

# Situation of Ukrainian refugees in Central Europe and the Balkans – lessons learned and policy recommendations

## HUNGARY

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## STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENTATION

1. The immigration policy of Hungary
2. The main theories (national identity, domestic policy, globalisation, network)
3. Ukrainian diaspora before 2022 – demography, legal and economic position, attitude
4. Political institutions that were engaged (central government, local self governments, NGOs)
5. Receiving institutes reaction (civil society, public opinion)

# THE IMMIGRATION POLICY OF HUNGARY



## IMPACT OF MIGRATION CRISIS IN 2015

- **Instant political profit** > politicians positioned the migrant crisis and placed additional interpretations alongside those that already existed, renewed debate on immigration and terrorism
  - **Fear/threat-security-protection/defence** triangle
  - **Deeper gaps** between the West and East European countries > opportunity to speak up and use their voice
- 
- **PROTECTION** > fear, xenophobia, projected or real threats (elements perfectly fit into the Copenhagen School's securitization model, which identifies migration as a threat and a security challenge)

## V4 RELATION IN 2015/2016

- Poland -> Jarosław Kaczyński's speeches: *Poland's mission is to preserve the Christian foundation of Europe, furthermore immigrants bring diseases and these are serious threats.*
- The Slovak party SMER: *"We protect Slovakia"*.
- They used these buzzwords in the election campaign too, and politicians in both Slovakia and the Czech Republic linked the issue of migrants with terrorism.
- **CHRISTIAN DEFENCE WALL**

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

**Enemy constructing narrative** appears regarding the refugee/migrant crisis (2014-2016).

Government's migration rhetoric has *two dimensions*:

1. Discourse on migration (*aliens*, they don't want to be integrated, they want to *conquer* our civilisation)
  2. Enemy creating discourse against the left-wing-liberal political blocs within the European Union (*Brussels*).
- 2. The communication style, and particular markers of populism and demagogy:**
- **protection of common European values and Christianity**; the impossibility of a harmonious coexistence with other religions and civilizations, especially with the Islam;



### **3. GOOD and BAD migrants**

The Christian-civilization connection (eg. persecuted Christians with Hungarian roots), where the “benefit” is to demonstrate that Hungary is a country of solidarity and inclusion;

1. Who helps (eg. the Hungarian contingent in Afghanistan), where the “benefit” comes from the gesture;

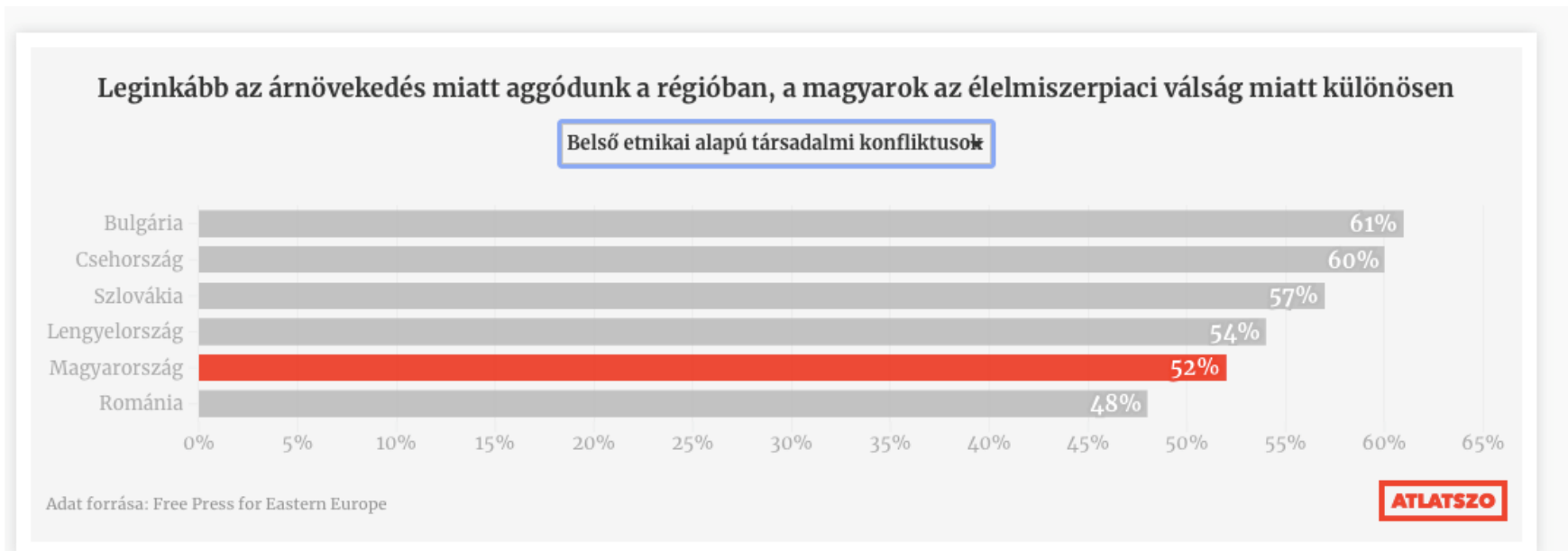
2. Who pays (e.g. businessmen, students, buyers of settlement bonds), where the “benefit” occurs in a purely material field;

