Risks to Community Cohesion Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities in Central Europe

Regional Brief

In Central Europe, governments, non-governmental organisations, businesses, multilateral organisations, and ordinary citizens have provided substantial support to Ukrainians fleeing Russia's 2022 invasion. However, as the war continues, their generosity might wane, including due to the challenges that the host countries face. These include high inflation and stretched social services, as well as disinformation campaigns targeting refugees, including by Russia-aligned stakeholders.

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Background

Social services and systems in Central Europe were stretched before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and pressure on housing, health, and education systems is increasing. Other challenges are likely to arise as the war protracts and people's needs and concerns evolve, particularly as inflation remains high. For example, consumer price inflation reached more than 30 percent in late 2022 in Moldova, and remained relatively high at 8.6 percent in autumn 2023. Incendiary and misleading narratives, including by Russia-aligned stakeholders and through disinformation campaigns, have the potential to exacerbate concerns and damage community cohesion.

In other crises, over time, tensions have led to increased polarisation of society and discrimination or hate crimes against minorities. Some early signs point to support for Ukrainian refugees beginning to erode in some countries. For instance, polling from May 2023 revealed that 73 percent of Poles were 'keen to welcome those fleeing Ukraine', a significant decline from a year earlier, when support was almost unanimous. In February 2023, 56.6 percent of Slovak respondents thought Ukrainian refugees reduced the quality of public services in Slovakia and weakened the country's economy. In the Czech Republic in September 2022, energy protestors demanded that the government 'enter into direct gas supply contracts with Russia' and return Ukrainian refugees to their country.

Looking ahead, with the invasion ongoing, the priorities of organisations that support Ukrainian refugees could change, resulting in a drop in funding available to support refugees and communities hosting them. Despite these challenges, the disruption to the status quo brings clear opportunities to improve the situation and general standard of living for both refugees and local communities.

We understand community cohesion as occurring in a society in which:

- All communities have a sense of belonging;
- People's diverse backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and valued;
- Similar life opportunities are available to all; and
- Strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in workplaces, schools, and the wider community.

Approach and methodology

The research was conducted between November 2022 and March 2023. The team carried out desk-based research, followed by research workshops in the five countries of focus – the Czech Republic, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. A total of 229 experts from government, multilateral organisations, local and international non-governmental organisations, and academia participated in the workshops.

Objectives

This brief and the accompanying report aim to help understand the factors that might undermine cohesion between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in the region in the medium term and provide recommendations for what relevant organisations could do to mitigate those factors.

Key findings

Economic concerns are a key driver of potential tensions. Polling in Europe consistently shows that, since mid-2022, the <u>vast majority of the population has been worried about economic factors</u> such as the rising cost of living. With increased fuel and energy prices in all five research countries, <u>discourses</u> such as 'What about our citizens?', or 'Ukrainian refugees are draining our social system at a time when our citizens are crushed by inflation' <u>appear</u>. The <u>narrative that rich Ukrainians siphon aid</u> they don't need from those in need has been present since the beginning of the Russian invasion. Some grievances may be partially based on truth, for instance when one-off or temporary benefits for Ukrainians are portrayed as permanent. This report recommends:

- Ensuring and communicating equity in the distribution of resources among Ukrainian and local populations in need.
- Extending programmes that support refugees to more vulnerable local communities.
- Implementing phasing programmes – that is, targeting support to those who are most vulnerable as the war continues.

- Sharing positive stories on social media – for example, about Ukrainian and host community support and solidarity and the contributions that Ukrainian refugees make to host countries.
- Engaging with businesses and organisations to help them make the most of a more diverse workforce.

Political discourses, fuelled by disinformation and historic grievances, have the potential to stir tensions. Russia-aligned stakeholders have been <u>active in spreading disinformation</u> in all five countries. <u>Slovakia and Moldova are particularly vulnerable</u> due to larger pro-Russian populations and greater sympathy for Russia than in comparable European Union (EU) member countries. Historic tensions are being stirred up as well. For example, in Poland, discourses in relation to the <u>V</u>olhynia massacre characterise Ukrainians as anti-Polish nationalists. This report recommends:

- Conducting activities that members of both host and refugee communities enjoy, providing opportunities to get to know one another.
- Implementing strategic communications to reach target audiences and penetrate information bubbles.
- Creating additional free or affordable after-school activities for both communities' children, which also provide avenues for parents to become acquainted.
- Improving the training of search engines and generative artificial intelligence to help reduce bias and potential abuse.
- Organising community dialogues around topics such as

fear of insecurity and war, Ukrainian history and culture, and the realities of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- Producing radio and TV programming to address tensions, including 'edutainment' that uses fiction to help build inter-community understanding.
- Working with journalists to support quality journalism that does not contribute to the spread of incendiary discourses.
- Reviewing school curricula, including in history and digital literacy to help students better understand the past, approach information critically, analyse sources and reduce prejudice.

