high level of security and to be culturally and mentally close to them. The study showed that the overall sense of security of most of the interviewed displaced persons in Poland remains mostly high.

However, the increase in tension between Poles and Ukrainians in the six months preceding the data collection is very noticeable. Even if there have been no individual incidents, people feel tense after reading the news and talking to other Ukrainians.

Manifestations of physical violence are extremely rare. At the same time, there are reports of damage to property (most often cars with Ukrainian registration). Most often, respondents reported widespread hate speech, insults, and verbal threats on ethnic grounds. Ukrainian origin exacerbates domestic conflicts and other types of hate speech (including against vulnerable groups).

The targets of verbal threats and hate speech are mainly vulnerable groups of the population. The source of increased danger in terms of dissatisfaction and threats is mainly financially disadvantaged groups of the Polish population, the elderly, and politically marginalised groups. Some representatives of the Ukrainian population in Poland are also a source of danger for the Polish population and their fellow citizens.

Although the overwhelming majority declare their readiness to apply to law enforcement agencies in the event of aggression, there is no systematic response from displaced persons. At the same time, there are reported cases of response from the Polish population, law enforcement and officials.

Few cases of domestic violence by or against Ukrainian nationals were reported by service providers. At the same time, it was reported that for some women, travelling to Poland was an opportunity to escape the domestic violence they faced in Ukraine at the hands of their husbands. There are isolated cases where the perpetrators of domestic violence were Polish citizens.

Cases of child abuse involving Ukrainian citizens are more frequent. Polish service providers noted certain differences in approaches to child-rearing between Ukrainians and Poles. In terms of violence against children and child labor service providers identified also some children from Roma families as at heightened risk.

There are many reports that could be classified as labour exploitation, including non-payment of wages, inadequate working conditions and unlawful employment. Several cases of labour exploitation by landlords were reported by displaced persons and service providers. In most cases, if displaced persons become victims of labour exploitation, they do not report to the relevant authorities or do not know how to do so. They try to find new jobs or return to Ukraine.

Service providers have also reported a few incidents of sexual exploitation by Polish citizens who have hosted Ukrainians under the government's "40+" programme. They emphasize the absence of adequate monitoring mechanisms within this programme, particularly in terms of reporting any illicit behaviour on the part of hosts.

A comprehensive study highlighted the challenges faced by displaced individuals seeking to integrate into the Polish labour market. The shortage of job openings in various fields poses a significant hurdle. Among

respondents from the displaced community and service providers, language proficiency, age, childcare responsibilities, and Ukrainian nationality emerged as major barriers to securing employment. Additionally, the need for diploma validation and differing expectations regarding salary and working conditions prompt many to opt for online work in Ukraine.

Ukrainians face challenging life circumstances and operate within a system where legal frameworks often steer them towards informal employment or roles with unfavourable conditions. Received information indicates widespread unfair treatment in employment, with Ukrainians often offered inferior terms compared to their Polish counterparts. Delays in official employee registration by certain Polish employers and opaque practices of intermediary firms exacerbate these issues. Unofficial earnings also result in the absence of social and pension contributions.

Ukrainians in Poland encounter challenges navigating the Polish tax system, particularly concerning potential double taxation issues for those under temporary protection. Currently, the Polish tax authorities turn a blind eye to the existence of income in Ukraine for people who have been living in Poland for more than six months. However, the existing legal regulations require Ukrainian citizens to pay the difference in taxation for income earned outside of Poland, which may become a problem in the future.

Access to banking services generally remains unproblematic, yet restrictions imposed by the National Bank of Ukraine impede the free transfer of funds to foreign accounts, posing a key concern for respondents. Moreover, pensioners receiving pensions through Ukrposhta branches face limitations in utilizing these funds in Poland and encounter obstacles in transferring payments to bank accounts. Reissuing pension cards demands confirmation from the Pension Fund, obtainable only in person in Ukraine, causing inconvenience for some pensioners.

Further details on these issues are provided below.

## 1. Research methodology

The survey was conducted from 1 September to 10 October 2023 in the Lesser Poland, Subcarpathian and Masovian Voivodeships of the Republic of Poland, covering large (Krakow, Rzeszow, Warsaw) and small (Przemysl) urban areas.

The study was conducted using semi-structured focus group discussions with in-person attendance and interviews with key informants (KII) from among the displaced population and service providers (online and in-person).

In Poland, the preliminary selection of candidates for focus groups and KII was carried out by the teams of community centres mainly by involving random participants of the event who met the selection criteria, or by targeted invitation in the case of groups that are not covered by the activities of community centres (e.g. students).

The focus groups were formed according to the following profiles: (1) parents aged 18-59 with a child under 6 years old; (2) parents aged 18-59 with at least one schoolchild; (3) adult students; (4) people aged 60 and over; (5) women.

KIIs were conducted with displaced persons and partner organisations (service providers) in each location. A total of 62 displaced persons from Ukraine residing in Poland and 18 representatives of service providers took part in the study. Detailed information on the focus groups and key informant interviews is provided in Annexes 1 and 2.

Personal data (such as names, surnames, etc.) was not collected, processed or stored during the study without the written consent of the participants. Audio and/or video recording was possible only with the consent of all participants of the focus group discussion. In the absence of such consent, the moderator took written notes. All data were collected, processed, and stored in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Poland.

Among the research limitation is the lack of Roma refugees among the key informants, yet this group faces systemic barriers and discrimination. Thus, DRC would like to draw attention to the report on discrimination and protection risks faced by the Roma refugees published by Foundation Towards Dialogue <<"They are not refugees; they are travellers". Situation of Roma Refugees from Ukraine in Podkarpackie Voievodeship. Monitoring report 2022-2023>>. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *"They are not refugees; they are travellers". Situation of Roma Refugees from Ukraine in Podkarpackie Voievodeship. Monitoring report 2022-2023 issued by Foundation Towards Dialogue available at <https://fundacjawstronedialogu.pl/en/reports/>*



## 2. Integration of the Ukrainian population

More than a year and a half after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion, the integration of the Ukrainian community into public life in Poland has been quite diverse in terms of level and nature, both in the assessments of war-affected people themselves and among service providers.

*"I have not yet integrated, except at the level of shops and doctors." (Krakow, 03.10.2023).*

*"I can't say that we're used to it, but somehow we've got used to it." (Warsaw, 25.09.2023)*

*"The degree of integration is very high" (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

Integration does not have a clear geographical reference, but rather depends on individual circumstances and willingness to integrate. Nor can we say that integration has been a priority for the Ukrainian population.

*"There may be some difficulties, but the main thing is that there is no war. You realise that you and your children are safe (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

Overall, in most cases, the integration of Ukrainians is assessed as high. A number of factors contributed to the integration of the Ukrainian population. Firstly, the proximity of the Polish and Ukrainian languages made it possible to ensure direct primary communication for basic services.

*"I think that [integration is going on] quite well compared to other countries. It is quite easy for a foreigner to find himself. The proximity of the language helps." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

Secondly, Poland has long been home to a large number of labour migrants and ethnic Ukrainians, who helped integrate newcomers into society.

*"There were already Ukrainians everywhere – Ukrainian-speaking managers in banks, Ukrainian coordinators at factories, etc. So, when there was such an influx, Poland was ready to receive them. In addition, people were going to visit their relatives." (Krakow, 10.10.2023).*

Thirdly, the Polish public, civil society organisations and government agencies mobilised quite quickly and provided as much assistance as possible to the arriving Ukrainian population.

*"Poland is quite a friendly country to Ukrainians. The Polish government and Polish people have been meeting the needs of those who come. Adaptation depends on the individual. Being from Luhansk myself, who had never been to Poland and had never heard the Polish language, I faced a whole range of adaptation issues." (Przemysl, 26.09.2023)*

*"The community and authorities also reacted quickly, so adaptation was faster compared to, for example, Germany." (Krakow, 10.09.2023)*

*"Poles can be proud of themselves and be an example for others, given the way they responded to the situation (how they provided shelter in their homes, how they gave away their clothes). The process of assistance continues, the war is not over" (Przemysl, 05.10.2023).*

Fourthly, the majority of Ukrainian citizens surveyed (79%) have been in Poland for more than 1 year, which gave them time to resolve basic issues (such as security, housing, legalisation of stay, etc.) and move on to issues related to employment and cultural integration.

*"...People's needs are changing. At first it was exclusively humanitarian (food, shelter), then there were issues of employment and language, and now there are more and more requests for cultural integration, leisure activities, buying real estate, getting a mortgage, etc. Those who have not found themselves, most likely, have already left." (Krakow, 10.10.2023).*

*"When we arrived, there was no integration, because there was a lot of stress. We stayed at home, took pills (for about two months). Then we realised that it would be a long time, but we had to move on and*

*change something. The first thing we did was to take Polish language courses. Secondly, we started going out with our granddaughter, talking to people." (Rzeszow, 06.10.2023)*

However, at the individual level, integration has not always been easy and continues to be difficult. Factors that have had a negative impact on the degree of integration are: lack of employment, poor language skills and, strangely enough, a large number of Ukrainians around, which means a lack of communication with the host community.

*"Integration is very important, work is the most important thing here. Programmes that not only offer language courses but also guarantee something - for example, employment, internships - will be effective." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

*"At first, I did not plan to move to Poland. I think that there has been no integration so far because I don't work. There is no communication outside the Ukrainian community, except for my kindergarten teacher. I am gradually learning the language and starting to communicate. I plan to look for a job." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"Integration is not bad, but we do not communicate with Poles. I have a very large circle of communication in Ukrainian with Ukrainians." (Krakow, 03.10.2023).*

*"No knowledge of the language. This makes it impossible to find a decent job and integrate into social life." (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

Also, according to service providers, a significant role is played by a person's attitude to integration.

*"There are two groups of Ukrainians: those who are aware of the need for integration, and those who do not want to integrate and want to return (and do return)." (Krakow, 03.10.2023).*

*"Poland is doing its best, and then it all depends on the individual. There are different mentalities, and those who want to integrate into Polish society do so." (Krakow, 03.10.2023).*

The political situation on the eve of the parliamentary elections in Poland has recently become a negative factor for integration. Respondents noted that during the election campaign, there were more problems with the attitude of the Polish population (up to aggressive).

*"There is an impression that Poles do not want Ukrainians to integrate into Polish society, so many are considering resettlement in another country. If the security of Ukrainians in Poland deteriorates, people will flee" (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"We are confused and do not yet know what to do and where to go next because of the situation around Ukrainians." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

According to Polish service providers, integration is best among the youngest.

*"The smallest ones integrate best. In the Polish language environment, they quickly catch on and begin to understand." (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

*"Integration starts with kindergartens and nurseries." (Rzeszow, 06.10.2023)*

Service providers also note that the integration of persons from the western regions of Ukraine is faster due to greater familiarity with the language and culture. It is noted that newcomers (less than a year) are often more prepared and have more information.

Among the most acute problems related to integration, in addition to employment and proper language skills (discussed below), respondents also mentioned **housing issues, which were** not part of the original research subject and therefore require additional study. The issue is acute for all categories of the population, regardless of the region of residence. The (un)fulfilment of this basic need directly affects the degree of integration of many people and influences their decision to return to Ukraine or resettle to another country.

The most vulnerable category is the elderly living in shelters.

*"Most of the elderly people in the shelters arrived from the active combat zones, and they have nowhere to go back to. They have no one in Poland who can help them. Now the shelter in Radymno is being reorganised - it is being closed, and the elderly people are to be transported to Krakow. They don't even have warm clothes. [...] The situation in Jarosław is also difficult, because now this shelter is overcrowded - there are 6 people in a room, and they are given food only once a day." (Przemysl, 01.09.2023)*

A common problem is the reluctance to rent to people with children or animals.

*It is a big problem to find accommodation, especially with a child. They don't want to rent because of the law that prohibits eviction of children. And we can't find anything." (Rzeszow, 02.10.2023)*

*They said, 'Sorry, you are with children - you are not suitable for us'. Even though we showed them contracts from work in Poland [...] We have been looking for an apartment for 4 months." (Rzeszow, 02.10.2023)*

It is not uncommon for landlords to be reluctant to rent to people of Ukrainian or foreign origin at all, or to require a guarantee.

*Housing is an uncovered problem. It is very difficult to remove it. Poles do not want to rent housing to Ukrainians, and this situation is very common." (Krakow, 29.09.2023)*

*They hang up if they hear that it's Ukrainians. (Rzeszow, 02.10.2023)*

In general, the cost of renting a house in Poland is too high for many Ukrainians.

*"The hardest part is finding accommodation for an adequate price" (Warsaw, 25.09.2023)*

### 3. Access to temporary protection, legal services and documents

#### 3.1. Access to temporary protection in Poland

The issue of granting temporary protection in the Republic of Poland is regulated by the Act of 12 March 2022 on assistance to Ukrainian citizens in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of this country (Dz.U. 2022 poz. 583, Ustawa o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa) as amended.

According to the Act, temporary protection in the territory of the Republic of Poland is granted to a person who simultaneously fulfils the following conditions:

- since 24 February 2022, has arrived in Poland from the territory of Ukraine or through other countries in connection with the hostilities in Ukraine;
- has Ukrainian citizenship or is the spouse of a Ukrainian citizen;
- has declared her/his desire to stay in Poland.

Temporary protection is granted for the period until 4 March 2024. The period of temporary protection may change with the introduction of relevant amendments to the legislation.

Persons granted temporary protection are allowed to leave Poland for periods not exceeding 30 days at a time. The number of trips is not limited. However, such visits should not have the character of regular border traffic.

Persons entitled to temporary protection receive a PESEL number with the status of UKR (so-called PESEL UKR), an eleven-digit numerical symbol that precisely identifies the individual. The PESEL number includes: date of birth, tax number, gender, and a control number. The UKR status allows you to receive social benefits, use public healthcare services free of charge, and officially work and study. Starting from 28 January 2023, the PESEL (UKR status) is issued within 30 days from the date of entry into the territory of Poland.

Only two of the displaced persons interviewed did not have UKR status, as they entered the territory of Poland before 24 February 2022 and reside there on the basis of a temporary residence permit.

Overwhelmingly, displaced persons and service providers were very positive about temporary protection.

*"If it wasn't for this crisis formula, we would have had to find some other legal solutions to cope with such an influx of refugees. The decision on temporary protection was the right and necessary one. It's a pity that this temporary protection can only be granted in one country [there are problems when moving to Poland from another country]." (Krakow, 05.10.2023)*

*"The best words. In Poland Ukrainians have received the assistance (free housing, medicine, education) that they have not been provided with in Ukraine." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"It is okay. It could be better in some places, but this is the Polish system (regardless of Ukrainian citizens)." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"It was done well. Within two weeks, all services were working and various services were provided." (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

*"The procedure is simple and clear. PESEL and social benefits are processed quickly, except for guardianship of elderly persons, where you have to wait for a decision." (Przemysl, 05.09.2023)*

However, there are some critical opinions.