3. Who works (eg guest workers) where the “benefit” is to be found in the viability of the economy and in meeting the needs of investors.

**4. Ukrainian refugees > Hungary helps, but at what price?**

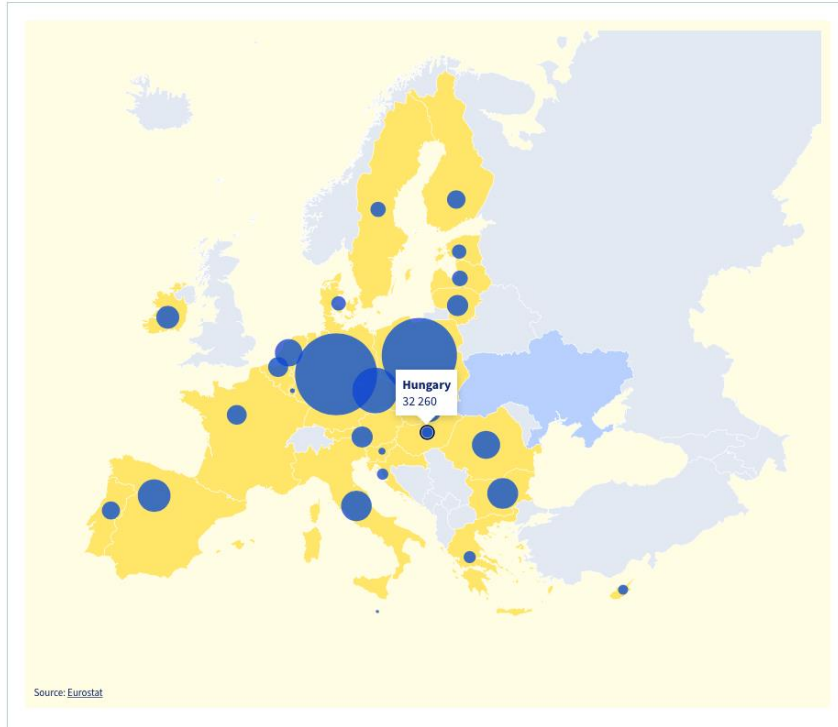
## UKRAINIAN DIASPORA IN HUNGARY BEFORE 2022

- During the 2011 census, **less than 4,000 people** in Hungary declared the Ukrainian language to be their mother tongue, and **4,200 people considered themselves to be of Ukrainian nationality.**
- 3,400 people committed themselves to Ukrainian cultural values and traditions. About two-thirds of Ukrainians are Hungarian citizens > Dual citizenship.
- Ukrainians have self-government in Hungary.