Many of the concerns that host communities expressed, and, with them, incendiary and misleading narratives, are rooted in longstanding operational issues such as strained healthcare or housing systems. The arrival of Ukrainian refugees has made some of these challenges more visible; it also can speed their resolution, which could improve the situation for both the Ukrainian and host communities. In some cases, different sources of funding might become available. This report recommends:

- Linking work focussed on community cohesion with broader efforts to improve operational concerns in each country.
- Conducting conflict and context analyses to inform programming and communication campaigns.

- Implementing programmes to improve access to services for the local and refugee populations (for example by providing translation services for h ealthcare and mobile clinics).

1. Characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable

This section outlines the characteristics that have increased, and can increase, Ukrainian refugees' vulnerabilities to exploitation, discrimination, and ability to access necessary services. Additional detail on key processes, procedures and characteristics that can increase vulnerabilities is provided below.

Journey stage	Characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable
Legal status, welfare, and benefits	Unaccompanied children face higher risks of abuse and exploitation during displacement.
	Elderly people (especially those travelling alone) and people who experience language barriers or low digital literacy may need additional help since many legal procedures are conducted online.
	People who struggle to register for temporary in person due to disability, cost, or other reasons face delays in accessing services.
	People with incomplete or inaccurate documents are more vulnerable to exploitation as well as delays and barriers to accessing services.
	People with complex temporary protection cases, including third-country nationals, face additional challenges when registering for legal status and accessing benefits.
	Transgender people whose official documents do not match their chosen names and/or appearance may face challenges when registering for legal status.
	Members of the Roma community may not have all required documentation.
	Single-parent families may have difficulty obtaining legal status due to laws in some countries (such as Moldova) that require both parents' consent to decisions concerning their children.
	People experiencing mental health conditions, trauma, or PTSD can face challenges accessing support.
	Elderly people, people with disabilities or chronic physical or mental health needs may face challenges accessing care, particularly if their health records are not in a local language.
	Women seeking sexual and reproductive health support cannot access information easily, especially in Ukrainian.
Healthcare	People who do not speak a local language or English face challenges in navigating a foreign healthcare system.
	People in more remote regions report significantly lower access to hospitals and general healthcare.
	People on lower incomes cannot afford medical treatment that is not publicly funded.
	Elderly people and people with disabilities or mobility issues that require accommodations can face challenges finding appropriate housing.
	People on lower incomes or in more vulnerable and precarious positions may experience challenges in accessing all types of housing.
	Members of the Roma community may encounter prejudice and distrust.
	People with young children, who are perceived as risks to property, can face discrimination from landlords; single parents find this particularly challenging.
	Residents in collective shelters are likely to be amongst the most vulnerable.
Housing	People renting privately without formal leases are more vulnerable to exploitation and precarious living conditions. This is particularly risky for women suffering from abuse.
	Families with children of pre-school age may find it challenging to find kindergarten spots.
	Children who do not speak the local language might be placed in the wrong grade level.
	Children of all ages attending online Ukrainian schools face additional risks of isolation and failure to integrate.
	Children with disabilities or neurodiversities might struggle to find appropriate support.
	Roma children are more likely to live below the poverty line and enrol in school at lower rates.
	People with childcare responsibilities who require flexible working hours can face challenges getting and keeping jobs due to issues accessing childcare.

1. Characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable

Journey stage	Characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable
Education	Highly qualified Ukrainians might struggle to find employment appropriate to their expertise, skills, and qualifications.
	People with disabilities, and those who were not economically active in Ukraine, may face difficulties finding employment in a new country.
	Refugees who rely on employment agencies can be vulnerable to exploitative working conditions.
	People who speak neither the local language nor English may struggle to access work. This is especially the case for people near retirement age.
	People based outside of major cities may find it difficult to find stable and well-paid employment.
	People suffering the effects of trauma, and those with neurodiversities, can struggle to participate in community life, particularly if unable to access mental health support and counselling.
	People separated from family and/or alone in a host country may face additional challenges including poor mental health, loneliness, and isolation.
Employment and income	Elderly people may have difficulty adjusting to a new social environment.
	Children and youth in their late teens, particularly those enrolled in online school and without local language skills, have more limited social connections.
	Refugees who identify as LGBTQIA+ may experience discrimination and feel excluded.
	People living in majority pro-Russian areas can feel isolated, bullied, and unwelcome.
	Refugees reliant on employment agencies
	People who do not speak the local language
	People based outside of major cities
	People near retirement age
Community, social, and political life	People suffering from trauma
	People employed in long-hour jobs
	People separated from family and/or in the host country alone
	Elderly people
	Children and young people in their late teens
	LGBTQIA+ refugees
	People with disabilities and neurodiversities
	Roma refugees
	People who are politically active in supporting the war effort (Slovakia and Moldova)

1. Characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable

Legal status, welfare, and benefits

In a reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, EU countries adopted the Temporary Protection Act, which formalises refugees' right to remain in host countries until March 2024 and entitles beneficiaries to accommodation in temporary placement centres, primary and emergency healthcare, education for children, and social assistance services. Moldova adopted the Act in March 2023. Some members of the Ukrainian population, however, find it challenging to access benefits under temporary protection status due to such factors as mobility issues, family separation, citizenship, flaws in documentation, and language barriers.

Healthcare

Limited information and structural barriers appear to contribute to ongoing challenges in accessing healthcare for some refugees in all countries.

In Romania, for example, particular challenges include registering for a family doctor, since general practitioners are not legally required to register new patients. Along with longer consultation times (due to interpretation and translation, complex patient needs, etc.), this disincentivises doctors to register Ukrainian patients.

Patients were reportedly asked to translate their medical records or re-submit them for evaluation in countries including Romania. This costly and time-consuming process is risky for people with urgent treatment needs for chronic conditions.

Community, social, and political life

The impact of trauma causes many Ukrainian refugees to struggle to participate in social and community life. The effects of trauma can become especially acute for people who do not receive adequate mental health support or counselling.

Overall, it is estimated that 78 percent of refugees from Ukraine experienced familial separation during their refugee journeys. As a result, their familial, social, and communal networks are severely disrupted, and traditional support networks are not in place. Separated family members face challenges that include difficulty accessing support and resources, negative impacts on mental health, and greater risk of exploitation or harm.

Education

A shortage of kindergarten spaces is an ongoing issue in all five countries, especially in larger cities. The issue predates the arrival of refugees from Ukraine. Ukrainians with few or no social-communal networks also struggle to access both informal and formal childcare.

Most Ukrainian children attend online Ukrainian schools due to bureaucratic requirements, language barriers, concerns that Ukraine may not recognise foreign school certifications in the future, and a general preference for online Ukrainian education. Online schooling, however, reduces opportunities to build relationships with local peers, limits language learning, and can be isolating.

Housing

Accommodation for Ukrainian refugees is provided in collective sites, hosted accommodation, the private rental sector, and limited public housing units.

Single-income households and those with low incomes or savings struggle to afford accommodation in the private rental market. Refugees in private accommodation, in turn, face heightened risk of hidden harms such as gender-based violence, exploitation, and arbitrary eviction due to limited visibility. Refugees may be reluctant to report problems to authorities because of legal uncertainties and the fear of not being believed – particularly when filing complaints against locals who are more familiar with the system and language.

Employment and income

Under temporary protection rights, Ukrainian refugees are entitled to access the host country labour market on par with citizens, and countries have established support mechanisms to facilitate employment. However, finding work is reported as one of the primary difficulties for refugees in many countries. Reasons include lack of opportunities and employment support, language barriers, and childcare responsibilities.

2. Misleading or incendiary discourses about refugees

The most common misleading or incendiary narratives fit within six categories.

1. "They're taking what's ours, and we are worse off."

Near-universal discourses on this topic are found in all five countries. 'What's ours' might refer to kindergarten spots, subsidised housing, jobs, healthcare, or financial support.

For example, with the increase in fuel and energy prices and high inflation, discourses in the Czech Republic say, 'Ukrainian refugees are draining our social system at a time when domestic citizens are being crushed by inflation – money can be found for "foreigners", while no one will help 'our people"'.

A workshop participant in Poland explained that their organisation took down a social media post about a health service being started for Ukrainian refugees after it received 500 negative comments within an hour. These included, 'My wife didn't get the help she needed because Ukrainians were prioritised'.

When the Polish Ministry of Health tweeted, 'A campaign to promote the vaccination of children from Ukraine in Poland and support for the supply of vaccines … are the main points of the cooperation agreement signed … [with UNICEF]', responses included:

'5 million Ukrainians entered Polish territory without any health checks … Poles are dying and waiting for years for specialist healthcare, and you are helping foreigners'.

2. "They don't deserve what they get."

