

# SOCIAL RECEPTION AND INCLUSION OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE



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## Report structure:

1. Why do refugees matter?
2. Methodology of the research
3. Case study
4. Results: needs, concerns, plans for the future
5. Discussion and conclusions



## Introduction:

Our research aimed to study the ongoing phenomena of cross-border displacement of the Ukrainian population resulting from the Russian aggression that started on the 24th of February 2022.

In the first stage of this research, we managed to get the opinions of over 500 refugees with a focus on their needs, concerns, plans, and expectations. Collected data also allowed a reconstruction of

social-demographic profiles of fleeing Ukrainian refugees. The preliminary outcomes are presented in the report. The follow-up stage envisages in-depth interviews sampling adults and children who attended the surveyed schools with a substantial presence of newcomers.

The outcomes will be used to produce a policy report helping to understand this unexpected situation and propose some possible scenarios.

## 1. Why do refugees matter?

The issue of refugees is one of the permanent elements of historical reflection on the mass movement of people or the phenomenon of migration. One can assume that movements of refugees differ from the phenomenon of migration in two factors: the potentially temporary nature and the impossibility of treating the refugee in terms of purely voluntary activity. Refugee movement and displacement are types of forced migration – a notion emphasizing involuntary reasons for fleeing. Oddly enough, the relationship between the notions of a forced migrant (refugee or a displaced person) can be included in the discussion between the realistic and the nominalist position (Hein 1993), while the first context provides the basis for in-depth empirical studies.

The refugee movement takes place under the influence of events over which individuals, and even entire communities, have little impact, although it is usually a manifestation of acting in opposition to its omission, especially when the reason for leaving one's country is „*well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social*

*group or political opinion...*” (Hein 1993: 44). According to UNHCR (The United Nations Refugee Agency) definition: “*A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries*”.

In other words: leaving the country of origin is a consequence of a well-founded belief in an existential threat, not a choice and expression of the right to choose, so often emphasised in migration studies. The concept is thus inherent in reflection on the subject of limited, but still present subjectivity, and memorable, often unpredictable events. Finally, the status of refugees, as described above, is an element of sociological or political perspective. It is different in the eyes of the law (Łukasiewicz et al. 2022). In the latter case, Ukrainians primarily are not refugees but people subject to temporary protection.

Our Ukrainian guests enjoy protection outside the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, choosing, for the most part, temporary protection activated by the Council of the EU and valid throughout the UE and, in parallel, making use of the special protection introduced in the Polish so-called Special Act (Act of 12 March 2022 on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with armed conflict on the territory of that country). Their status and the need to leave their country is a direct consequence of the inability of their country of origin to protect them in the face of a non-inflicted armed conflict. The use of the term refugee is therefore descriptive, not legal.

The subject of our interest are the consequences of an armed conflict: Russia's unprovoked armed attack in Ukraine on the civilian population forced to escape. Therefore, the traditionally used understanding of a refugee as a person fleeing political persecution becomes much less essential. At the same time, the fear of losing one's life due to military operations comes as a primary motive. Regardless of the reasons for the mass movement of people (whether they result from natural, social, or political conditions, whether they are a choice or a choice to a lesser extent), they strongly affect the dynamics of rooted communities, changing the population proportions, influencing the economic conditions.

In the temporal perspective, the refuge influence the culture and way of thinking of the receiving communities. An essential factor determining the social dynamics is the specificity of relations constructed on the axis: refugee - settled community - host country, this axis being influenced by distinctiveness of cultures, and more precisely, on the scope of differences, a crucial element of which is the area of communication. In the presented results of the study, the aforementioned cultural context seems to be particularly important and gives rise to greater openness and general agreement on assistance.

From the perspective of the refugees themselves, the reasons for leaving are probably much more important than the arguments of cultural proximity to the country you flee to. The theme of coping in a new place makes its appearance a little later when the trauma of the dramatic experiences subsides. The critical issue is the dynamics of taking root in a new place (even if it is only temporary), which involves the material dimension related to the base of Maslow's pyramid of needs (including accommodation issues, job

opportunities, and the job market in general). Moving from the problems of existential experience to the difficulties of functioning in a new place is part of the dynamics of the anchoring process, where the actors are the refugees. Our research aims to examine current hierarchies of needs and refugees' human capital that might help to overcome some of these issues faster.