Refugees from Ukraine who benefit from temporary protection in the EU



# Ukrainian–Russian war (2022-)

## Countries featured in the Refugee Response Plan

Country	Data Date	Refugees from Ukraine recorded in country as of date	Refugees from Ukraine who applied for Asylum, TP or similar national protection schemes to date <sup>(3)</sup>	Border crossings from Ukraine since 24 February 2022 <sup>(4)</sup>	Border crossings to Ukraine since 24 February 2022 <sup>(5)</sup>
Bulgaria	2023.10.10.	53 060	170 235	Not applicable	Not applicable
Czech Republic	2023.10.08.	361 385	565 030	Not applicable	Not applicable
Estonia	2023.10.01.	50 450	51 250	Not applicable	Not applicable
Hungary	2023.10.08.	53 375	38 185	3 653 150	Data not available
Latvia	2023.08.15.	32 470	49 965	Not applicable	Not applicable
Lithuania	2023.09.29.	49 970	81 140	Not applicable	Not applicable
Poland	2023.10.10.	959 875	1 639 725	15 845 900	13 375 090
Republic of Moldova	2023.10.08.	119 375	3 195	952 820	642 525
Romania	2023.10.01.	85 120	144 270	3 394 150	2 843 385
Slovakia	2023.10.01.	109 115	127 355	1 772 990	1 594 115
<b>Összesen</b>		<b>1 874 195</b>	<b>2 870 350</b>	<b>25 619 010</b>	<b>18 455 110</b>

## Other countries neighbouring Ukraine

Country	Data Date	Refugees from Ukraine recorded in country as of date <sup>(4)</sup>	Refugees from Ukraine who applied for Asylum, TP or similar national protection schemes to date <sup>(3)</sup>	Border crossings from Ukraine since 24 February 2022 <sup>(4)</sup>	Border crossings to Ukraine since 24 February 2022 <sup>(5)</sup>
Belarus	2023.08.01.	32 435	2 995	16 705	Data not available
Russian Federation*	2022.12.31.	1 275 315	65 400	2 852 395	Data not available
<b>Összesen</b>		<b>1 307 750</b>	<b>68 395</b>	<b>2 869 100</b>	<b>Data not available</b>

Source: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

Tens of thousands of Transcarpathian Hungarians came over the border in the first days of the war, approximately 35,000 Hungarians remained in Transcarpathia out of 150,000.

## Ukrainian–Russian war

- EU sanctions against Russia (11 packages) > Hungary constantly threatens the EU and NATO with veto

January 2023: Hungary will veto any EU sanctions against Russia's nuclear sector – announced Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

*"We will not allow sanctions that would further increase Hungarian inflation; "I will not let nuclear energy be included in the scope of sanctions"*

According to official estimates, more than **1,7-1,8 million** people left Ukraine through Hungary after the war broke out. The government's communication speaks about 1,8 million Ukrainians. Although it is clear that the final destination of most of the refugees is not Hungary, and it has been a long time since we have seen the crowds coming from Ukraine at the train stations, there are some who have been living here for a year.



A photograph showing Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister of Hungary, interacting with a family at a border crossing. He is wearing a dark jacket and is looking towards a man who is holding a child. The man is also wearing a dark jacket and has a cigarette in his mouth. The child is wearing a black hat with a blue bow. In the background, a police officer in a uniform and cap is visible. The scene is indoors, possibly a hallway or a waiting area. The lighting is somewhat dim, and the overall atmosphere appears to be one of a busy border crossing.

## Viktor Orbán welcomes refugees at the border

**Viktor Orbán, 11 24 2022:**  
*Hungary "has to cope with two migrant crises at the same time"  
We are the only country in Europe that has to cope with two  
migrant crises at the same time. "It is a fair demand on the part  
of the V4s that the Union also take on some of this burden."*

**NO MIGRATION!**

**NO GENDER!**

**NO WAR!**

 **Orbán Viktor**



orbanviktora



kenyaweszt420 Yes joint



7 ó. 1,647 kedvelés Válasz Fordítás megtekintése

Válaszok megtekintése (12)



kutyakukkendare ha tetszet ez a posztunk kovessetek be itt is, neha ide neha oda rakjuk ki a memeket



4 ó. 965 kedvelés Válasz

Válaszok megtekintése (3)



sorovllecram kedvenc shitpost oldalam



7 ó. 1,116 kedvelés Válasz



biroblanka és további 11 006 ember kedvelték.