*"I assess it as superficial. It is impossible to understand the Poles, what they want. On the one hand, they cannot send Ukrainians home, but there is no strategy. Some money is being allocated, something is being done, but there is no policy aimed at employment and integration, like in Germany. It is not known what benefits will remain after the elections." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

*"I would be willing to organise trainings for civil servants on the Special Law, as I still encounter cases of ignorance of the law among officials." (Krakow, 05.10.2023)*

*"It happens that officials do not know the Special Law." (Krakow, 05.10.2023)*

Most problems with the PESEL procedure were reported in the spring of 2022, primarily due to queues in large cities.

*"In the first days, there were huge queues for PESEL, people did not understand what to do, there was chaos. But in general, everything was fine." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"At the beginning, everyone was queuing for PESEL. We went and did it in a city nearby without a single queue" (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

*"The procedures are quite open and accessible. There were some problems at the beginning with the queues for PESEL." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

Currently, there is no such problem anywhere. In general, the procedure for obtaining temporary protection is not complicated, and local administrations and NGOs employed Ukrainian-speaking staff to help fill out the documents. However, according to service providers from Przemysl, some Roma women had problems filling out the documents due to lack of intercultural facilitation support.

Of all the problems reported to date, the largest share is the loss of UKR status (confirmation of temporary protection) and termination of payments provided within the framework of temporary protection (primarily the monthly childcare allowance of PLN 500 under the government's Family 500 Plus programme, the so-called 500+). This happens due to registration errors, the alleged person has exceeded the allowed 30-day stay abroad, or other reasons (e.g. due to technical problems or after a passport change). While the restoration of UKR status is short-lived ("restored in 10 minutes"), the resumption of payments, which are a significant source of income for vulnerable groups of the population, is a rather lengthy process.

Since January 2023, a new regulation has been introduced that suspends social benefits for the duration of a stay in any other country, including the 500+ programme. Payments are not always automatically resumed, and people apply to the ZUS [Social Insurance Office]. In turn, ZUS refers to the Border Guard Service, as it has to receive confirmation of entry. Most people do not have problems with the deadlines, but the law obliges people with UKR status to declare the purpose of entry. Therefore, at the border, such a person must not only present their passport and the Diia.pl app, but also declare that they are entering as a refugee from war and intend to use temporary protection. Not all persons do so.

Unless the purpose of the trip is clearly declared, such persons may be included in the general register of the Border Guard Service ("as tourists") and not in the relevant register of persons benefiting from temporary protection. ZUS does not have access to the general register of the Border Guard Service and therefore cannot track such trips. At the same time, in the register of persons benefiting from temporary protection, such persons continue to be recorded as absent from the country.

In case of loss of payments, such a person should first check their UKR status and restore it, if necessary. Then, they should contact the border crossing point where they crossed the border (best done through a trusted profile, but also by email). A sample of such an appeal is available on the website of the Border Guard Service. According to service providers and displaced persons, further procedures for interagency communication and the resumption of payments can take a long time (from two to eight months).

*"Previously, border guards responded relatively quickly, but now it takes a month or two. It will take several months for the Border Guard Service to update the data and send it to ZUS, and then for the relevant procedures to be completed at ZUS." (Krakow, 05.10.2023)*

The dependence on benefits and the complexity of the procedure for their renewal means that vulnerable people do not travel.

*"Women are afraid to leave in order not to lose 500+" (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

*"We do not go to Ukraine in order not to lose 500+" (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*In one exceptional case, a respondent from Krakow, who had never left Poland, reported that while investigating the reasons for the suspension of her benefits and loss of UKR status, she discovered that other people's trips were being recorded for her. After contacting ZUS and the police, it turned out that the trips were made by another person who is a full namesake of the person in question with an identical date of birth (and therefore has a similar PESEL number). The respondent has already restored her UKR status, but has not yet received the payment. Four emails sent to the border guards remain unanswered.*

None of the interviewed displaced persons covered by temporary protection have yet applied for a temporary residence permit (karta pobytu). Temporary protection solves most of the issues of such persons, while obtaining a residence permit leads to the loss of such protection. In addition, not everyone wants to stay in Poland for a long time (they plan to return to Ukraine or move to other countries).

*"We are not going to. There is no way to make money - we will move on [with a Canadian visa]." (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

*"I don't plan anything. We'll see when the war is over." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"We hope that temporary protection will be extended, because we do not plan to stay here." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

For those wishing to obtain a residence permit in the future, a significant limitation is the lack of official Polish employment, which is essentially the sole basis for obtaining a residence permit for persons with UKR status, making it inaccessible to pensioners, the unemployed and mothers with young children.

*"I would really like to apply for a residence card, but I have no grounds, as I am not employed in Poland." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"We would live here, but if the 40+ is cancelled, we will not have the means to live and will go to Ukraine." (Rzeszow, 06.10.2023)*

The extension of temporary status beyond 4 March 2024 remained unresolved at the time of the interviews. This was a concern of the interviewed displaced persons and service providers.

*"In general, the system is up and running. There are a lot of questions about what will happen after 4 March, what benefits will remain." (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

*"If the EU has already extended the stay of Ukrainians until 2025, Poland is still bargaining." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

The entry of a large number of unaccompanied children into Poland has led to the need to find solutions to ensure the representation of their interests.

On the basis of the Special Act, a new type of guardianship has been introduced in Poland only for persons with the status of UKR, the so-called "temporary guardianship", which is a unique legal solution. Unlike other types of guardianship, it is not preceded by the deprivation or restriction of parental rights, as in ordinary cases. The court procedure is free of charge for displaced persons and should take up to 3 days. In practice, the court decision is issued in 2-3 weeks. Not all parents previously understood the need for such custody, but now awareness and legal awareness of this issue has increased. No significant comments were made about the temporary guardianship procedure during the study.

*"I have never encountered any problems with guardianship. You go to court and get it done. A 17-year-old boy came to Poland on his own to enter a university. He had to look for a guardian before he reached the age of maturity, because he could not complete the documents for admission. The guardian was found through the Red Cross." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*Temporary custody is provided just fine. There are lawyers who do this for free." (Krakow, 05.10.2023)*

*"I was applying for custody of my sister. Everything went well. They came and checked" (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

A very limited number of respondents had experience of registering births and deaths with Polish authorities. According to the service providers, there were no problems with the registration of newborns, except in cases when parents did not have time to register their child within 30 days with the Polish authorities. In this case, the Polish registration authorities, in accordance with Polish law, gave the child an arbitrary name, which the parents then had to change as part of the name change procedure. As for the burial and repatriation of deceased persons, no issues with the procedures were reported. The main issue is the cost.

*"What shocked Ukrainians was the possibility of allocating a burial place in Krakow for only 20 years, and then you have to pay for it. As for the repatriation of the dead, the problem is the high cost, not the documents." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"It is expensive. There are companies that do everything, but it costs money. The Ukrainian consulate does not deal with this." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

### *3.2 Extension and provision of Ukrainian passport documents*

Some displaced persons entered the territory of Poland on the basis of an internal passport or birth certificate, which does not allow them to fully exercise their rights. This is especially true for newborns and children from the occupied territories, pensioners and other vulnerable groups. According to service providers, it is not possible to obtain a PESEL on the basis of a birth certificate because there is no photo. There are also problems with the submission of documents due to the lack of Latin transliteration in the internal passports of Ukrainian citizens. Consequently, such persons do not have full access to temporary protection services. At the same time, the large number of displaced people living in Poland causes significant needs for the renewal and extension of passport documents.

Therefore, it is not surprising that as many as 27 (or 43%) of the displaced persons interviewed in the study have experience of issuing or extending passports for their household members during their stay in Poland.

*"There are serious problems with the preparation of documents: queues, long waiting times, high cost. Among Ukrainian documents, the most common problem is with biometric passports." (Przemysl, 01.09.2023)*

Before Russia's large-scale invasion, there was already an extensive network of Ukrainian consular offices in Poland, but it was not ready for the huge influx of Ukrainian citizens and its accessibility in many areas is still significantly limited.

*"There are no problems that cannot be solved. The only thing that used to be a problem was standing in line. Now the number of people has decreased. The cost of services is higher than in Ukraine." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"I direct you to the consulate, but there is a long wait and high prices." (Krakow, 05.10.20023)*

*"We had our passports made at the consulate. The first passport took 5 months to make, the second - 2 months. It was almost impossible to sign up for the electronic queue. We had to make an appointment at 4 am when the systems were being updated. It took a month to register." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

A significant relief was the launch of the services of the State Enterprise Document (respondents used the services of the branches in Krakow and Warsaw), which relieved the consular offices. However, such services are more expensive and therefore less accessible to a wide category of the population, especially vulnerable groups.

*"Two passports for children. One was made through the consulate. It was almost impossible to get an appointment, but somehow we managed. It took almost a year. The other one was done through the State Enterprise Document in Krakow [there was a live queue, no problems]. It took a month, but it was more expensive." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"I tried to get my child's passport issued at the consulate (because it is cheaper), but they send it to the State Enterprise Document." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"For a month I tried unsuccessfully to make an appointment at the consulate [to get a passport and ID], but I had to go to the State Enterprise Document. It's fast and good, but expensive. I managed to register without any problems." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"The service centres of SE Document have started working. However, 600-800 PLN for services is a lot of money." (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

*"In case of absence of passports or expiry of ID-cards, people prefer the services of SE Document because they are afraid to cross the border." (Przemysl, 26.09.2023)*

Next to the price of services, the most frequently reported problem is difficulties with registering in the electronic queue (approximately until the summer of 2023).

*"I got my passport issued at the SE Document in Warsaw [after being referred from the consular department]. Without an appointment in the electronic queue, through an entry in the journal [live queue]. I waited overnight at the train station [according to the respondent, it was "no problem"]" (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"We had it done in Warsaw at the SE Document. We were lucky that they told us when the queue was updated and we managed to make an appointment." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

The problem of queues has now been more or less resolved. Also, the quality of services provided by the SE "Document" is generally not a cause for complaint among respondents.

For residents of the territories bordering Ukraine, it is sometimes easier to obtain passports in Ukraine. At the same time, obtaining a passport in Lviv for residents of Rzeszow costs about the same as a trip to Krakow and the price of services at the State Enterprise Document (including overnight accommodation and travel).

Due to a number of problems with access to documents, travelling to Ukraine is forced for people who come from the temporarily occupied territories.

*"If the territory is occupied and there is no access to documents, the consulate refuses to confirm the identity and sends you to the migration service. To do this, you need to enter the territory of Ukraine." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"My mother-in-law is from Volnovakha, she entered through Russia with an internal passport. Then she went to Kyiv to get a Ukrainian passport." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

At the same time, this is problematic for men who have just reached the age of 18, given the difficulties of crossing the border in the opposite direction.

The problematic issue is that you cannot officially send identity documents across the border (for example, if you left them in Ukraine). Official postal services do not accept such items, so people send documents by carriers.

### **3.3 Consular services (except for passport services)**

Conflicting information is received regarding other types of consular services. In particular, service providers paid attention to the activities of the Consulate General in Krakow.



*"Very long queues at the consulate. On Facebook, people share that the attitude at the consulate is 'very rude'." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"The consulate in Krakow is the most passive consulate in the whole of Poland. I know that in other cities, consulates respond to any allegations, but I have serious doubts about the Krakow one." (Krakow, 05.10.2023)*

*"In Krakow, the consulate works at a minus level. The only thing they do is confirm your identity and issue a certificate of residence in Poland." (Krakow, 05.10.2023)*

The respondents reported "kilometre-long queues" (the Consulate General currently has only a live queue) and long processing times (even compared to other consulates). However, the queues have significantly decreased since the opening of the SE "Document" branch. There were also complaints about the inability to get quality advice.

In Krakow, at the time of the study, there were no birth, death and marriage registration services. It was reported that the Consulate General did not have a connection to the Civil Registry Office, while other consulates in Poland did. At the same time, people who received or facilitated the receipt of a birth certificate in 2022 and early 2023 reported that birth certificates were issued very quickly ("within two days").

As for the other consulates, the biggest problems arise with the electronic queue. It also takes a long time to respond to inquiries from Ukraine. People everywhere report difficulties with calling the consulate.

*"In Lublin, I had my child's documents done. In principle, it was fine, but the consulate did not tell us at what time or what services were available. We needed a certificate confirming that the child was born in Poland. We arrived in the morning, and it was issued only after 2 o'clock. [...] The certificate was issued quickly, within a few hours. In Krakow, we were told to wait 2-3 months." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"My daughter went to paste a photo of her child in Przemysl. It was done in 15 minutes." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"It's very difficult to register, it's impossible to register in the online queue [in Warsaw]. It takes up to 3 months to produce documents. People have to travel to Ukraine to get their documents made." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"In Przemysl, there is only an honorary consulate with limited functionality. It is difficult to reach the consulates in Lublin and Krakow" (Przemysl, 26.09.2023)*

*"We don't even try to go to the consulate, because it is impossible to get there" (Warsaw, 25.09.2023)*

According to service providers, the Honorary Consulate in Przemysl issued "white passports" for some time, but then stopped doing so. There are certain nuances in the processing of documents for those travelling from the occupied territories, especially when there are insufficient or no documents.

The most problematic issues were when mothers in Przemysl approached the consulate with one or more children in the family who had only Russian citizenship without the possibility of confirming Ukrainian citizenship. Accordingly, such children could not cross the state border of Ukraine, and in Poland they had no possibility of obtaining temporary protection.

### **3.4 Obtaining legal services in Ukraine**

Sometimes displaced persons are forced to travel to Ukraine to obtain the relevant document. At the same time, elderly people have difficulties with this, primarily due to lack of funds. Another vulnerable group includes mothers living alone in Poland, as they are forced to either travel with their children or leave them in someone else's care.

People visit Ukraine to perform various legal actions and to receive administrative services. These trips are mostly limited to Western Ukraine, but respondents often resolve their issues during visits home. It is

common to go to an ASC, exchange a driver's licence and perform notarial acts (powers of attorney, apostille, etc.). Ukrainian notaries are involved in drafting documents, which are then officially certified in Poland at the consulate (e.g. in case of sale of property).

*"I changed my driving licence through an online service in Ukraine. They did a great job." (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

*"Many people go to the ASC in Lviv. IDPs go to confirm their place of residence." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"They leave. They turn to Ukrainian notaries to draw up documents, which they then take to the consulate." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

There are some documents that are produced or restored only in Ukraine. In particular, it was reported that people from the temporarily occupied territories had difficulties restoring their children's lost secondary school certificates. To do so, they had to travel to Kyiv. There were also reports of difficulties in obtaining certificates from the Territorial Centres for Recruitment and Social Support (TCRS).

Divorce between Ukrainian citizens in Poland is an extremely lengthy process, and therefore, in such cases, most people prefer to go to Ukraine.

*"[regarding divorces] It is easier to leave for 1-2 weeks or hire a lawyer than to do it in Poland." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

Some pensioners have to travel to Ukraine to resume suspended payments.