We consciously avoid the category of refugees' social integration (in favour of the concept of anchoring, Grzymała-Kazłowska 2015), accepting their right to consider their stay outside the country of origin as temporary. Therefore, we will not ask questions about the effectiveness of integration with the host society or even acculturation. Thus, we leave it to the person's individual choice to what extent and how they want to proceed with their changing understanding of integration level they aspire to. Therefore, the change in the attitude toward war refugees was highly significant. However, it is doubtful whether this change will continue when Russia's war in Ukraine ends. We could suggest here a significant change at the level of public discussion in relation to, for example, refugees and migrants who illegally crossed the border from Belarus before the outbreak of the war. The problem here lies primarily in the widespread sociological understanding of refugees at the level of public discourse. It is much clearer when the war is taking place just beyond our borders, rather than referring to less comprehensible legal norms and rights.

## What do we know about us: attitudes of the host society towards refugees (data from Poland)

*„Poles are unanimous in the matter of accepting refugees from Ukraine”* - this is the quotation from the CBOS report from the study carried out in mid-March 2022 (No. 38/2022: 8). 94% of respondents were convinced that Poland should accept refugees. Thus, support for accepting refugees had increased by nearly 40 percentage points since the last survey in June 2018, when it ranged from 50 to 62% over ten years with slight fluctuations.

The level of support for receiving refugees remained relatively high; nevertheless, the phenomenon sparked lively discussions and fuelled the dynamics of the political dispute. It was particularly evident when people were asked about war refugees in armed events outside Europe (CBOS Report No. 111/2021). In such a situation, the support for accepting refugees was significantly lower, and from the second half of 2015, it did not exceed 50%, reaching 42% at the end of 2021.

It seems that the cultural proximity of Poles and Ukrainians and the presence of refugees and migrants from Ukraine in Poland since the events of 2014 are of significant importance. The survey carried out in mid-2018 (CBOS Report No. 87/2018) collected answers to the question: „do

*you think Poland should accept refugees from countries affected by armed conflicts?*” and a question about accepting refugees from Ukraine. Support for affirmative answers to the first question in June 2018 was 22%, and for the second - 56%. Similar questions were asked for example to the Czechs; the answers revealed two facts: on the one hand, a comparable level of affirmative responses; on the other, significant fluctuations in opinions among Poland’s south-western neighbors (over 12 months, support for accepting war refugees - from outside Europe increased from 27% to 38% ). This suggests that attitudes to refugees are so complex that they need to be considered in the context of the specificities of particular societies.

## ...and them: what do we know about Ukrainian refugees on the basis of the already published research reports?

According to the Polish Border Guard data, from February 24, the day of the beginning of the war, until April 25, the Polish-Ukrainian border was crossed by 2,944 million refugees from Ukraine. However, the general data on border crossings does not give us a precise number because some



people might be commuting. It does not give us an answer about the distribution of refugees within the country’s territory. It also leaves the unknown:

how many of the refugees remained in Poland, or where did they stay?

The Union of Polish Metropolises (UPM) published one of the most reliable data on the distribution of refugees in the largest Polish cities (Urban Hospitality: Unprecedented Growth, Challenges and Opportunities. a Report on Ukrainian Refugees in the Largest Polish Cities). Importantly, unlike standard diagnostic tools, refugee declarations were not used here. To collect data, this organisation used IT tools used in marketing, including logged-in mobile phones with Ukrainian SIM cards. The conclusions of the UPM study point to the specificity of the relocation of refugees from Ukraine within Poland. It is probably not surprising that the places of refugees are mainly large urban centres with both residential infrastructure and a developed labour market. What is extremely significant in the case of the specificity of the Polish response to the refugee crisis, non-governmental organisations and private individuals were the quickest to react by creating ad hoc forms of support and launching various forms of assistance: from direct support to organising collections of needed resources to logistics and providing shelter. Here, the social infrastructure of urban metropolitan areas has proven to be extremely important, as has the existence of a developed sector of non-governmental aid organisations.

As highlighted in the UPM report, the local government of major cities became heavily involved in the emergency response process, offering their infrastructure for the needs of refugees, but also organisational resources. Based on data from the border crossings, the dynamics of the refugee influx were established, which on 6 and 7 March reached a level of about 140,000 people per day, to stabilize at the end of March at a level of more than 20,000 people per day, and then steadily decrease. Based on official data, 21% of the refugees were children. Data obtained from the UPM investigation indicated that refugees were staying in metropolitan areas of Warsaw (approximately 469,000), Katowice (approximately 303,000), Kraków (approximately 230,000) and Gdańsk, including the Tricity (approximately 223,000).