7 ÓRÁJA



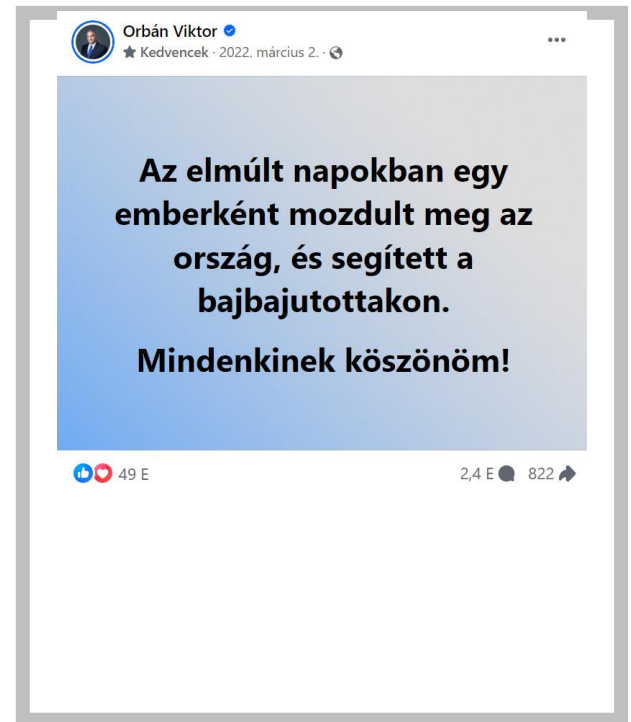
Hozzászólás írása...

Küldés

“We take  
care of  
everyone”



In the past few days  
Hungarians helped  
people in trouble  
unconditionally. I thank  
all of you!





## NGOS ALSO HELP

- The larger civil organizations (Red Cross, Asylum Civic Organisation, IOM, Maltese Charity Service / Maltese International) were the first who responded to the wave of refugees and started providing care for the refugees.
- The government appeared on the Hungarian–Ukrainian border first time 3-4 days after the outbreak of the crisis.
- The government first assessed the public opinion of Hungarian people and then decided to help refugees eventually.





## REFUGEE POLICY IN VARIOUS LEVELS

To the society: The government has learnt from the previous Syrian refugee situation: they thought it would provoke resentment and rejection from the population at the sight of so-called "broken, miserable people".

And it was a big knock for them that there was a broad section of people who were moved by solidarity and wanted to help. **People were taking refugees from the streets** into their homes, bringing sandwiches, organising medical care. So it was a self-organised way of help in 2016.

Still there is **no transparent asylum system** in Hungary, with a coherent framework and at least medium-term objectives.

Services are fragmented, with NGOs, authorities, voluntary helpers, church and municipal organisations trying to organise themselves into a system.

In 2023: **Despite more than a year of war in our neighbourhood, there is still no one coordinating the care of refugees in Hungary.**

## HUNGARY HELPS



## GOVERNMENT HELPS (?)

- 2022. March: Norbert Pál has been appointed government commissioner responsible for persons fleeing to Hungary to escape the Russian–Ukrainian war.

### **Pál is responsible for:**

1. assisting in the placement of refugees from Ukraine,
2. contributing to the preparation of government decisions concerning refugees,
3. cooperating with the minister responsible for the organisation of public administration in the performance of official tasks concerning refugees,
4. making recommendations to the government on legislative and other tasks requiring decisions concerning the employment, education, social and housing issues of refugees.
5. providing information to refugees and cooperates with the ministries responsible for related tasks, the National Directorate General for Aliens, Hungarian and international humanitarian aid organisations, and organisations involved in the provision of temporary employment and placement services.