*One respondent from Krakow, who is from Kryvyi Rih, had her pension stopped being paid to her bank account in Ukraine. The respondent had been saving her money there on purpose and did not spend anything. According to the woman, "they thought she had died" because there was no movement of funds on the account. After a month of dealing with the Pension Fund in Dnipro, pension payments were resumed. However, at the same time, her disability payments were withdrawn due to travelling abroad. The respondent is working with a lawyer to restore these payments.*

There have been cases when relatives of people who died in the temporarily occupied territories (TOT) transited to Poland to obtain death certificates in Ukraine and then travelled through the Baltic States back to the TOT.

### **3.5. Digital administrative services**

Digital administrative services have become widespread in Poland and Ukraine.

*I like to use them both in Poland and Ukraine. For example, I found the 45+ examinations programme in the Patient's Electronic Health Record. I filled out the form and underwent all the tests and diagnostics." (Krakow, 05.10.2023)*

The use of such services requires access to certain technologies (smartphone, computer, etc.) and a certain level of digital literacy, which is a problem for some groups of the population, especially the elderly.

*"Pensioners and those without phones have problems. It takes some time to download the app and use it." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"Older people lack digital skills. There are appropriate classes at the [Open Place] centre." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"Everything works, but not everyone knows how to use it or has smartphones." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

Ukrainian citizens with a PESEL number with the status of UKR were able to receive a trusted profile (zaufany profile), which is a digital tool and is the equivalent of an online identity document. With the help of a trusted profile, you can, for example, sign applications for submission to government agencies online. Obtaining a trusted profile is not mandatory and requires a Polish mobile phone number. For this reason,

not all displaced persons have received it. Also, its use requires certain skills. At the same time, a number of administrative services in Poland are directly linked to the functioning of the trusted profile, which creates technical obstacles to their use.

*"The best way to contact the authorities is through profil zaufany, but it is a challenge for older people or those who cannot read instructions in Polish." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

When using a trusted profile, the restrictions on personal data protection (so-called RODO) do not allow other persons (e.g. lawyers) to enter data for the applicant. In other words, they can only be informed how to do so.

Frequent requests to organisations that provide support to Ukrainian refugees are to reinstall and update programmes.

*"A lot of requests. mObywatel is a very capricious programme, there are many technical issues." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"Salam Lab has a dedicated specialist who is directly involved in the installation and updating of software." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"It is actively used. Sometimes there are technical problems. mObywatel is often installed with problems." (Przemysl, 26.09.2023)*

Unlike other European countries, the Polish government decided not to issue plastic cards or insertions in passports to confirm temporary protection and travel within the Schengen area, but to replace them with the Diia.pl mobile application, which is linked to another administrative service, mObywatel. This application is the most popular among the displaced population.

*"Most problems arise for those who travel abroad. About 80% are Diia.pl." (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

*"Diia.pl needs regular updates. A lot of people are contacting us." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

According to service providers, displaced persons most often applied because of an unrecorded proxy profile, which meant that they could not create a profile in Diia.pl, or the inability to register children under 13 in mObywatel, which meant that they could not have a separate profile in Diia.pl. The absence of the application did not allow for the correct recording of border crossings by such persons. Now parents have been given the opportunity to update their children's profiles, but this does not solve the issue if the children live in Poland under the care of other persons.

Also, if people leave for more than 30 days, they lose their UKR status and, accordingly, their certificate in Diia.pl. And there is no way to create it in Ukraine.

At the same time, refugees continue to use digital services in Ukraine, primarily Diia, in particular, they applied for the programme of compensation for destroyed property. They also applied for the exchange of rights and to the e-court for the recovery of alimony. No problems were reported with the use of Ukrainian services.

### **3.6. Free legal aid**

The majority of contacts with free legal aid for displaced persons who took part in the survey are at DRC community centres or other organisations that support Ukrainian refugees. For many of them, it is important to receive personal advice.

*"I was a volunteer. Many Ukrainians do not want to read, it is important for people to receive information in person [regardless of age]." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"Legal aid is not enough. Not all people know where to look for help, not all people are ready to read something [they prefer to communicate]." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"There is no shortage of legal advice. In general, people have been relaxed by legal aid. When you say 'go there, do this and that', the answer is often 'I don't know how'. People who came before 2022 had to do everything on their own. Even after a year of staying, people have not learned to solve simple issues on their own, they lack motivation." (Krakow 10.10.2023)*

The opinions of service providers and the displaced population on the adequacy of such services are divided. Some believe that such assistance is sufficient, but there is a problem with public awareness of such services.

*"There is no problem with access, there is a problem with citizens' awareness of such services." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"There is enough help in official and humanitarian institutions. Polish private legal services are paid and not always accessible to everyone." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"There are many offers of legal aid in Krakow and in Poland in general. Only on 26 September, a new migrant support centre (with lawyers and psychologists) opened in Krakow. [...] We even had Poles come to us and complain that they do not have the opportunity to consult for free, while Ukrainians can." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

On the other hand, there are comments on its quality and reduction.

*"There is no appropriate amount of legal aid for people from Ukraine. [...] As a representative of an organisation that provides free legal aid, I assess its accessibility outside the organisation in Krakow as low, because I have no one to refer a person to in other cities. At the beginning, many organisations agreed to provide free legal aid for refugees, but after a month or two, there was no one. More and more legal aid centres are closing down." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"I think legal aid is not enough. The information I received about the residence card and visa issues was not very informative. You can find out at forums." (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

At the same time, there is a fairly unanimous opinion on the need to continue and even expand such assistance. The issues addressed by the respondents were quite diverse (border crossing, child custody, access to social assistance, disability registration, housing lease agreements, visa issues, etc.) At the same time, the following issues were identified as requiring additional legal advice:

- children's rights and custody (including whether children can be left unattended or released on their own);
- change of driving licence, car registration and traffic rules;
- obtaining a residence permit;
- double taxation issues;
- peculiarities of employment in Poland.

Service providers noted that the gap is in the areas that are currently under-resourced, including divorce, temporary guardianship and assistance with death registration and repatriation.

Paid notarial services and certified translation remain a major uncovered problem.

#### 4. Access to education

In general, Polish education is accessible to Ukrainians. However, there are a number of issues that require special attention. Service providers note that the situation with access to education is much better now. In 2022, there were no places in schools and kindergartens, as the Polish education system was not prepared for such an influx of Ukrainian children. At the same time, respondents note that the shortage of places in kindergartens and schools is still significant, although this is not solely due to the arrival of Ukrainians.

*"There is no problem of access to schools and kindergartens for Ukrainians. There is a general Polish problem of lack of places. A large number of people from small towns come to Krakow." (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

There is also a lack of awareness among the Ukrainian population about the procedures for enrolling in public schools and kindergartens.

*"People don't know the system of registration for kindergartens and schools, and therefore miss the registration deadline [30 March in Krakow]. There are problems with the availability of places. There are no problems with origin." (Krakow, 02.10.2023).*

Compared to other levels of education, higher education is more likely to require language adaptation. A relatively recent phenomenon (the admission campaign for the 2023/2024 academic year) is the arrival of boys of pre-conscription age.

*[KRA-KII-SER-07] Now mothers bring boys who have completed secondary education so that they are not taken to the front and receive the appropriate education. (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

As for adult education, difficulties in learning the language are mostly experienced by older people and people with disabilities. Lack of money, free time and having children are serious obstacles to self-education.

##### 4.1 Preschool education

According to UNHCR, as of June 2023, almost 36,000 Ukrainian children were enrolled in Polish preschools, and almost 6,000 more were enrolled in preparatory classes ("zero"). Of these, 9.5 thousand attended non-public institutions.

The issue of access to nurseries (up to 3 years old), which are paid for (approximately 300-500 PLN per month for placement and meals) and are optional, and public kindergartens, which are free for children from the age of 3 (5 hours per day, parents pay only for meals). From the age of 6, children have

Among the respondents to the survey, the situation is such that most children stay at home with their parents or other relatives until they reach the age of three.

*"We did not enrol the youngest in kindergarten, it is too early (2 years old)" (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"I'm thinking of giving him to a nursery, but I haven't got round to looking for him" (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"The girl is two and a half years old. They are ready, but have not tried it" (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

At the same time, there are reports of long waits for admission to public nurseries. In general, there is a belief that it will be easier to enrol children in public kindergartens from the age of three, as there are more places available.

*"We signed up for a place in a nursery in February 2023, but the wait was very long (there were 134 in the queue, now there are 65). We tried a Ukrainian kindergarten from a foundation (350 PLN per month). We took it, but in the end the child refused to go." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

No other problems were reported in relation to attendance at the nursery, except for one case of suspected child abuse and one case of bullying.

*"There was a nuance with a kindergarten teacher with a younger child (one year and 9 months). During the first week, the child did not want to eat or drink. The child sat and cried, looking at one point, because she missed her mother. Then, I started leaving her to sleep at lunchtime. And when she was falling asleep, a boy touched her and she reacted violently. And the teacher grabbed her and started shaking her so that her head, arms and legs were shaking (the mother saw it through video monitoring). [The mother contacted the administration of the nursery, had a conversation with the teacher, who denied everything and said that it was just a game they were playing and the child was laughing at the time. According to the respondent, everything is fine now]." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"There is a lot of aggression, actually. The bullying was against my son, although he is only 5 years old. His peers were harassing him terribly. There was no way out, because he had to go to kindergarten. But there they teased him and said terrible things. He hid behind his teacher. When the language barrier disappeared, he managed to make friends with another boy." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

The overwhelming majority of parents of children aged three to six years tried to enrol them in pre-schools. Children of the same age who did not attend kindergartens were mostly looked after by grandparents. In the course of the study, the problem of lack of places in kindergartens was reported by respondents in Warsaw, Krakow and Rzeszow.

*"The child was 6 years old when we arrived in Poland. According to Polish law, we were obliged to send the child to a kindergarten. We had to go through about 10 [public] kindergartens until we found one where they agreed to accept the child. The child was very happy in the kindergarten." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"There is a very big problem with places in kindergartens. In Krakow, there was a UNICEF programme [until the summer of 2023] that paid for places for Ukrainians in state kindergartens [there was a separate website with a list of places]." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

At the same time, no such problem was noted in Przemysl.

*"There are no problems with preschool education, because children go straight to kindergartens where they learn Polish. You can enrol in every kindergarten." (Przemysl, 05.09.2023)*

With the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Poland, alternative forms of pre-school care are becoming more widespread.

*"In 2022, the law on home-based parental care was finalised and adopted. This is an alternative to kindergartens, when one mother looks after children while the other works. It is even used by some employers now." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

Due to the lack of space, parents have to send their children to private kindergartens.

*"It was very difficult with the kindergarten. So we went to a private kindergarten for a year." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

However, some parents consciously prefer private kindergartens.

*"Sometimes parents are not satisfied with the level of services in kindergartens - they ask for help with enrolment in private kindergartens" (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"We went to a private kindergarten. It was expensive, but we didn't like the public kindergartens we looked at" (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023).*

*"We got a place in a public kindergarten, but stayed in a private one" (Warsaw, 25.09.2023).*

The children's adaptation is mostly smooth, especially when there are other Ukrainian children in the group. The proximity of the language allows children to generally understand their peers and educators. However, there are exceptions.

*"The girl did not speak Polish and the children did not communicate with her, but now she is fine."  
(Rzeszow, 05.10.2023).*

#### 4.2 School education

According to the UNHCR, as of June 2023, refugees from Ukraine accounted for 4% of all registered students in Poland. More than 85,000 classes have at least one refugee student.

At the end of the 2022/2023 academic year, almost 129 thousand Ukrainian students were studying in Polish schools, including almost 110 thousand in secondary schools (szkoła podstawowa) (grades 1-8) (on average 11-13 thousand students in each grade); more than 19 thousand in secondary schools (szkoła średnia) (including lyceums (4 years) - more than 9 thousand technical schools (5 years) - about 7.5 thousand, vocational schools of I-II level – about 2.8 thousand). 7.2 thousand pupils studied in non-governmental institutions.

The rest probably continued their studies at Ukrainian online schools.

The vast majority of respondents' school-age children were covered by the Polish or Ukrainian education system. Public education is free, although there are associated costs. It is public education that covers the majority of school-age children whose parents participated in the survey. According to parents whose children study at non-public schools (respondents from Warsaw and Krakow), the cost of non-public education is approximately the same as in Ukraine (but the material base of the school is better, according to parents).

Among the respondents' children, only one child with a disability was temporarily out of school due to problems with access to education.

During conversations with service providers, it became clear that the problem of out-of-school affects also children in the Roma community. During interviews, it became known that a group of Roma refugees from Zakarpattia reside in a very remote shelter located in Kidalowice. According to interviews with service providers from Przemysl the problem of children not attending Polish schools was particularly persistent there and caused by the remoteness of the site and lack of transportation, systemic discrimination, and reluctance or disinterest of some parents. It is difficult to make an estimate of the number of such children, as there is a constant movement of residents of the shelter, but the number of children living there was up to 140. Many of the parents themselves have often not accessed formal education. Some children attended church schools but were not covered by education in Ukraine. The shelter in Kidalowice is also the only shelter that does not provide transportation to school. This case study is indicative of the systemic barriers Roma refugee face in access to services and related protection risks.

*"The biggest achievement for us [...] will be that Roma children from the shelter in Kidalowice will be able to go to school and get basic literacy skills. [...]The children living in this shelter do not go to school, and they did not go to school when they lived in Ukraine. Children in their teens do not understand first grade material. But there are many talented children. We have to give them the opportunity to go to school."  
(Przemysl, 01.09.2023).*

According to respondents, in 2022 there were problems with the lack of school places in all localities, except for Przemysl.

*"They refused to enrol me in school because there were no places. Until Ukrainian volunteers intervened"  
(Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"We arrived in October last year. The child was supposed to go to the first grade of the lyceum, but there were no vacancies. There were no places in technical schools either. We offered to continue his education online in Ukraine. We appealed to the city administration and to a special commission that was supposed to help refugees solve their educational problems. I went to all the lyceums in turn, but nothing helped. [the child continues to study in the 10th grade in Ukraine online]" (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

Sometimes the problem was the reluctance of school administrations to accept Ukrainian children.

*"There were schools that closed their doors and did not want to communicate. One principal said: "We have enough Poles, and here are Ukrainians." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"At the beginning, there were cases of mass refusal to admit Ukrainian children to schools due to lack of knowledge of Polish." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"In one situation near Krakow, we had to deal with a principal who initially did not want to take a Ukrainian child to school" (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

According to the information received, access to schooling for Ukrainian children improved in 2023. The Polish education system has largely adapted to the arrival of refugees, but a lack of places is still reported.

*"There are no barriers as such. There is a shortage of places in schools, too many have moved in" (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"This year my child went to the first grade. The registration was online and everything was very easy. The school quickly accepted the girl because we are attached to this district." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

Service providers note that it is in large cities that there are problems with school places. In smaller settlements, the situation is better. Also, public schools tend to accept children at the place of residence. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage for access.