Although the quantitative data presented in the study is based on the juxtaposition of research data with official data (which raises certain doubts in terms of its precision and methodological assumptions), it allows us to understand quite accurately the specificity of the grassroots relocation of refugees, as well as to answer the question which cities enjoy an attractive image from the point of view of refugees, or more precisely - the dominant group of women who decided to leave the country engulfed in warfare. The data from this study will be used in the following stages of the study for more detailed analyses concerning directly the specificity of the Poznań metropolitan area concerning data from other areas.

## 2. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

### How did we collect data?

The study aims to diagnose attitudes and capture their changes due to anchoring refugees in a new place of residence for several months of 2022, from February 24th. We assume that it is the dynamics and effectiveness of the anchoring process that determine the attitudes of refugees, as well as the specificity of their fears. In this report, we present the results of the first stage of this research.

In the CAPI *Computer Assisted Personal Interviews* survey conducted using Qualtrics XM software, 523 completed questionnaires were obtained in one of the three language versions (413 in Ukrainian, 77 in Russian, and 42 in English). Trained interviewers used Computer Assisted Personal Interviews to collect responses at the reception points for Ukrainian refugees from 30/03/2022 to 30/04/2022. The refugees and volunteers' networks also distributed the information about these questionnaires. The questionnaire included questions about the essential needs, concerns, and plans related to the place of stay, education of children, or goals related to professional activity. The respondents also had the opportunity to present their language

proficiency, professional qualifications, and the ability to document them.

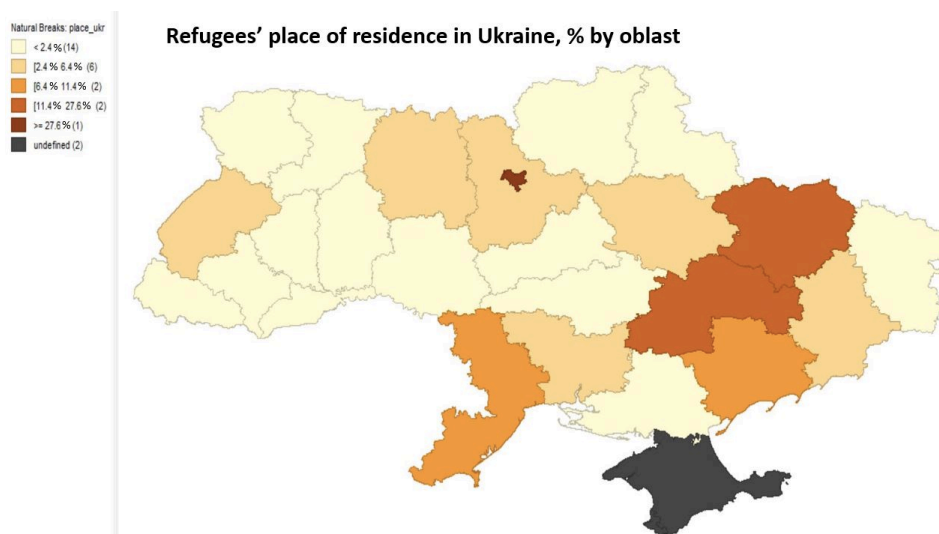
The first stage of the study was carried out in April 2022 among refugees from Ukraine who reached European countries after the beginning of Russia's aggression. The primary research tool was an online questionnaire translated into three languages: English, Ukrainian, and Russian. The interviews were conducted in the three target countries - Poland, Germany, and Ireland. The largest share of the interviews were conducted in Poznań, with the help of interviewers and with the use of tablets connected to the Internet at the point of assistance (at the Poznań International Fair - refugees reception and aid centre), in cooperation with the Wielkopolska Voivodeship Office in Poznań. The sample selection was non-probabilistic, limiting the possibilities of simple generalisations but allowing to formulate conclusions referring to a specific group of refugees who found themselves in a particular place and time.