## LONG-TERM RESIDENTS

### Long-term residents can be divided into two broad groups:

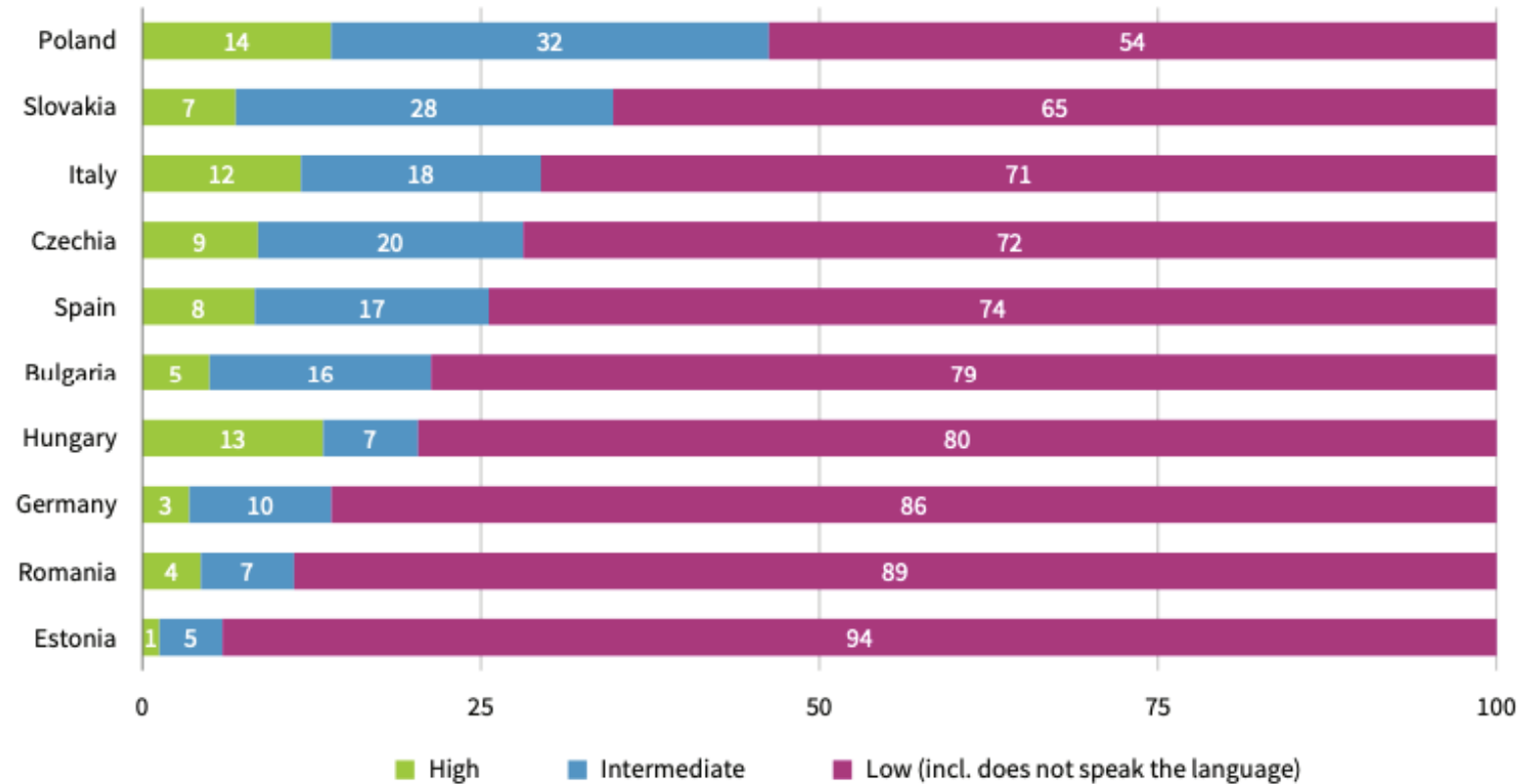
1. **Ukrainian women and children** who want to stay close to their husbands and male family members left behind in Ukraine to survive the war
2. They used to live in relative prosperity but have now exhausted their reserves.
3. Although they speak Ukrainian and may have difficulties due to language barriers, they are more sympathetic and supportive of Hungarian society because they are the ones who better embody the **'ideal' refugee** image.
4. There is another, **larger group of refugees** who remained in Hungary: Hungarian-speaking Roma families in Transcarpathia who live in poverty, early drop-out from the education system and unemployment long before the outbreak of the war.
5. For them, Hungary had long seemed the promised land. In order to make a better living, the male members of these families have often been working in Hungary for 8-10 years as migrant guest workers. **People in Hungary have much less solidarity with them.**

## ACCOMMODATION

- Originally, those critical facilities offered temporary accommodation for a few days or a week or two to the refugees who arrived in Budapest.
- After a month and a half, it was already apparent that the families who did not have enough money and connections to continue to Western Europe were stuck in Budapest mainly. **The average time the refugees resided in Budapest was 2-3 months.**
- Many people received a room, or flat in "accommodation for workers", hostels, elder people received workplace worked the night shift, but most of their salary went for the accommodation, they could save 100-120 EUR per month. But there was nowhere to go.
- It is an advantage if someone speaks Hungarian, it was easier to get a job.
- There are no dedicated plus sources. The state pays **HUF 7,000/person on daily basis as a normative subsidy (17 EUR)**, which is used to cover accommodation and meals.