*"There are four schools in the neighbourhood. I arranged for two children without any problems" (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"Sometimes it was difficult to get into a school in the place of residence due to lack of places, but it was always a little further away." (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

*"In general, there were no problems. The kid was accepted to the second school we applied to." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

According to the respondents, it is common practice to accept children in the younger grade compared to Ukraine, which is not acceptable to some parents and children, especially high school students.

Difficulties in providing students with textbooks were reported in some schools in Rzeszow, including for children with disabilities.

*"I transferred a 4th grade child from the 'second' school [#2] to the 'third' school [#3] because the 'second' school has no books for Ukrainian children. And the teachers give 'one' marks because there are no books. This attitude is not very pleasant" (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"This year [of the school year], I already wanted my child to go to college. I have a child with a disability. According to Polish state regulations, such children should be provided with free textbooks in schools. The school [technical school No. 12] said, "We will not take you". Because it's the first time this has happened and we don't want to... [had to continue studying online]." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

The adaptation of children to Polish school is not always smooth. According to the reports of parents and service providers, it can be concluded that the problem of adaptation increases with the age of the children.

*"Ukrainian children in primary school (grades 1-4) integrate without any problems, they pick up the language well. In grades 5-6, integration is more problematic, especially if you don't fit in with a group."*



*[...] And there are 15-year-old children who study online, who have integration problems and even psychological problems due to isolation and lack of friends." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

Psychological reasons play an important role in adaptation.

*"My son was depressed, he was in a very serious condition and could not go to school at all. He studied at a Ukrainian school for a while. He did not want to communicate with anyone. [...] I found a psychologist through Viber, who held several sessions. [...] Now he has enrolled in a Ukrainian class at a Polish school and is studying normally." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"My son also went to school. At the beginning of the war, he was with his grandmother. He went to a class with all Poles. He went to a psychologist. And for a year he adapted with hysterics." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

As a rule, children do not have an adaptation period and most of them experience difficulties due to lack of understanding of the language.

*"Children are usually required to be involved in the learning process in Polish right away. They do not understand the material in Polish and start to fall behind. Teachers punish children for answering incorrectly in Polish or for not knowing Polish, which does not give any incentive for the child to continue learning and achieve success. It is very demotivating." (Przemysl, 01.09.2023)*

*"There is no adaptation at the lyceum, they give low grades. The child loses motivation to study. We need a psychologist." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"My daughter is in the final year of school and will be taking exams. She has health problems (surgery). She stayed at home for six months and had individual lessons. She has problems with adaptation because she does not understand everything she is asked in Polish." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

Parents report that Polish teachers are not always loyal to Ukrainian children ("you have been in Poland for a year and should know Polish"). It is common practice to lower grades and threaten to leave them for the next year. Public schools do not offer or are unable to offer additional Polish language classes. At the same time, free language courses for children do not always offer an acceptable schedule of classes, and many parents do not have the means to pay for tutors.

At the same time, service providers note that at the beginning, parents did not always show interest in their children's learning of Polish, which now creates problems with adaptation at school.

*"A very big problem is the language barrier. When parents sent their children to Polish schools, they thought that the war would end soon and did not force their children to learn the language much because they hoped to return to Ukraine. As a result of this approach, the children did not learn the language, and now they have no knowledge of the language. In addition, children living in shelters do not have the practice of speaking the language because they do not have the appropriate environment." (Rzeszow, 29.09.2023)*

In order to improve the educational process of Ukrainian children, some schools in large cities created special classes, but in the 2023/2024 academic year, some of these classes were disbanded for various reasons.

*"At first, we went to special Ukrainian classes, but then a directive was issued that if a child has been studying for 2 years, he or she should go to a Polish class." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"This year we transferred to another school to a Ukrainian class, because most of the Ukrainian children from the previous school [grades 1-8] moved back to Ukraine or other European countries." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

Ukrainian schools had been operating in some areas even before the outbreak of large-scale war, which undoubtedly contributed to the better adaptation of the children who attended them. Starting in 2022, non-public Ukrainian schools began to open in Krakow and Warsaw, where tuition fees are charged.

*"Educational adaptation in Przemyśl is relatively easy thanks to the Ukrainian gymnasium and the Ukrainian House." (Przemyśl, 26.09.2023)*

*"A year ago, a Ukrainian school was opened in Krakow [with 200 students]. At first it was free, but since this school year it has been paid for." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"I heard about the problem with Ukrainian children in Krakow. From the very beginning, they organised a free Ukrainian school, and a year later they introduced a fee and parents are panicking." (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

Problems with the adaptation of Ukrainian children in schools are supposed to be solved by so-called "intercultural assistants". In Krakow and Przemyśl, such positions were funded by international organisations, including UNICEF. At the same time, parents and service providers reported the absence of intercultural assistants in some schools in Rzeszów.

*"There was no intercultural assistant at the school. The child was immediately forced to study in Polish and it was very difficult for him" (Rzeszów, 05.10.2023).*

Questions about the reasons for leaving Polish schools were raised during interviews with service providers. The known cases of Ukrainian children leaving Polish schools are mainly related to the relocation of parents to another area. At the same time, there are also cases of changing schools due to bullying, as well as switching to online education due to the difficulties of learning in Polish.

*"There are cases when 11-13 year old boys do not want to go to a Polish school and go online [because of the internal setting for return]." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"The children went to school, but they were insulted at school. After some time, my daughter and grandchildren returned to Ukraine." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"I have never met a child who was completely excluded from any education system. But there were cases when they left Polish schools because of violence from their peers." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"There are cases when 15-16 year olds leave Polish school and go online because they will not pass the 'matura' [exams]" (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

#### **4.3. Access to school education for vulnerable groups**

A focus group discussion was held in Rzeszów, during which the issues of access to education for children with autism spectrum disorders were discussed. According to the respondents, there are currently 5 Ukrainian families with such children living in Rzeszów. In Rzeszów, there is a Complex of Special Schools named after UNICEF, which provides education for children with autism spectrum disorders of varying degrees. If a child is enrolled in this specialised school, he or she receives a range of educational services provided for by Polish law (classes of up to 5 students, special curriculum, etc.). However, the number of places in this educational institution is very limited. In this case, children can study in an inclusive class of a regular school or, in severe cases, in institutions outside the city. The key basis for admission to a school is the conclusion of the relevant clinic. However, such diagnoses, conclusions and, accordingly, recommendations do not always coincide with those provided by Ukrainian doctors. Accordingly, children cannot continue to study in the usual format.

*"My daughter attends a UNICEF school. At first, after the 'poradnia' [polyclinic], she was sent to a regular school for inclusion, although the conclusions of Ukrainian specialists prescribed individual lessons or lessons in very small groups. When I came to UNICEF, the first answer was that there were no places and I was sent back to the 'poradnia'. We came to UNICEF with a new diagnosis." (Rzeszów, 05.10.2023)*

*"The child goes to a UNICEF school. At first, she attended a school for more difficult children, but then she received a certificate from the 'poradnia' and was transferred to Rzeszów." (Rzeszów, 05.10.2023)*

*In one case, differences in diagnosis led to the exclusion of a child from education. The child was studying in the 4th grade in Ukraine. In Poland, she was diagnosed with a moderate degree. However, in Rzeszow, there were no teachers in general education schools to work with children with this diagnosis, and there was a lack of places in a specialised school. The child cannot learn Polish or mathematics without specialised help (an assistant). For six months, the child studied online in Ukraine. Now they do not attend school and study at home because they have not been able to get a new diagnosis for a month and a half to be in time for the start of the school year.*

*Also, the child's mother sees the problem that such Ukrainian children cannot immediately adapt to the Polish curriculum. In her opinion, there is a threat that if these children are taught according to the Polish curriculum immediately, they will lose the skills they have already acquired. It would be advisable to continue teaching the Ukrainian curriculum and gradually learn Polish, which takes some time (up to a year). However, according to her, there is no compromise, as they are told that the teaching will be conducted exclusively in Polish.*

Parents also note differences in the level of education in Ukraine and Poland.

*"The child 'grabs' the Polish language well. What she learns here at the age of 8, she learned in Ukraine at the age of 5." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"The child is studying at the same time according to the Ukrainian curriculum [in the 3rd grade, in the Polish school - 2nd grade]. I would like to have a bigger workload." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

According to parents, children lack the services of a Ukrainian speech therapist. Parents also note the lack of additional classes and problems with socialisation for children in the summer.

*"There are not enough additional classes. What is available is very expensive. 100 PLN for 40 minutes or 130 PLN for a sensory class." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"We went to TUTU [the centre for psycho-physical development of children], but they said that 'we are not their format'. They don't always want to see the child there, and the things they offer are not interesting to the child [a girl with high-functioning autism]." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

#### **4.4. Manifestations of bullying (harassment) at school**

According to the most recent data from<sup>2</sup>, 46% of children aged 11 to 17 years (48% of girls and 44% of boys) experienced various types of peer violence in Poland in the last year alone, which indicates that this phenomenon is widespread. Girls were more likely than boys to experience psychological or emotional violence (32% and 21%). The prevalence of violence is also higher in urban areas than in rural areas.

The study found a large amount of information about both very positive attitudes towards children at school and numerous cases of bullying against Ukrainian children in schools. This does not depend on the locality or a particular school, but rather on the situation in the classroom. Most bullying is verbal in nature.

*"There are a lot of cases of bullying. There are no physical manifestations, in most cases it is verbal. Children hear what their parents say at home and then reproduce it at school." (Rzeszow, 29.09.2023)*

*"There are facts of bullying. These are mostly offensive words and nicknames." (Przemysl, 02.09.2023)*

Bullying does not necessarily have to be ethnic in nature. They can also be bullied for "different" clothes, shoes, earrings, hairstyle, or for academic success ("do you think you're so smart?"), etc.

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<sup>2</sup> Katarzyna Makaruk et al., rep., *Diagnoza Przemocy Wobec Dzieci w Polsce 2023* (Fundacja Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę, October 27, 2023), <https://www.ore.edu.pl/wp-content/plugins/download-attachments/includes/download.php?id=43409>

The lack of language skills and inability to communicate is a factor that contributes to the child's isolation from the rest of his or her peers, potentially creating a risk of further bullying. Lack of language skills also causes communication problems between teachers and children.

*"The Poles are very loyal and cooperative. But they don't let Polish children into their team unless they speak Polish." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"There is no bullying as such, but there are situations with problematic integration into the Polish children's group." (Przemysl, 26.09.2023)*

*"My son, who is the only [Ukrainian] in the class, was trying to make friends, another boy came up and said 'go to Ukraine'." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

The reason for self-isolation is also the psychological trauma experienced, which is not understood by classmates.

*"Different children have different stories and different responses to the trauma they have experienced. [...] Nowadays, there is less talk about the horrors of war and Polish children have forgotten. [...] Some children had nervous disorders in response to such situations, even nervous tics." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"Children arrive traumatised. They are either aggressive or closed. [...] There are children who need help and support to feel that they are not alone. Parents cannot give them this help because they are in survival mode. Parents have to work to provide for their families, so they usually neglect their children, sometimes leaving them alone." (Przemysl, 01.09.2023)*

Often, it is the topic of war that becomes the key theme.

*"My child has not met, but I know that there have been cases of children I know shouting "Putin will win!", "go back to Ukraine" (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023).*

It should be noted that bullying is not typical for primary school (almost no reports), but becomes clearly visible after grade 5.

*"In grades 6-8 (12-13 years old), there are cases of verbal bullying of Ukrainian children (obviously under the influence of parents), but there are also examples of aggressive behaviour of Ukrainian children towards Poles. In elementary school, children learn the language quickly, and there are no issues of nationality or conflict at all." (Krakow, 10.10.2023).*

In addition to peers, some Polish teachers are sometimes the source of bullying at school.

*"There are even cases of bullying by teachers, not just children." (Krakow, 01.09.2023)*

*"Teachers have a worse attitude than children." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*One respondent from Krakow reported constant bullying from her Polish language teacher. The teacher constantly underestimated the child's grades (according to the mother, the child has high grades in other subjects), repeatedly stated that the level of education in Ukraine was low, and also resorted to shifting the problems of Polish-Ukrainian historical relations onto the child ("Your Bandera slaughtered Poles"). The teacher told lies about the child in her communication with the mother. The mother appealed to the principal, who said that the teacher was a conflict person who had problems with other students and the teaching staff, and asked her to ignore her. The woman also spoke to the Ukrainian-speaking coordinator at the school, who said that the teacher could not be trusted in everything. The mother decided not to continue and told her child to ignore it. In turn, the child and the rest of the students learnt to ignore the class teacher. According to the mother, the school principal and other teachers are very happy with the child.*

The response of Ukrainian parents to cases of bullying, if any, is not always appropriate to the situation. On the one hand, there is a fear of further harming the child, but it can also be evidence of legal ignorance or unwillingness to do anything. Most often, parents stop at the level of contacting teachers, school

psychologists and school administrators. However, parents are no longer willing to go to the curator of education and the police, not to mention the Ombudsman for Children's Rights.

*"Compared to other problems, there are not so many of them. But if they come to us, it usually means that the conversation with the school administration was unsuccessful. Most often, parents stop at the level of contacting teachers and then the school administration." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*Both parents and children need support, they need to be informed of their rights so that they can respond to bullying properly. Because parents do not respond to bullying. (Krakow, 29.09.2023)*

*"Parents are not ready to defend their own rights, they are not ready to complain to the school or the police." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"On the class photo that hangs at the entrance of the school, my son and several other children have scratched their faces all over. [I noticed this during a visit to the school.] I asked other parents, but they assured me it was nothing serious. [I did not complain to the school and did not tell anyone] (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"There was a case of bullying at school, which the parents reported only at the end of the school year because they were afraid that the child would get even worse." (Krakow, 29.09.2023)*

According to parents and service providers, in some cases, there was an unwillingness of teachers to make a big deal of the issue (a desire to "sweep it under the carpet"), attempts to shift the blame to Ukrainian children ("they don't see it that way") or to punish all those involved, including the child victim.

*The older one got into a fight [biting the Pole] and was summoned to the principal [the principal herself did not come] [...] The video shows that the child is innocent, he was beaten, his arms and legs were twisted [...] The mother of the other boy mocked me, saying I was strange because boys talk like that. [...] The class teacher said that everyone would be punished, including my son [because the Polish child was also injured]." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"The principal said everything was fine, the children were friendly. But there were some children who insulted my son and other children. We report such cases, but there is no reaction, no action." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

If the case is brought to the police, the response is also not always adequate.

*"It is known that when we once went to the police because of bullying, they said 'you are guests here' and should be understanding of Polish realities. [this was the end of the intervention]" (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

If attempts to respond fail, parents are inclined to change schools.