### 3. CASE STUDY

523 respondents participated in the research. 84,3% were women, and 15,7% men. 165 people (41.45% of those who answered this question) declared that they did not know anyone at the place of their arrival. However, most of the respondents have a more or less extensive network of social relations. 23.86% of the respondents declared that they know one person on the premises, 27.88% know two to five people, and only 6.75% know six people or more.

Areas of respondents' origin (by region, ukr. *oblast*) are presented on the map below. They are defined per *oblast* and not particular localities because respondents were using the biggest nearby city to describe their place of origin. The map shows that most refugees come from the *oblasts* neighbouring intensive military operations, but not those under the most devastating attacks. This might indicate that the population in the regions under immediate attack have been trapped and cannot flee.



Most respondents filled in the questionnaires in Poland (63,4%), 18,7% in Ireland, 13,9% in Germany, and 4% in other countries. When asked about possible future destinations, an absolute majority are willing to stay in the current place of residence, and only a tiny minority declare their willingness to move. Of 63,4% surveyed in Poland, 58,4% claimed that they chose it as a preferred country. Some reported a desire to move to Ireland (the difference between those who are already there and those who intend to visit is 1,7%), the United Kingdom (the difference is -1,3%), Germany (0,6%), Canada, France, Netherlands, Sweden (c. 0,5% each). In terms of linguistic issues, we could say that the most commonly spoken foreign language for adults is English, with 18% declaring their level as elementary and 26% as fluent; Polish was second known - 12% (with only 3% fluent), only 5.6% adults claimed some knowledge of German, 6,5% Italian, and 3% French. 67% indicated the knowledge of Ukrainian (mostly fluent), and the rest left a blank space instead of an answer. 45% mentioned Russian

(mostly fluent), with the rest leaving a blank space instead of an answer. The linguistic skills of children turned out to be even worse. However, this might be due to their age, given the fact that some did not have any schooling or minimal schooling in foreign languages. 25% know English (12% on an elementary level and 13% fluently). There is a noticeable difference in knowledge of Polish between adults and children – only 4% of kids know it and practically all on a basic level.

Structure of the sample, N=523	
Category	Value
<b>Sex</b>	
Women	84,3%
Men	15,7%
<b>Social network density</b>	
„I know one person here”	23,6%
„I know two to five people here”	27,8%
„I know six people or more here”	6,7%

At the same time, the biggest number of Ukrainian refugees decide to stay in Poland. This might pose a challenge to the Polish schooling system in the future, as well as the knowledge of other foreign languages: French 1,7%, German 3,6%, Italian 3,6%.

The refugees came with a broad spectrum of skills and qualifications. There are representatives of all professions; several persons reported multiple occupational categories. In particular, 14% of respondents are entrepreneurs or IT specialists.

Each fourth individual had previously held a position of a scientist, engineer, health, or education specialist. Many interviewees are blue collars or possess service skills that have been in high demand in Poland during the last few years. Specifically, 10% of refugees have HoReCa-related skills. About 16% of respondents worked as personal caregivers or domestic staff. Drivers, farmers, construction and sales workers make up 19% of the case study.