## DIFFICULTIES IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Figure 1: Host language proficiency of the respondents, by country (% , weighted)



**Notes:** The question was phrased as follows: 'How well do you speak the language of the country you are currently staying in?' There were six response options, recoded into three for reporting here.

**Source:** FRA, Ukrainian survey 2022



# Education 1

- Of the 328,000 refugees who contacted various organisations, only 8,000 applied to organisations working in the field of education, and of these, less than 3,000 children were enrolled in the public education system.
- This means that, despite compulsory enrolment, only a small number of children have been placed in an appropriate educational institution
- Why? → lack of people who speak Ukrainian
- 130,000 HUF support for training in Hungarian
- There are also quite a few refugee teachers and many Ukrainian adults.
- NGOs have found a lot of people for their summer programmes, but it is difficult to employ foreigners. It's easy to hire them in factories, but for schools it was a months-long process to get an assignment contract.



## Education 2

- **traumatic experiences**, the trauma of children suddenly forced to leave their homes, worried about their friends and relatives left at home, did not disappear when they crossed the Hungarian border, for which the schools and the host community should have been prepared.
- **language difficulties, except:** for the children from Transcarpathia, who are mostly **native Hungarian speakers**, it may seem almost natural that they will cope well with the new situation.
- Hungarian schools do not have enough school psychologists by default.

## Education 3

- Responses to the public interest data request were received on 23 February 2023:
- On this basis, the number of pupils with Ukrainian citizenship who are asylum seekers is around 2,800 (about 600 in kindergarten, about 2,000 in primary school, 87 in secondary school, about 100 in vocational education),
- the number of pupils with dual citizenship is around 2,700 (250 in kindergarten, 1,800 in primary school, 300 in secondary school, 350 in technical and vocational education).
- On this basis, the maximum number of pupils who are refugees from Ukraine is **5,500-6,000**. In reality, however, the number is lower: a significant number of dual citizens did not flee to Hungary after 24 February 2022, as Ukrainian-Hungarian dual citizens have lived and studied in Hungary before.

## Education 4

- **United Way Hungary's "Together for Ukraine" program:**
  - supports civil society organizations and projects that aim to create and maintain living conditions for refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine, to promote the well-being and integration of families and children.
- There are also projects that aim to promote access to and participation in education for refugee children and young people, or focus on self-sufficiency for families, or provide access to appropriate health care and disease prevention.
- **The Civil Platform for Public Education**
- **The Civil College Foundation (CKA)**

## Education 5

- There are many things missing in the work of organisations, professionals and teachers who help refugee children and young people, including information and advocacy in the field of education.
- Those who are asylum seekers or Hungarian citizens are **entitled to free education** in Hungary. This does not only affect them, but also the teachers who teach them and certainly their future classmates.
- **The EDUA project, implemented by the Civil Education Platform** in cooperation with the **Civil College Foundation** and with the support of **United Way Hungary**, aims to provide a sustainable solution to this problem.
- Within the framework of the project, an information portal **UAINFO.HU** has been created in Hungarian, Ukrainian and Russian, which contains information important for families, teachers and helpers, including information on schooling and curricula.

Mindent a magyar oktatásról egy helyen.

## Education 6

- <https://uainfo.hu> EDUA project
- **PROVIDING EDUCATION TO UKRAINIAN REFUGEE CHILDREN IN HUNGARY**
- Mindent a magyar oktatásról egy helyen. Ukrán menekülteknek, segítőknek, pedagógusoknak.

Все про угорську освіту на одному порталі. Інформація для біженців, вчителів та їх помічників.