*"All the cases I know of ended with a transfer to another school (principals did not want to react). Mothers need to be taught how to act in such situations (not just talk, but write official letters)." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

*"I heard that a girl withdrew from the college because of bullying and continued her studies at a Ukrainian online school." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

Peer bullying can also be a reason for not attending school or certain classes. For example, one mother of a child with a disability (6th grade) is afraid to send her child to a Polish school in Rzeszow because she has heard about the high number of cases of bullying, and therefore prefers distance education in Ukraine. Another respondent said that a Ukrainian girl she knew who was left alone at school after other Ukrainian children left said that the main thing was not to contact anyone and not to go to clubs, "then you can survive".

At the same time, there are manifestations of bullying in the Ukrainian environment itself.

*"One mother reported that her Ukrainian-speaking child was being bullied by Russian-speaking Ukrainian children." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

In the extracurricular sphere, conflicts were reported between children of different ethnic groups from Ukraine. in a shelter in Radymno near Przemysl.

#### *4.5. Access to Ukrainian school education*

There is still a fairly significant number of students from Ukraine who continue to study online. It is difficult to estimate their number today. According to UNHCR estimates, at the end of the 2022/2023 school year (almost half of school-age children were not enrolled in the Polish education system), they are likely to continue their education remotely in Ukraine. Of the 42 school-age children who are members of the surveyed households, 16 had experience of studying remotely in Ukraine. Of these, at the time of the survey, 3 children were studying exclusively at a Ukrainian school remotely, 9 were combining Polish full-time education with online education in Ukraine, and 4 had dropped out of online education in Ukraine.

The attitude of the Polish authorities to online education is rather negative.

*"We need more involvement of children in Polish education. We cannot control the quality of online education. It also contributes to better integration." (Rzeszow, 06.10.2023)*

According to observations, the number of children studying remotely is decreasing due to a number of reasons, including the return of parents to Ukraine, departure to other countries and the transition to the Polish education system from the new school year.

*The children [son, 14, daughter, 16] studied online until they went to a Polish school. The Ukrainian programme was not continued." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

The reasons for attending school online depend on individual circumstances. According to service providers, these include, for example, a reluctance to integrate due to anticipated departure.

*"A common practice [among those] who do not want to integrate into Polish society. It's a waste of time. I feel sorry for those children." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"Some children deliberately do not study in Polish schools, as they are aiming to enter Ukraine and return." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

The reasons for choosing distance learning are also differences in the education programme (including enrolment of children in the junior grade compared to Ukraine), the desire for the child to master the Polish language at a level sufficient for studying. The reason for returning to distance learning may also be bullying that the child experienced at a Polish school and fears of failing exams.

*"Some parents are hesitant, wondering whether it is better to study online and learn Polish at a course, and only then send their child to a Polish school. They also study in parallel, which is a strong overload for the child." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"According to parents, the choice in favour of online education is made in case of differences in the curriculum, but also because of problems of adaptation [during the period of learning Polish] or conflicts with peers." (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

*"Most teenagers choose online education because it is difficult to adapt to lyceum education in Poland. It is easier to complete your studies in Ukraine and then apply to a university in Poland." (Przemysl, 05.09.2023)*

A certain number of children study at Polish and Ukrainian schools in parallel. Parents doubt whether it is worth returning to Ukraine and want their children to receive two educations: one online in Ukraine and the other in Poland. For some parents, it is important to continue studying the Ukrainian language and history, while in Poland such opportunities are severely limited.

*Since we do not know about our further stay in Poland, the child studies at a Ukrainian school in parallel to be able to take exams." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

The main problem for these children is the increased workload.

*"He is studying in the 10th grade at Ukrainian and Polish schools, it is very difficult to combine, but so far so good." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"Parents did not complain about the quality of online education, but they did complain that it was difficult and challenging for their children. Children complain that they have a lot of homework and it is very demotivating." (Przemysl, 01.09.2023)*

Therefore, at least half of the parents of such children reported a decision to reduce the workload compared to the previous school year by changing the form of education (e.g., staying in Saturday school or going to an external school) or by dropping out of a Ukrainian school.

According to parents and service providers, a significant step towards solving the problem of excessive workload could be a system of subject enrolment between Ukraine and Poland, which has not yet been fully implemented, the organisation of Ukrainian language courses at Polish schools, and fewer homework assignments from Ukrainian teachers.

Most parents have no complaints about access.

*"Ukrainian education is very good, because all textbooks are in electronic format." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

According to service providers, there is a category of people who cannot continue to study at their old school online but have to look for another one because such an educational service is not provided (e.g., a child from Kyiv studies in Mykolaiv).

Unfortunately, children do not always have the necessary equipment to study remotely. According to service providers, this is often observed in places of collective accommodation, where the Internet may be poor, there is not always a separate place for children to study, and children only have a phone at their disposal to follow the lesson and open an electronic textbook. At least two of the interviewed respondents had the opportunity to study exclusively with the help of smartphones.

As for specific barriers, they report a requirement for boys to be older to provide a certificate of military registration.

*"Recently, a problem has arisen that if a boy (16 years old) wants to study remotely at a Ukrainian college, he is required to provide a certificate of military registration." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

#### **4.6. University education**

Given that young people are not well covered by the activities of community centres, only three respondents from Krakow, who are currently studying at Polish universities, took part in the focus group discussions. The rest of the information on higher education was obtained from service providers.

Overall, it is reported that a large number of students from Ukraine are studying. Polish higher education institutions have facilitated access to education for Ukrainian students, particularly in Krakow.

A special programme was launched at the Jagiellonian University to allow students from Ukraine to transfer and complete their studies in the academic year of their specialities in April-August 2022. In addition, the Jagiellonian University opened free language courses for those who wanted to continue their studies in Poland. The Jagiellonian University also opened a new study programme (Polish-Ukrainian relations), where it was possible to study in Ukrainian. It is also important to note that studying at the Jagiellonian and Pedagogical Universities of Krakow is free of charge for people with UKR status.

*"Universities are very easy to enter. Not all universities required exams, but only an interview and submission of documents (sometimes even their translation was not required). Not all universities required the results of external independent evaluation, but only a certificate." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

At the same time, it is noted that Ukrainian students often lack educational documents that remained in Ukraine to enter the university. The problem is exacerbated if the applicant lived in the occupied territories.

Students reported some problems with finding the necessary information about admission on university websites, which do not always contain up-to-date information, and therefore they have to contact the deans directly.

At the beginning of the 2023/2024 academic year, there was no special adaptation programme for Ukrainian students. Language continues to be a barrier.

*"Little knowledge of the language, but I did not feel like a stranger. Teachers are very understanding" (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

All students who took part in the survey noted the friendly atmosphere of their fellow students and teachers.

*"I study international relations. Everyone is very friendly. There have been some jokes, but I take them as jokes." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"The teacher put up a map showing Ukraine without Crimea. I came up to her after class, she apologised and said it was a mistake and assured me of her full support for Ukraine." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"When discussing complex historical issues that later influenced the relationship between peoples, none of my classmates touched on Polish-Ukrainian issues. I think it was on purpose, given my presence." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

At the same time, Ukrainian students expressed their wish for certain changes to improve the access of Ukrainian citizens to Polish education. For example, even if a university is oriented towards accepting Ukrainian students (there is a translated website, etc.), the Polish admission system is different from the Ukrainian one, so Ukrainian applicants need additional explanations. Integration meetings with other students after the start of their studies would also be useful to better understand university life. The work of the departments for working with foreigners at universities does not raise any complaints in general but could be more active.

#### **4.7. Language courses**

Language courses are an extremely important tool for the integration of the Ukrainian population in Poland. The demand for learning Polish is extremely high. In all locations, there is a fairly wide range of free courses offered by humanitarian organisations, organisations of Ukrainians in Poland and Polish local administrations. Some large companies also offer language courses for their employees, and universities offer preparatory courses for future applicants.

At the same time, people have problems getting into courses or have to wait for a group of the appropriate level to gather.

*"There are many language courses, but not everyone knows how to look for them. Here [the Open Place Community Centre], the language courses are full (both Polish and English at all levels)." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"I have been trying to enrol in language courses for a long time without success and only a month ago I managed to get into a group at the [ProHub] centre." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"My wife attended Polish classes, but it was difficult to enrol because the class was not full. She had to wait several months." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

The free nature of the courses is partly responsible for the lack of regular attendance, as noted by service providers.



*"The language courses at the centre [Open Place Community Centre] are completely full. There are other centres where people have signed up and simply do not attend." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"There are a lot of language courses available. Some of them require regular attendance, otherwise you lose your place." (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

Different categories of people often lack time to learn Polish or the course time overlaps with their work. Therefore, there is a great demand for affordable online courses among the employed population and mothers with young children.

Recipients and providers of services raise the issue of insufficient quality of language courses. In addition, most organisations received funding for A1/A2 level training, which is not sufficient for well-paid employment and studying at a high school or university. The B1/B2 level is available mainly through paid courses, which not everyone can afford.

*"There are many language courses, but most of them are of very low quality. They are more like conversation clubs that will not help you find a job." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

*"Not all language courses are of high quality. In the courses run by the labour administration, even the entrance exams were wrong" (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"There is a lack of quality Polish language courses. The quality of courses is poor for both children and adults. Organisations try to help to the best of their ability, but groups are usually formed for people with different levels of language proficiency. Teachers are also not always good. (Przemysl, 01.09.2023)*

Elderly people and people with disabilities have difficulties with learning. For the latter, there is no offer of adapted Polish language courses.

*"I started learning Polish at a course, but I have forgotten everything." (Rzeszow, 06.10.2023)*

However, the biggest challenge faced by the majority of surveyed service providers is the lack of funds to continue providing Polish language instruction starting in 2024.

## 5. Access to the healthcare system

### 5.1. Access to basic medical services

Persons with UKR status have access to the same free healthcare services covered by the National Health Fund (NFZ) for Polish citizens. In the first weeks after the full-scale invasion (before the adoption of the Special Act), there were problems with access to NFZ services. Currently, only those citizens of Ukraine who, for various reasons, do not fall under temporary protection do not have free access to medical services. Also, when a refugee gets a job, the NFZ system treats such a person like any other officially employed person (the UKR status is no longer relevant). Both the employee and the employer pay the relevant contributions. However, if such persons subsequently lose their jobs, they need to register with the employment centre, otherwise there will be no automatic resumption of healthcare coverage, which is not always known to people.

Still, the main problem with access to healthcare services is long queues and long waiting times for appointments (according to respondents, much longer than in Ukraine), especially for narrowly specialised specialists. However, this problem has been present for a long time and has only intensified with the arrival of Ukrainian refugees.

*"Unlike the Ukrainian healthcare system, you have to wait a long time to see a doctor, sometimes even years. It is incredibly difficult to make an appointment. Even the Ukrainian-language NFZ line does not help." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"The problems are mostly the same as those of Poles: queues to see specialists and access to ambulances. People think it's because of their origin, but it's not." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"As long as you have UKR status, [medical services] are free. But to get to a specialist, you think 'it's better to die than to be treated in Poland'. I have to wait 4 months for an appointment, which can be critical [for someone with asthma]." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"The biggest problem for the displaced population is the difference in the Polish healthcare system and the inability to receive services 'here and now'" (Przemysl, 26.09.2023)*

*"Most of the problems that people come with can be solved, except for speeding up the timeframe. The main problem is getting to the doctor." (Przemysl, 05.09.2023)*

The usual solution to the problem of specialists and services is to go to a private clinic or travel to Ukraine, but not everyone has the means or the desire to take the risk.

*"If it is not a problem to get an appointment with a general practitioner, access to narrow specialists is difficult (3 months or more). [...] My friends' allergist has an appointment for 11 months. And they could not go to Ukraine because they have a large family." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"It was difficult to make an appointment with the NFZ ENT. There was no appointment for 2 months in advance, so we had to go to a private appointment. Then we went to Ukraine, to Lviv, and got everything done." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"There were no problems with the family doctor at all. I need a child psychiatrist. There are only 2 of them free of charge. I was registered for a live appointment in November, but I had to be there at 5am. I can't go with my children at 5am. I will look for a paid one. [...] The appointment with the children's ophthalmologist was for the next year, so we travelled to Ukraine." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"[Regarding a child with autism spectrum disorder] We go to the only psychiatrist in Rzeszow, to whom we pay money. If it's free, we have to wait three months. We got to the neurologist by an acquaintance 60 km from Rzeszow. And he has already prescribed me everything." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"A child [with an autism spectrum disorder] needs an encephalogram every six months (for prevention). It is almost impossible to get a referral and have it done. They say that if there is an attack, then we will save him. [...] We cannot return to Kyiv with the child under shelling." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

Some private clinics offer the possibility for persons covered by temporary protection to use NFZ-covered services free of charge.

*"We mainly used the services of the private Luxmed clinic and quite often, because the child is often sick. But this clinic accepts NFZ and did not charge any money. The only thing we paid for was medicines. We also used the services of another clinic with Ukrainian-speaking doctors - we were very satisfied, but we had to wait there (about a week)." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

However, not all medical services are covered by the NFZ. Thus, temporary protection provides free access to basic services, but does not provide access to rehabilitation services, sanatorium treatment, etc. This is a challenge for older people, the unemployed and people in difficult financial situations.

*"I had situations when I was refused an appointment with a doctor and was told that these doctors are only available to those who are employed. I consulted with other girls and many of them told me that at the beginning of the full-scale war it was possible to register with a doctor, but now it is only for those who are officially employed." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"I was also told that I could only see a certain doctor if I was working, and I could not with my UKR status." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

Respondents also reported problems with access to emergency medical care (the so-called SOR).

*"I had to spend 5 hours in the SOR on Sunday with a child with a Lego in his ear." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"After 6 hours in the SOR, I missed the 'corrupt medicine in Ukraine'. But in terms of medicine, they did everything right afterwards. In general, I have no complaints." (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

*"As for emergency care, the ambulance will not come if they know that this is a shelter [in Radymno]. Therefore, if there are residents who need emergency care and intervention, they have to go to the hospital themselves." (Przemysl, 01.09.2023)*

In the vast majority of cases, there are no complaints about the quality of the services provided and people express their gratitude to Polish doctors. Also, displaced persons actively use various programmes that allow them to undergo free examinations and reimburse the cost of prescription medicines. Many people in particularly serious conditions have received professional help. Special attention should be paid to the provision of assistance with cancer.

*"The only problem is that you have to wait a long time. But if you get to visit a specialist, you get all the services that a Polish citizen can use." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

*"I had two eye surgeries. I am very satisfied with the attitude and services provided. The help is very qualified." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"Many Ukrainians have received help that they could not count on in Ukraine, such as free transplants or heart surgery." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"There are many people with cancer. They know about the availability of professional medical care here in Poland. We currently have one lady we help to take to chemotherapy." (Przemysl, 05.09.2023)*

For most Ukrainians, the need to communicate in Polish is a significant obstacle. Sometimes the language issue becomes quite acute.