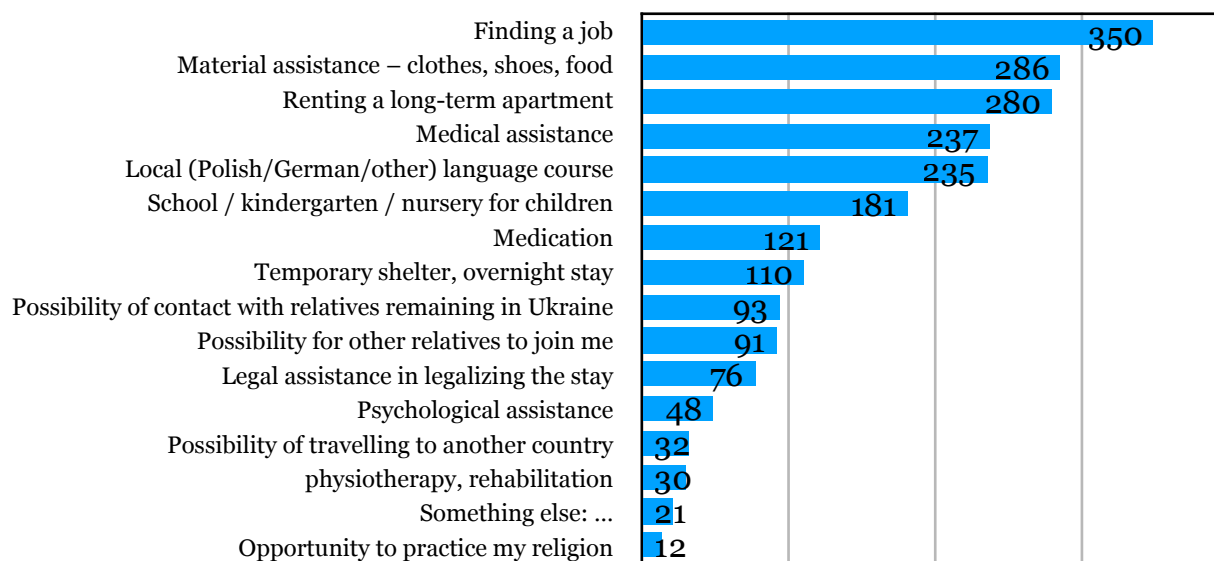
## 4. RESULTS: NEEDS, CONCERNS AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The respondents could choose from 15 essential needs, of which they were to indicate the five most important ones. The charts below show that „finding a job”, „material assistance”, „renting a long-term apartment”, „medical assistance”, or „local language course” were selected as the most important. Among the less frequently mentioned were: finding a kindergarten or nursery for children, medicines, temporary shelter, or enabling contact with family and relatives who remained in Ukraine. These responses show the proactive orientation of the respondents. Few (32)

of them were interested in traveling to another country.

In addition to various forms of immediate help, they are interested in actively looking for a job, place of residence, or the possibility of continuing education of children or caring for the youngest. The answers to the following questions show that most of them are already actively looking for a job in their current place of residence.

Pic. 1. Responses to the question: „What are your most important needs?” Respondents could choose up more than one from the list of 15 needs. (Responses in numbers)



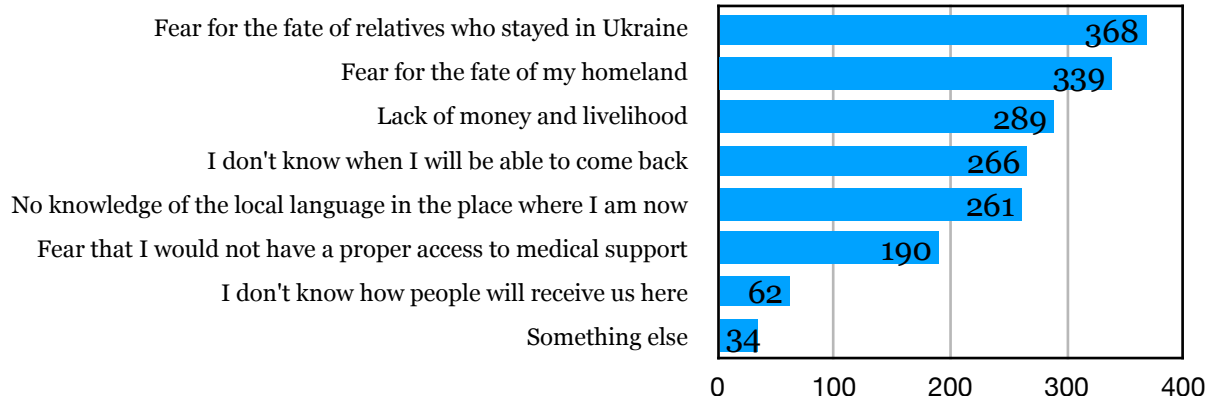
The questionnaire also asked about the sources of concerns. The respondents were asked to indicate the five most important, which are as follows: „lack of money”, „poor knowledge of the language of the host country”, „fear of how people will receive me”, „uncertainty about the fate of relatives who stayed at home”, „uncertainty about the possibility of returning home” and, finally, „uncertainty about the future of Ukraine attacked by Russia”.

The following responses were registered: lack of money (289 responses), uncertainty about the future and the possibility of returning to the homeland (266 responses), as well as poor language skills in the host country (261 responses; it is worth noting here that this problem was also

pointed out by students involved in collecting empirical data). The respondents were also concerned about the lack of access to medical care (190 people). Oddly enough, the least frequently chosen answer was the concern about how the locals would receive them - only 62 respondents indicated it.