- All about Hungarian education in one place. For Ukrainian refugees, helpers, teachers.
- Hungarian deputy ombudsman who is responsible for rights of nationalities announced that ***they do not know how many Ukrainian refugee children*** who are requested to go to school are currently in Hungary.

SEGÍTŐ/PEDAGÓGUS VAGYOK

Я ВЧИТЕЛЬ/ПОМІЧНИК

# UNHCR Research on refugees

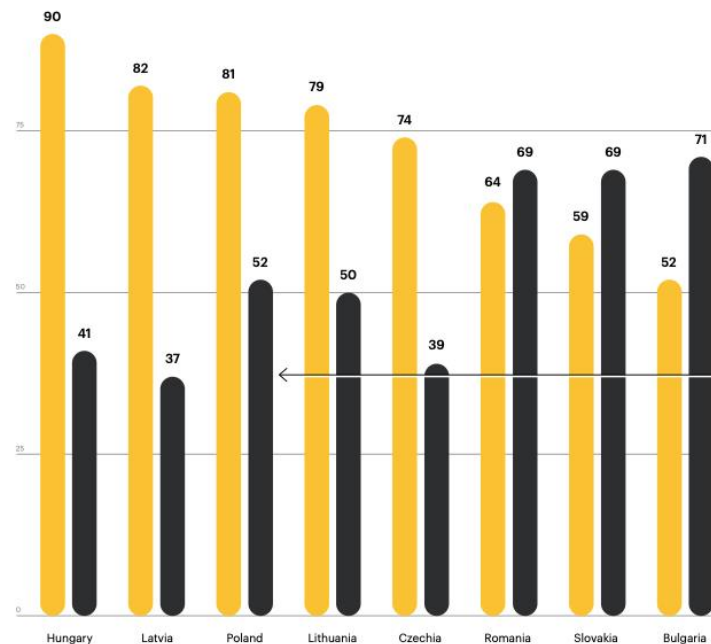
- **The report made by UNHCR and released in October 2023 provides a more or less complex overview about the life of refugees in Hungary:**
- One third of Ukrainian refugees still live in shelters/accomodation for workers > 27% are children > 5% said they are Roma.
- 60% of them were refugees with refugee status, 21% has dual citizenship and 20% of them do nothing, it means they do not work nor study, because they don't speak any other languages except Ukrainian or Russian.
- 21% of children (30% of refugees) did not go to school last school year – mainly because they participated in Ukrainian education. 12% of those who requested it could not access health care, 40% of those in need of mental health care could not access it. The reason is the inaccessibility of providers and language issues.

## PUBLIC OPINION

# CONSISTENT SUPPORT FOR UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

### Agreement with statements about refugee assistance (%)

- My country needs to continue supporting Ukrainian refugees because they are fleeing the war.
- Ukrainian refugees receive support at the expense of our citizens from weaker and socially vulnerable parts of population, that need it more.



Over a year into the war, support for refugees also remains robust throughout the region, with 73% of CEE respondents agreeing that their countries should continue providing assistance to refugees. At the same time, 53% think Ukrainian refugees are receiving this aid at the expense of socially vulnerable groups in their countries who need it even more. As with other examples of disinformation and manipulative efforts, the narrative that refugees are given preferential treatment regarding social benefits over citizens resonates most among Bulgarians, Romanians, and Slovaks. Such strong resonance of the narrative portraying Ukrainians as “stealing from locals” should be swiftly addressed to prevent further growth.

## TENSIONS BUBBLING UNDER THE SURFACE

Even in countries like Poland, espousing welcoming and supportive views towards Ukrainians fleeing Russia’s aggression, the narrative that Ukrainians are receiving benefits at the expense of locals finds some resonance. In Poland, a majority of Ukrainian refugees, predominantly women with children, are concentrated in the largest Polish cities, placing enormous strain on local administrations, housing, schools, the job market, and healthcare in incorporating a vast number of arrivals into society. By September 2022, it was estimated that around 700,000 to 800,000 school-aged refugees from Ukraine had arrived in Poland.<sup>5</sup> It might have been one of the factors contributing to the rise of Polish right-wing Konfederacja party that has nearly doubled its polling support over the past six months and now stands at 10%, positioning itself as the third most popular party as parliamentary elections approach in October 2023.<sup>6</sup>



**73%**  
THINK THEIR COUNTRY NEEDS TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING UKRAINIAN REFUGEES BECAUSE THEY ARE FLEEING A WAR.