*"They put all the spokes in the wheels at the reception. The child was sick, vomiting, the rotovirus was in a rough form and I had the child in my arms, and the nurse did not let me see the doctor and said "Speak Polish." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"There are doctors who speak English, but not knowing Polish creates difficulties." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

The way out is to find Ukrainian- or Russian-speaking doctors, contact relatives and friends who speak Polish, or use electronic translators. They also often turn to volunteers or refugee centres for translation assistance (in person or by phone), although the amount of such assistance has decreased since the beginning of the crisis.

*"If I go to see a Polish doctor, I prepare beforehand, use Google translate or ask [for help] at the [ProHub] centre. If the doctor's attitude is normal, then solving the issue is not a problem." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"I go with my daughter [to the doctor], but she doesn't understand everything." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"There used to be volunteers, now I know one man who provides such services [translation support] in some cases. We need to look for friends who would accompany us to the doctor." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

A certain barrier is a different system of diagnosis and approach to the treatment of certain diseases, such as neurological diseases. For example, according to mothers of children with autism spectrum disorders, doctors in Poland tend to prescribe very heavy medications. In Radymno, a general practitioner visiting the shelter prescribed strong sedatives to a person with high blood pressure, which would be considered dangerous in Ukraine. In addition, in case of serious illnesses, despite the existence of conclusions of Ukrainian doctors, patients have to confirm their diagnosis in accordance with Polish medical protocols, undergoing all examinations and laboratory tests.

The human factor plays an important role among the barriers.

*"[in a private clinic that positioned itself as providing free services for Ukrainians] The doctor at the end of the appointment said that you understand that we are paid less for you and you do not need to come here all the time [even though it was the first visit]." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"The gynaecologist said that Ukrainians who come to the NFZ are already tired. He did not diagnose or refer me to an oncologist." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"During my rounds in the hospital, the doctor said, 'There is no war in Ukraine. It's all in the TV'. She was angry at the Ukrainians taking up space. She diagnosed that there was no problem at all, although another examination showed a serious problem [cancer]." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

A respondent from a rural area reported problems with accessing healthcare services at the place of residence

*"There are no doctors in the village. If you don't have a car, you have to ask someone to take you to a neighbouring village." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

If they have to use paid medical services, many people find their cost high (higher than in Ukraine).

*"We used the services of a dentist in Rzeszow. The services seem to be of high quality, but very expensive." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

Service providers report that vulnerable groups (pensioners, people with disabilities) do not have sufficient coverage for prescription drugs, and that there is insufficient funding for government programmes.

Medical documentation from Ukraine (medical reports, vaccination certificates, etc.) is generally accepted by Polish doctors. The problematic issue here is its translation, the cost of which is not always affordable, especially if there was a need for a certified translation.

*"There was a problem with the vaccination certificates, which were written out manually by [Ukrainian doctors] and which Polish translators did not want to use." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"Vaccinations are asked to be translated into Polish. There have been cases when parents did not want to do mandatory vaccinations." (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

*"People are very dependent on translation, especially translation of Ukrainian documents with a diagnosis. Pensioners cannot afford the cost of translation." (Rzeszow, 29.09.2023)*

It is not possible to buy medicines with Ukrainian prescriptions, but it was relatively easy to obtain a corresponding Polish prescription (even free of charge) for most medicines, except for certain types (e.g. psychotropic drugs), provided that their analogues are available in Poland. Currently, in most cases, people bring medicines from Ukraine.

Certain problems also arise in obtaining Polish medical documents, primarily due to the length of the procedures.

*"[Shelter in Radymno] A child with autism had to go for rehabilitation in Ukraine. We had to prepare the necessary documents. The process of preparing documents in Poland is very long. The problem is in the system. It does not depend on whether a person is Ukrainian or Polish." (Przemysl, 01.09.2023)*

Except for one person who has been living in Poland for a long time, none of the respondents were aware of the Charter of Patients' Rights in Poland and the procedure for filing a complaint in case of unsatisfactory healthcare services.

There is a well-identified demand among respondents for first aid courses.

## **5.2. Access to pregnancy and birth support services**

Two respondents gave birth in Poland (one before the start of the large-scale war). No problems with the provision of medical services were reported.

*"I gave birth to my youngest in Poland and I am very pleased. We have not seen anything like this in Ukraine, although we lived near Kyiv. In the 'maternity hospital' I felt like I was at a resort." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

The majority of service providers also did not report any special problems if the services were covered by the NFZ.

*"Women are satisfied. Problems [arise] at the stage of obtaining a Ukrainian birth certificate." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

*"The UKR status allows you to stay in the maternity ward for up to 3 days free of charge. There were cases when there were complications and we stayed for a longer period, we received large bills." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

According to observations, pregnant women cross the border in both directions, however, most of them gave birth in Poland (except for the areas around Przemysl). The decision to give birth in Ukraine may be driven by attachment to certain doctors, the desire to receive services in an understandable language, faster legal procedures and paperwork, and differences in certain medical procedures.

*"There were no complaints from those women who gave birth in Poland, they were satisfied with the services. At the same time, the majority preferred to go to Ukraine to give birth and return to Poland with the child [because they wanted to receive services in Ukrainian]." (Przemysl, 26.09.2023)*

*"I have hardly ever met women who travelled to Ukraine. There was a case when a woman gave birth to her third child, she specially went to Ukraine [to arrange her husband's departure]." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"Maybe someone goes to Ukraine because they are afraid that in Poland they are saving the child, not the mother. Or they want to hear the Ukrainian language around them." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

*"There are cases of travelling to Ukraine to give birth to a child in a familiar environment with Ukrainian doctors and preparing documents [so as not to wait at the consulate]" (Krakow, 03.10.2023).*

The involvement of Ukrainian medicine is still noticeable, as many pregnant women come to Poland at a late stage (exclusively for birth), and before that, they are treated by Ukrainian doctors. Women also seek an alternative opinion from a doctor from Ukraine whom they know and trust.

In Krakow, the KOALA Family Maternity Centre has launched a special programme to help Ukrainian women with childbirth. Thanks to KOALA, Ukrainian women have access to a free childbirth preparation programme (szkola rodzenia), which is not normally covered by the NFZ. As many women face language barriers, the centre has hired a Ukrainian-speaking paediatrician and gynaecologist. This is where other humanitarian organisations refer pregnant women from Ukraine.

With regard to access to contraceptives and abortion in Poland, neither respondents nor service providers had any relevant experience. It was reported that contraceptives are relatively expensive and available only on the basis of prescriptions, and therefore a doctor's visit is required first.

### *5.3. Procedure for confirming disability in Poland*

According to information from service providers, the procedure for confirming disability is perhaps the biggest challenge for humanitarian organisations supporting vulnerable groups of Ukrainian refugees in Poland. At least 10 people with disabilities took part in the study, and at least five others had experience of registering disabilities of their household members in Poland. Mostly, people seek to confirm their disability in Poland in order to gain experience and access to certain benefits. The social security system in Poland is designed in such a way that a Polish disability certificate is mostly required (e.g. exemption from payment in a collective living centre after 120 days of stay; various benefits). At the same time, under the programme of payments for housing for refugees from Ukraine (the so-called "40+ programme"), it is possible to continue receiving payments for the stay of persons with disabilities of groups 1 and 2 after 120 days on the basis of a Ukrainian certificate.

Sometimes, older people who did not have the status of a person with a disability in Ukraine try to register a disability in Poland to have an additional source of income, but they are usually denied. At the same time, some people deliberately do not re-register their disability.

*"My child has a disability in Ukraine, and in Poland they insist on re-registering him in Polish. I don't want to do it because I'm always in a 'suitcase mood'." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

There is no agreement on mutual recognition of disability between Ukraine and Poland. When it comes to confirmation of disability, as in the case of certain serious illnesses, the differences between the Polish and Ukrainian social security systems and diagnoses are evident. As of today, disability certificates (decisions) for Ukrainian citizens are issued under the same rules as for Polish citizens.

*The disability [of the eyes] was taken into account, but I had to formalize it in a new way. [...] Unlike in Ukraine, now there is no need to undergo medical treatment and confirm disability every six months." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

Confirmation of status for people from Ukraine is free of charge, but a certified translation is required, which entails significant costs for people, most of whom belong to vulnerable groups.

*One respondent from Krakow has a disability related to vision and mobility. According to her, she has not been able to confirm her status in Poland, as there is no way to get to a doctor who can confirm the diagnosis. In addition, the translation of documents is too expensive (50 PLN per page) and she does not have enough money.*

Also, the procedure for obtaining a decision on disability or the degree of disability takes a month or more (in the practice of service providers, at least 4-5 months), which causes misunderstanding among Ukrainians.

*"Confirmation of disability takes about six to eight months, a long process [including the appointment of benefits]. If you are older, it is very difficult to cope with all this." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

However, it should be understood that the Polish social security system could not have been prepared for the almost simultaneous arrival of so many new persons with disabilities.

*"Poland was not prepared for such an influx of people with disabilities." (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

People who entered the territory of Poland with internal passports face certain problems with the submission of documents.

*"It is also difficult when a person does not have a foreign passport, because everywhere you need to transliteration of the name into Latin letters. It is also necessary to enter the expiry date of the document everywhere, and if a person has only a Ukrainian internal booklet passport, this information cannot be entered." (Rzeszow, 29.09.2023)*

The lack of mutual recognition of disability documents is becoming a problem for adult men in wartime regimes.

*One person reported problems crossing the Ukrainian border to Poland with his adult grandson, who has a registered disability in Poland (due to lack of mobility). Ukrainian border guards were not satisfied with the Polish certificate with translation and demanded a Ukrainian document, which was not available. In Ukraine, according to the respondent, they were denied a disability certificate because the grandson lived with his mother in Poland.*

#### **5.4. Access to Ukrainian healthcare services**

At least one third of respondents confirmed that they had experience of visiting Ukraine to receive medical services, receive online consultations from Ukrainian doctors, or import medicines from Ukraine. The vast majority of respondents and service providers confirmed that this practice is widespread.

*"It is a very common practice, even our employees go. It's not a matter of better medicine, but rather of attachment and doctors who know the patient's history." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"Not uncommon. They ask for legal support to cross the border for more than 30 days to undergo treatment in Ukraine in order not to lose their UKR status." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"If services are expensive, there is an understanding that it is worth going to Lviv" (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

*"Those who can, go to Lviv to see doctors." (Przemysl, 01.09.2023)*

*"People often use and consult doctors from Ukraine. People go to Ukraine for treatment, especially when surgery is required. If you need a generalist, you usually use services in Poland, if you need a narrow profile, you go to Ukraine." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

Due to the remoteness of the border, visits to Ukraine for medical purposes are not as common among respondents in Krakow as in other locations (although online contacts with Ukrainian doctors are regular). Pensioners who do not come from Western Ukraine and students do not use the services of Ukrainian healthcare ("we will get our teeth done and then we will not leave").

They contact their family doctors for "minor" issues and to confirm vaccinations. Visits to paediatricians, chronic disease management, and online consultations with psychotherapists are not uncommon. Ukrainian doctors are contacted even if they are currently in other countries ("I have good doctors who went to Germany").

The most popular are dental services, which are much more affordable and accessible.

*"Everyone gets their teeth treated in Uzhhorod and Lviv." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"It is typical to visit Ukrainian dentists, who provide significantly cheaper services without the need for long waits." (Przemysl, 05.09.2023)*

*"We went to Lviv to visit our mother and, on occasion, to resolve issues with a dentist and an otorhinolaryngologist." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"It's already some dental tours. It's all because of the long wait for specialists." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

Along with this, they consult a wide range of other specialists and undergo examinations.

*"Tomorrow I am going to Ukraine for medical tourism because I have chronic health problems. I have tumours in my body that need to be monitored." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"Women go to see a gynaecologist and have tests. Sometimes they had to take a child in serious condition to a paediatrician because they 'could not cope' here." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"When it comes to psychiatrists, people have to travel to Ukraine to visit them." (Przemysl, 01.09.2023)*

*"The proximity of the border allows not only to use telemedicine, but also to travel directly to Ukrainian doctors. This is also used by the Polish population." (Przemysl, 05.09.2023)*

*"We had an appointment with a children's ophthalmologist for the next year, so we went to Ukraine." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

At the same time, respondents and service providers note that in the case of oncology, people try to go to Poland.

*"If you need surgery or oncological support, they go to Poland." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

Given the different medical protocols, differences in prescription drugs, and the cost of medicines in Poland, the practice of bringing medicines from Ukraine is extremely common.

*"The medications the child is taking are not available in Poland. We have to bring them in." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"People often cross the border to buy medicines in Ukraine." (Przemysl, 26.09.2023)*

*"Everyone orders medicines through delivery services from Ukraine" (Przemysl, 01.09.2023)*

### **5.5. Access to psychological services**

The war and staying abroad have largely changed the attitude of the Ukrainian population towards receiving psychological assistance. Most respondents from the displaced population have received such assistance in person or online.

The overwhelming majority of respondents are convinced that the supply of psychological services is currently sufficient in all localities. However, some of these projects are halted or lack confidence in future funding.

*"There are no problems with psychological support now, but most projects in Krakow have confirmed funding only until the end of the year and a problem may arise. There is a large flow. I have an appointment for 3 weeks, a child psychologist - for 2-2.5 weeks, all 20 Zustricz psychologists from the centre on Królewska Street are involved. The demand for psychologists is high, and with the start of school, the demand for child psychologists has increased significantly." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"At the beginning, there were many psychologists in all organisations, but women were mostly not ready to undergo therapy. Currently, the situation is reversed, when women are ready to make contact, but the amount of funds for this purpose is much smaller." (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

*"As for psychological assistance, people have finally realised the need for it, especially for children. There is a demand, but there is not yet responsibility everywhere [cancelling appointments just before the time*



*of the agreed visit, etc.]. Also, not everywhere there is funding at the same level as before." (Krakow, 10.10.2023).*

*"I used to see a psychologist at another foundation, but funding stopped there. But there are no problems with access." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

The majority of respondents noted that psychological assistance for refugees from Ukraine should continue. There was a need for Ukrainian-speaking psychologists for children and psychiatrists for adults. There was also a need for psychologists who would specialize in the military and military wives.

## 6. Security issues

### 6.1. General assessment of the security level

Finding a safe place to live was the main reason for Ukrainians to leave Ukraine. Many of them opted for Poland, which they considered to offer a high level of security and to be culturally and mentally close to them.

Security issues were among the most vocal topics raised by participants in focus group discussions and individual interviews. The overall sense of security of most of the interviewed displaced persons in Poland remains mostly high.

*"It's perfect. I don't pay attention to the little things and nuances, because they are everywhere. But yes, it feels much better than at home [including the safety and behaviour of drivers on the road]." (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

*"They feel safe. There are no specific examples, we can only guess." (Przemysl, 05.09.2023)*

*"Rzeszow is a calm city, with a lot of police. It is very comfortable. It is a city for everyone, for any age group." (Krakow, 05.10.2023)*

*"The first thing we felt in Poland was safety. Safety on the street, safety in the hospital." (Rzeszow, 06.10.2023)*

The dominant belief of service providers is that the level of security of Ukrainians in Poland is also mostly high, although conflicts are noted.