The answers provided by the respondents show that their worries mainly concern the fate of their relatives remaining in Ukraine, in their places of origin - this answer was chosen by 368 of them. A similar, although a slightly smaller, number of responses concerned fears about the fate of Ukraine (339 people chose this answer).

Pic. 2. Responses to the question: „What are your most important concerns?” Respondents could choose up more than one from the list of 8 concerns. (Responses in numbers)



Our research shows that most of the refugees we interviewed assessed various forms of assistance available to them in the host countries. The common denominator connecting all our interlocutors, regardless of their country of residence, is the feeling of temporariness, uncertainty, and fear for their own and their loved ones' future. However, the countries receiving refugees, especially their citizens, partially address these concerns and needs.

Positive statements about the host countries are dominant among the respondents. Over 78% of the respondents assessed the conditions they encountered in the countries receiving refugees „very positively” and another 16.22% „positively”. Only 3.98% evaluate them as „neither good nor bad”, and slightly more than 1% as „bad” or „very



bad”. This proves that, regardless of the unpredictability of the whole situation and the massive number of refugees, the vast majority have a sense of support and help in their places of residence.



## Conclusions:

The results we presented constitute the first part of an international research project, the justification of which is the unique situation of an influx of refugees from Ukraine invaded by Russian troops. Out of fear for their own lives, millions of people have been forced to leave their places of residence and look for a safer environment. This spontaneous influx of people to neighbouring countries was met with a response from state agencies, organisations, and institutions. Finally, ordinary people offered their support and help, volunteering with free shelter in their own residence, assistance in finding a job, and many other forms. In Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania, and other countries, refugees try to adapt to this situation and are engaged in various states of mutual aid and support, and are also vividly interested in the fate of their fighting country. We don't know how long this situation will last. However, we aim to describe it.

This report is a summary of the first part of the UKREF\_2022 research project. In the next ones, which we intend to publish in the summer and autumn of 2022, we will present the results of in-depth research among refugees who have anchored their live in Poland, Germany and Ireland, and other receiving countries for a longer time.



We hope that the occurrence of our common fate and shared experiences will allow us to get to know and understand each other better.

In terms of formulating a discussion - based on the collected material - the exploratory nature of the research should be emphasised, which explains the wide range of questions posed. The results obtained confirm the observation formulated in the introduction about the hierarchy of needs in most cases of female refugees. The dominating conditions can be inscribed in an elementary, albeit consecutive, anchoring stage. The issue of finding a job and obtaining social stability comes to the fore. This is followed by health issues and the issue of communication. The relatively distant temporary shelter and accommodation position suggests that there were also people at an utterly preliminary stage of refugeehood within the study group. Refugees' specific psychological and social condition is clearly defined by the awareness of leaving loved ones and their previous life behind in Ukraine. Only in third place come concerns about the here and now (material security issues). At this point, the difference between refugees and migration can probably be seen.

The formulated conclusions, which are necessarily quite general, suggest the need for a closer look at the phenomenon of war refugees, where the trauma of departure overlaps with the trauma of the refugee condition in the receiving country. Just as needs relate to the „new here and now”, fear relates to the people and places that had to be left behind. The socio-professional description of refugees, which suggests an extensive range of skills and competencies, requires separate reflection, but this would need more in-depth analysis due to the specificity of the non-probabilistic sampling.

Although critical and tragic, this entire refugee situation can also be seen as the basis for building friendly neighbourly relations. Direct knowledge of people, their dramatic fate, and the willingness to deal with this situation can be helpful in rebuilding the country's infrastructure destroyed by war and solving many other problems, the sources of which lay in mutual hostility and ignorance in the past. The first wave of refugees and social responses in host countries show the enormous potential of human kindness, hospitality, and a willingness to communicate.

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38/2022, Polacy wobec rosyjskiej inwazji na Ukrainę [Poles towards Russian invasion to Ukraine], Feliksiak Michał, Roguska Beata (eds.)

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## Refugees and volunteers - encounters photographed

All the photographs presented in this report were taken in March and April 2022 in Poznań. By the end of this month, over 100 thousand refugees had arrived to the city. They were granted various forms of material aid and symbolic support. Volunteers took a substantial part in these actions - citizens of Poznań: youths, pensioners, scouts, charities and Church organizations. Photograph below: Adam Mickiewicz monument in Poznań