**53%**  
THINK UKRAINIAN REFUGEES ARE RECEIVING SUPPORT AT THE EXPENSE OF DISADVANTAGED AND SOCIALLY VULNERABLE CITIZENS, THAT NEED IT MORE.



## Who is responsible for starting the war in Ukraine?

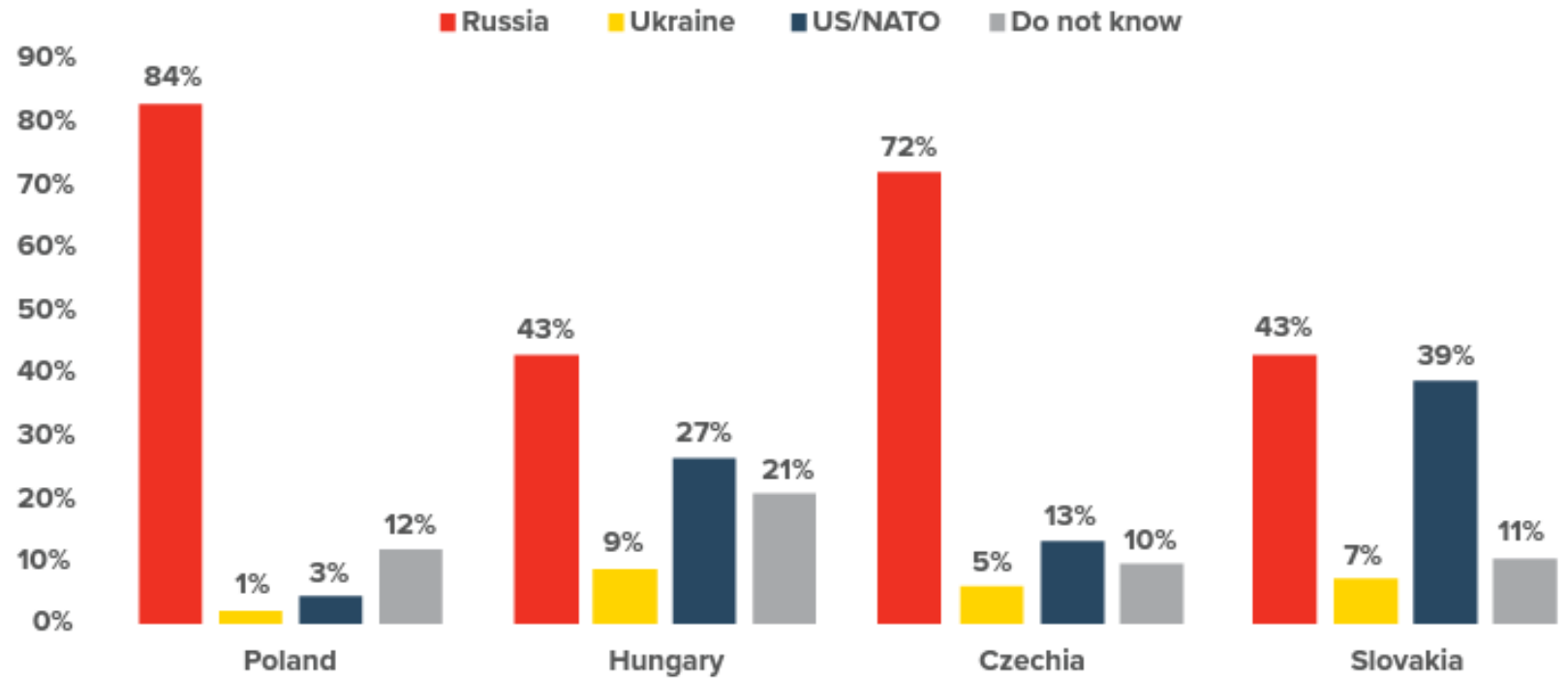


Figure 7 The proportion of respondents blaming Russia, Ukraine, the US and NATO for the war, and the proportion of those who did not know or did not answer the question.



# **Thank you for your attention!**

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