*"In general, I rate the level of security as good. There is violence everywhere, but fortunately, it is a small percentage. In general, Poland is a safe country for Ukrainians." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"Overall, it's good. But some individual situations are unavoidable. There is no widespread discrimination, but there are people who make certain claims or show anger." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"I think it all depends on the city. Krakow is the cultural capital of Poland, which earns its money from tourism, and people here are used to the fact that it is difficult to hear Polish in the city centre. There may be conflicts, but we have not been asked for help, but we do read the news. I know that the police intervene. Each situation should be dealt with separately." (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

*"I think it is very high. We feel the gratitude of people." (Przemysl, 05.10.2023)*

However, the increase in tension between Poles and Ukrainians over the past six months, especially before the parliamentary elections in Poland, is very noticeable. Even if there have been no individual incidents, people feel tense after reading the news and talking to other Ukrainians.

*"Hatred has increased with the grain deal. There is a lot of aggressive behaviour, especially in administrations." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"My personal feeling is nothing. But after listening to the news and the Internet, my husband says not to speak Ukrainian in public. An inner fear creeps in. I realised that not all Poles are good-natured. I try not to speak Ukrainian in public transport. At the same time, the volunteers, the Poles we live with and work with are wonderful people." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"Mostly adequate people, but more and more inadequate [because of propaganda and elections]. Sometimes there is an arrogant attitude towards Ukrainians." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"If you read the news, you start to worry. Rzeszow is one of the cities with the largest number of Ukrainians, a lot of Ukrainians, so the discontent of the local population is understandable. Our family hasn't encountered anything bad yet." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"I am waiting for this 15 October, who will win these elections and whether to leave Poland [three other focus group participants agree]" (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"More and more often we hear 'Poland is for Poles', the feeling of security is not what it was in the beginning" (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

The same assessments are present in the responses of service providers.

*"There is a lot of aggression. People have become more aggressive. Poles are tired of Ukrainians" (Krakow, 29.09.2023)*

*"The further we go, the less safe we are. Even the previous night, Ukrainians were beaten in Krakow, and the police are asking witnesses to come forward. The situation is getting worse before the elections. [...] Personally, my family and I feel safe." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

There were no cases of physical violence against respondents or their relatives. The absence of physical violence is also confirmed by service providers.

*"There is no open violence. Most often, the manifestation of aggression is verbal, but it is a manifestation of individual behaviour, rather than a general trend" (Rzeszow, 29.09.2023)*

*One respondent from Przemysl noted that she does not attend public events on the advice of local residents. She was told that there were cases when, upon hearing that someone spoke Ukrainian, some members of the host community could severely beat Ukrainians. The situation in the city was already quite tense before the large-scale invasion, and now it has deteriorated even further.*

Along with this, there are reports of damage to property (most often cars with Ukrainian registration). Compared to other locations, there are relatively more such reports from Rzeszow.

*"Our car was scratched because it had Ukrainian licence plates. The same thing happened to our friends - they scratched the car with their keys. We also had an ashtray thrown on our window. I heard that there are many such situations. I do not feel safe in general." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"We heard that a car with Ukrainian licence plates had a flat tire here in Rzeszow" (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"The feeling of security is not what it was at the beginning. Cars with Ukrainian registration are being damaged and a crossed-out portrait of Bandera is being glued." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

Respondents reported widespread hate speech, insults and verbal threats on ethnic grounds. Compared to Krakow and Warsaw, such incidents were reported significantly more often by displaced persons living in Rzeszow.

*"I was walking down the street with a colleague and spoke Ukrainian. A Pole in his 50s and 60s attacked us with foul language and told us to get out of Ukraine, because Poland is for Poles." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"There was a case when I asked an older woman for her address, and she spat at my feet and said we hate you." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"An older lady heard a conversation in Ukrainian at a bus stop and said that 'you in Poland should speak Polish so that we can understand what you are talking about'. There is no tolerance in Polish society. I cannot imagine such a situation in Odesa." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"I am from the Kyiv region, my husband and I speak our own language, and our children are bilingual. What we are facing here simply does not fit into any reasonable framework. We are not doing anything wrong." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"On the street, I'm afraid to speak Ukrainian in front of other people, so I stop talking. They say I shouldn't go out in the evening. Poles are getting more and more angry because of the payments for Ukrainians [called 'tourists'], they say that Ukrainian women come for Polish men. [...] Older women often make insulting comments about Ukrainian children on playgrounds [e.g. "Ukrainian children are stupid"]. [...] They pick on men about why they are here. [...] Every second person says "Lviv is a Polish city!" (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"There were no threats. I witnessed aggression towards girls who spoke Ukrainian on a bus. Perhaps this heat is related to the elections." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

Ukrainian origin exacerbates domestic conflicts and other types of hate speech (including against vulnerable groups).

*"We meet aggression. They react negatively to an autistic child [a tall boy, 13 years old] who also speaks Russian [they are from Kharkiv]. The child likes to shoot short videos on his phone and constantly encounters aggression from passers-by and drivers, especially when they realise that they are Ukrainians [because they do not speak Polish]. They don't pay attention to the fact that this is a 'special' child. [...] I lived in the war for 9 months and came here not for a good life and not for other people's husbands, and why should I hear men on the street calling me a 'b...h' [crying]" (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"At school, a Pole came up to me, thinking I was Polish, and started saying that 'Ukrainians came and poured water and toilet paper in the toilet'. I specifically asked the teachers and they assured me that it had always been like that." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"A woman came to the playground and started taking pictures of everything. I asked her why she was doing this. In response, she told me that 'Ukrainians have arrived and are exercising their rights'. The most interesting thing is that later I saw her photo on an election poster." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

The targets of verbal threats and hate speech are mainly vulnerable groups of the population.

*"The more vulnerable the group, the worse the financial situation, the worse the security situation." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

The source of increased danger in terms of dissatisfaction and threats is mainly financially disadvantaged groups of the Polish population, the elderly and politically marginalised groups.

*"'Disadvantaged' groups believe that Ukrainians take away their jobs. It is necessary to conduct appropriate explanatory work with these groups." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"As a rule, people with higher education are very favourable [they understand that "we are next"], and there are short-sighted people who do not like the presence of Ukrainians as such ["Poland is for Poles"]." (Krakow, 05.10.2023)*

Some representatives of the Ukrainian population in Poland are also a source of danger for the Polish population and their fellow citizens.

*"Refugees also behave differently. In many cases, it is refugees who need to be educated." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"Some Ukrainians behave terribly. They should understand that they are guests here. If aggression happens, it is not reported." (Krakow, 29.09.2023)*

*"Teenagers are most often exposed to hate speech, although there are cases when they themselves provoke and offend Poles (not all of them are sane)." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

Responding to verbal aggression can take many forms.

*"There was an incident in a taxi when the taxi driver picked on the fact that I was Ukrainian and what I was doing here. I wrote a complaint [to the customer service] [...] They apologised and said that he would not drive you anymore." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"I met them in person several times. They shouted in my wake "Ukrainians - get out of Poland!" Now I react more boldly - I start filming with my phone and say that I will contact the police, and everything stops immediately." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

Although the vast majority declare their readiness to apply to law enforcement agencies in the event of aggression, only one displaced person among those interviewed had applied to the police (regarding

potential identity theft). Several people believed that the Polish police tended to sweep such cases under the carpet or would side with the Poles, and therefore there was little point in reporting. Service providers confirm this trend and do not have many cases of such appeals, although they generally note that the police respond quickly to cases of violence.

At the same time, there are several cases of reaction from the Polish population, law enforcement and officials.

*"Older women attacked my friends with abuse. An officer of the 'Straża Miejska' [city guard] was passing by and intervened on the side of the Ukrainian women." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"We were travelling in a tram. A drunk man heard that we were speaking Ukrainian and Russian and started to get indignant. He shouted "we are feeding you here" and kept shouting until the driver stopped the tram and kicked the man out." (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

According to service providers, tensions between residents of collective accommodation facilities are growing. Manifestations of conflicts within the Ukrainian community in shelters are mostly verbal rather than physical.

*"Within the Ukrainian community in Radymno, there are serious conflicts between residents from Western Ukraine and those from Eastern Ukraine [Bakhmut, Mariupol]. The managers of the collective accommodation facility tried to resolve the conflict, but they were quite biased due to obvious favouritism. The situation was already tense. There are almost no people from eastern Ukraine in Przemyśl." (Przemyśl, 01.09.2023)*

## **6.2. Domestic violence, violence against children, human trafficking and exploitation**

Except for one displaced person, most of the respondents do not know anything about the Blue Card procedure. People do not rule out situations of domestic violence or violence against children by or against Ukrainian citizens, but have not encountered them personally, except in one case.

*"When we lived in Kopylanki [a collective residence for 600 people], there was a man [...]who was threatening his wife and children. [...] The woman reported him to the police and went to Warsaw. [...] An investigation was opened against him and he is now deprived the right to leave [Poland].", 03.10.2023)*

Service providers have somewhat more information about cases of domestic violence between Ukrainian citizens.

*"I know a case from a colleague, with the intervention of the social service and the police [the 'abuser' was removed from the family]." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"They go to a psychologist with such problems. In recent months, domestic violence and suicidal moods among young people have been the most frequently reported problems for our psychologists." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"There was a case of domestic violence (without a Blue Card). The older child 'pressured' the mother and forced her to leave the apartment." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"When there is a man in a Ukrainian family, Polish owners report cases of drinking and quarrels or shouting." (Przemyśl, 05.09.2023)*

For some women, leaving for Poland was an opportunity to escape the domestic violence they faced in Ukraine at the hands of their husbands.

*"From my conversations with clients, I know that the war was an opportunity for several women to escape domestic violence in Ukraine [at the hands of their alcoholic husbands]. (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"There have been cases when women have left the abusers in Ukraine and travelled to Poland and other countries. Some of those men came looking for women and even reported them missing to the police." (Przemysl 26.09.2023)*

At the same time, there are cases where the perpetrators of domestic violence were Polish citizens.

*"Recently, there was a case of a Ukrainian woman being beaten by a Pole with whom she lived with her child. We helped her move to another apartment. In another case, in a hostel, a drunken Polish owner pushed a Ukrainian resident, but the police refused to take a report. They turned to volunteers who helped them to draw up a statement, which was accepted by the police, and the girl and her friend were evicted. No such cases have been reported among Ukrainians (although there may be)." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

Cases of violence against children involving Ukrainian citizens are more frequent. In the practice of service providers, cases of drunken mothers who left their children alone were reported, and the social service took the children away. There are irregular cases of violence against children (slapping), mainly when "mothers lose their nerves". There was also one case of a mother committing suicide.

*"There are actually many such cases. The Polish system is quite restrictive. There are many appeals about the loss or restriction of parental rights on various grounds. From alcoholism to child abuse. [...] The consulate showed a lack of response in such cases, leaving everything to the Polish authorities." (Krakow, 05.10.2023)*

*"I heard about two cases where neighbours called the police when parents shouted loudly at their child or used force." (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

*"While working at TESCO, there were cases when mothers (due to general stress) shouted at their children." (Przemysl, 26.09.2023)*

Not in all cases of suspected child abuse did it take place.

*"There were cases when Poles called the police because a highly sensitive child was screaming or crying for a long time. But in those situations, it turned out that the parents were not involved. The only thing that was done was to register the child with the social services, but without further action." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

Polish service providers noted certain differences in approaches to childrearing between Ukrainians and Poles.

*"It is noticeable that the attitude of Ukrainians towards children is sometimes the same as it was in Poland about 15 years ago (MOPS has worked in this direction). Especially among people from the East and rural areas. People from Kyiv and Western Ukraine have the same attitude as in Poland."*

In terms of the risk of violence against children, service providers saw children from the Roma-refugee community living in Przemysl and the surrounding area as particularly exposed.. This included also exposure to risk of forced labor.

*"Cases of violence against children were observed in Roma families (slapping, pinching, forcing them to beg), while among other groups of the Ukrainian population they were mostly not observed." (Przemysl, 05.09.2023)*

There is a possibility that some of the cases remain unaddressed by the Polish authorities.

*"Polish social services do not always know what to do with Ukrainian women in cases of child abandonment and do not apply the blue card procedure." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

A case of violence against children by unrelated persons (in the form of unwanted sexual attention) was reported in Przemysl. At the beginning of the crisis, there were cases of short-term foreign volunteers "courting" Ukrainian underage girls at the refugee reception centre (TESCO), which resulted in the call of the police, interviews and suspension of such "volunteers" from work.

As for human trafficking, no specifics were reported, except for suspicions of service providers (sometimes quite reasonable).

*"No specifics. In the first days, it was reported that people were taken to the territory of other countries under various pretexts." (Krakow, 05.10.2023)*

*"There were rumours of human trafficking and unaccompanied children going missing at the beginning of the full-scale invasion." (Przemysl, 26.09.2023)*

*"There were such signals at the very beginning. But there were a lot of police, the services were ready. They checked everyone who wanted to help with travel or accommodation." (Przemysl, 05.10.2023)*

*"I haven't heard for a long time. But in the beginning, it was an ideal environment for human trafficking. I was called twice for help when I had already escaped (someone offered to help, took me somewhere, kept me in a labour camp where they took my documents). I don't see this now." (Krakow, 05.10.2023)*

No incidents were reported.

At the same time, there are a large number of reports that could be qualified as labour exploitation, including non-payment of wages, inadequate working conditions and unlawful employment. Several cases of labour exploitation by owners of accommodation under the so-called "40+" programme (a programme for those who wish to shelter citizens of Ukraine for 120 days and receive a certain compensation from the state) were reported by displaced persons and service providers.

*"We lived in a hotel near Rzeszow. And the owner [the owner under the 40+ programme] made us work, clean and make sweets. Then we started taking courses and he didn't like it very much. A teacher came to us so that we could fill in the form. And the host started to get indignant, asking why the courses couldn't be in his hotel, why we had to go somewhere else. Then a lot of guests started coming, and we were forced to work at night and make cookies. They promised to pay us, but they didn't. We went to the labour inspectorate, but they demanded a contract in order to do anything." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"There is one well-known case (at the level of rumours) when a woman lived with a Pole who demanded sexual services from her. There is labour exploitation among Ukrainians. There are no boundaries in the shelter: the manager can come, even in the middle of the night, and say: "You have to do this for me". Refugees lived there under the 40+ programme" (Rzeszow, 29.09.2023)*

According to service providers, victims of labour exploitation are often people who live outside of large cities. A significant percentage of such persons agreed to work without a written labour contract. It is not uncommon for displaced persons to be paid less than the legal minimum wage, to receive no extra pay for overtime or weekend work, or to receive no pay at all. There are cases when unscrupulous employers refuse to cover medical treatment in case of an occupational injury.

The most vulnerable groups at risk of labour exploitation and unfair treatment are single mothers with children of preschool or early school age, people with disabilities and the elderly. Single mothers without a support system are particularly at risk of labour exploitation due to limited employment opportunities due to childcare.

In most cases, if displaced persons become victims of labour exploitation, they do not report to the relevant authorities or do not know how to do so. They try to find a new job or return to Ukraine.

Also, service providers reported few incidents of sexual exploitation by Polish citizens who hosted Ukrainians under the "40+" programme. In their opinion, proper monitoring of this program, including mechanisms for reporting illegal behaviour on the part of hosts, does not exist.

## 7. Employment and financial issues

### 7.1. Access to the labour market

All citizens of Ukraine (regardless of whether they arrived in Poland after 24 February 2022 and enjoy temporary protection or have stayed in Poland before) can benefit from a simplified procedure for legalising their employment.

At the time of the survey, 18 people (29%) of the interviewed displaced persons were employed (8 of them had jobs (mostly online) in Ukraine), 13 (21%) were retired, and 29 (47%) were not employed in Poland. 9 people from among the unemployed and pensioners were in the process of looking for a job. 1 person was in the process of setting up an individual business (equivalent to a Ukrainian private entrepreneur).

Poland is a country with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the European Union, and Ukrainian labour has long been a novelty on the Polish labour market. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians had experience of working in Poland long before the full-scale invasion. Traditional areas of employment for Ukrainians include the service sector (cleaning, hotel and restaurant business, beauty, retail, and care), agricultural work, construction and labour specialities. The arrival of a large number of displaced persons from Ukraine, who have gained access to the labour market, has increased competition among Ukrainians themselves.

At the same time, displaced persons experience a number of problems with access to the Polish labour market. There is a shortage of vacancies in many professions, especially in the Subcarpathian Voivodeship (Rzeszow and Przemysl).

*"There is a lack of jobs. The work is often low-paid and hard [e.g., you have to go to work twice a day]. In Rzeszow, the main job offers are the waste recycling plant, Inpost and Sinsay." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"It is generally difficult to find a job in Subcarpathian Voivodeship. But those who want to find seasonal work, work in factories and open businesses "[beauty and cooking] (Przemysl, 26.09.2023).*

*"The problem is the oversaturation of the labour market and, consequently, the lack of jobs." (Przemysl, 05.10.2023)*

The majority of respondents from the displaced population and service providers indicate that lack of language skills, age and having children are the biggest barriers to accessing employment. Lack of knowledge of Polish or at least English blocks access to skilled and well-paid jobs. If they have children, women are forced to look for part-time jobs or take turns looking after each other's children. Ukrainian pensioners are looking for employment opportunities. However, older people, even with work experience in Poland and knowledge of the language, have to "compete with the young".

*"As for employment, not everyone wants to hire a person who does not speak Polish. [...] People who do not have knowledge of Polish language and Polish education go into physical labour (washing dishes, construction, etc.), where the pay and working hours are not adequate." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"There are vacancies for working positions, but they are not suitable for older people and women with children." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

*"The language is a barrier for a significant number of people, because they have not yet mastered the appropriate level and are working in a way that is not appropriate for their skill level." (Rzeszow, 06.10.2023)*

*"It is very difficult to find a job. They offer work for 12 hours, which is impossible with a child" (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*



*"Employment is very difficult. [...] There are not enough jobs. It's about a person's desire to learn the language and accessibility. For example, elderly people, grandmothers, cannot work in labour-intensive jobs." (Krakow, 29.09.2023)*

It is reported that Ukrainian origin and uncertainty about the duration of a person's stay in Poland may also be a limiting factor for employers.

*"I am an engineer with two children. I could not go to work for more than 6 hours, so at first I decided not to go to work. I had part-time jobs [cleaning] and studied the language. I graduated from a police school, but no one ever hired me [for professional cleaning]. I think the reason for the refusal was my Ukrainian origin. I send my applications to all the supermarkets, cleaning vacancies - there are no responses." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"There are barriers. Some employers do not want Ukrainians at all or give them lower salaries." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"I applied to IKEA, but they didn't accept me because of the language and also because they didn't think I would stay longer than August 2023 [the duration of temporary protection at that time]." (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

The expectations of Ukrainians from employment (salary level, work in their speciality, proper working conditions) are also a significant limiting factor. Many people choose to work online in Ukraine or remain unemployed altogether.

*"I work online in Ukraine. What is offered in Poland is low-paid and not in my speciality." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"I can't find a job yet. I look at vacancies, but there are no offers for my speciality." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"There is no possibility of working in my profession. I cannot bring myself to clean toilets." (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

*"Only low-paid work is available and it is very difficult for many people psychologically, especially for those who had a profession in Ukraine." (Krakow, 29.09.2023)*

*"Many came after stable jobs and have certain expectations. In our trainings [information meetings], only 5-10% are ready to work in a factory, 30% are looking for an accountant, 20% for a doctor, the rest for IT and a few percent of people with children [are looking for part-time work]." (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

*"Poland has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Europe. You can find a job if you want to. The other thing is the expectations from work" (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

There are also technical barriers when Ukrainians do not know the peculiarities of the Polish labour market, do not know how to search for vacancies or write a CV, and do not have experience of passing interviews.

*"When it comes to employment, not everyone knows where to look, how to write a CV, what a qualification conversation is." (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

*"I have just joined the labour exchange. I signed the RODO [access to personal data] there, because without it, they don't even have the right to open the questionnaire and call me. Apparently, because of the unsigned RODO, no one has ever called me before" (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

Service providers also noted self-imposed limitations and low self-esteem ("having several degrees, knowledge of languages, experience of running their own business, they go to assemble boxes at a factory").

Life circumstances and a low legal culture push Ukrainians into informal employment and employment on unfavourable terms.

*The wages offered are very low and not enough for anything. People are forced to work part-time. (Krakow, 01.09.2023)*

*"Not always the wages correspond to the subsistence level." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

According to service providers and displaced persons, unfair employment is extremely common. It is also common for Ukrainians to be offered worse employment conditions than Poles (e.g., Polish citizens are transferred from temporary to permanent employment contracts more quickly).

*"What is being faced is mobbing by employers [e.g. threats to report to the police and deport to Ukraine if a person does not agree to work overtime], as well as work without a contract [because it was easier]." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"My son is 18 years old, and at first they hired him for 8 hours. And then they said that all Ukrainians would work for 12 hours. My son refused and was fired." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

Some Polish employers delay the official registration of employees and, in case of any problems, dismiss them (in fact, simply stop paying them). In addition, the activities of intermediary firms (often organised by people of Ukrainian origin) that help Ukrainians find employment are not transparent and in many cases create additional problems. Unofficial earnings also result in the absence of social and pension contributions.

*One of the respondents of retirement age, who has been working in Poland since 2017, was working in Warsaw at the Biedronka supermarket at the cash register at the time of the full-scale invasion, where she had been employed through Ukrainian intermediaries. According to her, the working conditions during the pandemic were inadequate, including the lack of compliance with sanitary standards. When the pandemic ended, all Ukrainians from the store were fired in favour of Polish staff and ended up on the street. They were also deprived of their office accommodation. The interviewee applied for unemployment benefits from ZUS. The payment was granted, but a year later, ZUS sent an official letter demanding a refund with interest. It turned out that the intermediary company that employed her had not paid its share of the mandatory contributions. The respondent delayed her appeal because she was in Ukraine at the time. An appeal to the labour inspectorate did not help. The woman found a lawyer who suggested going to the labour court. The case is currently being considered.*

A key obstacle to employment in the speciality (especially for doctors, psychologists and teachers) is the need for nostrification (confirmation) of a diploma. Nostrification requires a certain level of language proficiency, and there is a lack of language courses at the appropriate level.

*"The most vulnerable are the specialities that require nostrification of diplomas. A dentist can't find a job. She was hired as a junior medical staff member and found herself in a vicious circle: her salary is low and cannot cover the expensive cost of nostrification of her diplomas, and it is impossible to get a higher salary without nostrification. Now the city administration refunds the money for the nostrification of diplomas, but first the person has to pay for it, and then they are compensated." (Rzeszow, 29.09.2023)*

*"The nostrification of the gynaecologist and paediatrician diplomas at our centre [KOALA] took a long time, primarily because of the need to confirm the level of language proficiency. For our gynaecologist, it took 8 months." (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

*"One of the biggest problems arises with the nostrification of diplomas - it is almost impossible. The procedure is very complicated, and an expensive translation is required. The procedure can cost as much as 2500 PLN - it depends on the educational institution." (Krakow, 29.09.2023)*

At the time of the study, the problem of nostrification of the diplomas of Ukrainian psychologists, who were allowed to work without it until the end of September 2023, was acute. Many of these psychologists worked in refugee assistance centres. The relevant ministry did not extend the grace period for Ukrainian psychologists, although it had promised to do so in conversations with international organisations.

*"There is also the problem of nostrification of diplomas, particularly for psychologists. The requirements for psychologists in Poland are higher, and if there are not enough hours of study (e.g., second degree or part-time education), it is unrealistic for a psychologist to get nostrification. It is easier to get nostrification for doctors, as the requirements for training are the same. Construction specialisations and architects are not nostrified at all, as well as some chemical [EU technical standards]." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"Psychological assistance is now problematic because they did not extend the permission for Ukrainian psychologists to work without nostrification [the day before the interview], although they promised to give them the opportunity until March 2024. People have applied for nostrification, but the process is not going fast." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

As for starting your own business, the main problem is accounting, which differs from the Ukrainian system. There are free consultations on starting a business and accounting. According to service providers, there is currently no understanding of how to work with Polish clients (they are focused on Facebook rather than Instagram, other cultural peculiarities, and working with the cash register). At the same time, there are no significant obstacles to starting a business. According to the respondents, displaced persons most often start their own business in the IT and beauty sectors.

## **7.2. Taxation issues**

People do not understand the need to file annual income tax returns, and sometimes people are charged fines because they are unaware of certain legal peculiarities. At the same time, there are no particular problems.

*"I changed jobs four times, and each time I filed a declaration. I was pleasantly surprised by the tax refund." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"[The PIT declaration] was prepared and submitted by myself. The tax office made adjustments, I corrected them." (Rzeszow, 05.10.2023)*

*"There are no problems with taxes in Poland. The support with the preparation of the RIT-37 declaration is quite good. Last year, there was a problem that if there were several employers, not all of them sent RITs on time." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"In Poland, there are different types of employment contracts, which creates certain difficulties in understanding the system of taxes and various deductions." (Krakow, 04.10.2023)*

There are no widespread problems with Ukrainian taxes and reporting, but service providers are sometimes approached to help former government officials declare their income.

What raises questions is the lack of regulation of double taxation in the context of granting temporary protection for hundreds of thousands of people. Currently, the Polish tax authorities turn a blind eye to the existence of income in Ukraine for people who have been living in Poland for more than six months. However, the existing legal regulations require Ukrainian citizens to pay the difference in taxation for income earned outside of Poland, which may become a problem in the future.

*"The system of double taxation is not clear at all. Most of our acquaintances are working as individual entrepreneurs in Ukraine, in IT. They sit in Poland, work and simply do not show their income." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"Many Ukrainians do business separately in Poland and Ukraine. This is how they 'solve' the problem of double taxation." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"The issue of double taxation is not settled, especially after 183 days of stay. The reality is that people pay taxes where they receive income or salary. Currently, the Polish tax authorities turn a blind eye to this, but the problem may arise." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"The IT sector, which often works online in Ukraine, has certain issues with taxation, but in general, the practice is that we pay taxes where we earn them." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"The tax office is not currently responding to cases of employment in Ukraine." (Krakow, 09.10.2023)*

### **7.3. Banking services**

All interviewed displaced persons had accounts in Polish banks. At first, there was a problem with opening bank accounts. Not all banks (not all bank branches) opened accounts on the basis of internal Ukrainian passports or foreign passports that had lost their validity, and some banks re-issued accounts without the presence of employment in Poland.

Service providers also reported that some people do not want to open bank accounts or are not used to receiving their salary on a bank account. On the other hand, there are generally no problems with opening accounts in Poland. Many banking mobile apps already have Ukrainian language versions.

Among the most common problems reported by displaced persons today were the operation of mobile applications, charging fees for using the account after the end of the grace period (usually a year), double conversion or arrears.

*"I went to the bank, got a card, which was immediately blocked by accident because I didn't understand how to use the app. It asked for a password, I entered the password I had come up with, and it turned out that it required a special password. In fact, my husband also has a card." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*Sometimes there are receivables on cards because people did not know about this option at all." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"There are problems with using apps and understanding the terms and conditions (double conversion, etc.). About 80% of people do not know how to do it (e.g. top up their phone)." (Krakow, 10.10.2023)*

As for Ukrainian banks, the key issue was the impossibility of free transfer of funds to foreign accounts due to NBU restrictions. Even if you have the funds, it is not possible to pay rent or kindergarten fees from a Ukrainian account. People get out of the situation by opening several accounts or by importing cash.

There were some problems with blocking and re-issuing Ukrainian cards, but now Ukrainian banks are sending cards to Poland. The loss of a Ukrainian mobile number is problematic, as people do not know what to do and lose access to mobile applications. In one case, the bank demanded a certificate of an internally displaced person, which was impossible to produce in the short time spent in Ukraine.

In one case, an elderly man had his money stolen from his Oschadbank card while he was in Poland.

The issue of pension payments deserves special attention, as people who received their pensions through Ukrposhta branches are unable to use their funds in Poland and are unable to transfer payments to a bank account.

*"The problem is people who received their pensions from the post office. It is difficult for them to open online accounts in Ukraine (they do not have the means to travel to Ukraine)." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

Some pensioners had problems with re-issuing their pension cards, for which the bank required confirmation from the Pension Fund, which could only be obtained in Ukraine, as it was not possible to do so online.

## 8. Sources of information

The respondents noted that the most commonly used means of obtaining information about services for displaced persons and events in their place of residence in Poland and Ukraine are the Telegram messenger, the Facebook social network via mobile phones and personal communication. YouTube, TikTok and, to a lesser extent, official websites of state bodies and NGOs, as well as city news portals are also popular.

Service providers report the dissemination of false or unverified information by bloggers aiming at clickbait (a trend that has been observed in the Ukrainian community in Poland since the COVID quarantine). This is especially true of YouTube and TikTok (but also other sources of information). It is also common practice to ask questions in forums and groups on social media.

*"A very large part of it is because of bloggers who have their own interpretation of everything to increase views." (Krakow, 03.10.2023)*

*"Middle-aged people watch YouTube vloggers who are aimed at clickbait, so the information should be carefully checked." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*

*"Rumours are now very widespread that it will be impossible to stay in the country without a residence card. There is information in Telegram that the Temporary Protection Directive may be suspended." (Rzeszow, 29.09.2023)*

*"If we read official sources, we would not have such an emotional reaction to the events." (Krakow, 02.10.2023)*



**DRC** DANISH  
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