Discourses that 'Ukrainian refugees get more than poor locals' or 'they don't deserve what they get' resonate across all five countries. Whilst the discourses above focus on scarce resources, this one refers to merit in receiving support.

For example, comparisons of the circumstances of Ukrainians and Moldovans often contrast the perceived wealth of refugees with the hardships that elderly, unemployed, or disabled Moldovans face. In the Czech Republic, popular discourses claim that refugees don't want to work or, conversely, are economic migrants who come to the country primarily for work. Workshop participants in all countries discussed narratives about Ukrainians being rich and not needing support. Stories of refugees' expensive cars are abundant. Comments online include,

'Poor things. Give them food, some rations to put in those 80-litre tanks, and full medical care, and don't forget to pin a blue and yellow badge to the lapels of their jackets'.

Narratives also claim that refugees do not appreciate the support they receive.

Some workshop participants closely connected social benefits, social security, and a person's economic status with 'merit', which is particularly valued by Slovak and Czech societies. This is the belief that a person's social and economic status is earned, not conferred by others. Therefore, ideas about abuse of social benefits and excessive state support to undeserving individuals can resonate broadly. Messages under this narrative include 'Czechs have to work hard to pay for housing or rent, and Ukrainians get it for free'.

2. Misleading or incendiary discourses about refugees

3. "They're making the economic situation worse."

A third, related discourse focusses more specifically on economic fears and concerns that refugees may exacerbate the economic situation in host countries. For example, in the Czech Republic, posts link the two discourses above to a worsening economic situation. These include, 'Do you understand that they will replace the Czechs? Will they take people's jobs, kick you out of your apartment … That they get everything for free? And that they will make everything more expensive?'.

4. "Ukrainians are making us less secure."

Particularly in Slovakia and Moldova, political discourses relate to the war itself. The 'peace narrative' is especially popular in Slovakia, where a broad range of people claim Ukraine should not prolong suffering by continuing to fight but should negotiate and concede to prevent the humanitarian situation from deteriorating. A continuation of Ukraine's defence can be portrayed as endangering other countries – economically, through soaring inflation, and physically, possibly by bringing the war to their borders.

5. Discourses in some countries relate to historic grievances.

The Volhynia massacre, during which it is estimated that up to 60,000 Poles were killed between 1943 and 1945, stirs up historical grievances by characterising Ukrainians as anti-Polish nationalists.

Similarly, workshop participants in Moldova noted an emerging discourse about Ukrainian nationals who supported Transnistria in the conflict against the Moldovan state in the 1990s. Narratives ask why Moldovans should support Ukrainians when the Ukrainian state was perceived as having fought against Moldovans' interests.

In Romania, a narrative draws on allegedly poorer treatment of Romanian minorities in Ukraine and political concerns about their rights. Since the Russian invasion, coverage of this issue in the Romanian media has increased. This narrative has the potential to influence reduced Romanian support to Ukrainians, leading to apathy or resentment.

6. Discourses in some countries refer to the effects of refugees on culture and 'social fabric'.

The 'Ukrainisation of Poland' discourse refers to the threat that the fabric of Polish national and cultural identity will disintegrate. The narrative's messages include a focus on the alleged prevalence of Ukrainian symbols in public spaces, the Ukrainian language, and the deterioration and potential dissolution of Polish culture. Some narratives speculate about the unification of parts of Ukraine and Poland into 'Ukropolin'. 'Ukropolin' would allegedly introduce large planned resettlements 'at the expense of Polish national identity'.

'Ukrainisation' takes a different meaning in Romania, referring to alleged efforts by the Government of Ukraine to forcibly assimilate Romanians in Ukraine.

This concept is also noted in the Czech Republic, mainly referring to Ukrainian flags that are often displayed on Czech public holidays. An illustrative message is that 'the Ukrainization of the Czech Republic continues. The ceremony of awarding the Memory of the Nation … was accompanied by the Ukrainian anthem'.

Similar assertions have been noted in Romania, related to the discourse that 'Russians and Ukrainians are basically the same'. This viewpoint is partly driven by fewer interactions between Romania and Ukraine than between other neighbouring countries and Ukraine, as well as greater linguistic differences.

3. Potential sources of tensions

The table below details the phenomena, policies, and characteristics that are (or could be) sources of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities. It is important to stress that, at the time of writing, these had not necessarily harmed community cohesion. However, they could do so in the future – for example, should contextual factors change or disinformation actors intentionally magnify the tensions. While the overall risks are generally low, the risk ratings below relate to the risks to community cohesion in each country.

RISK RATING:	🔘 Relatively low	🟢 Relatively medium	🟠 Relatively high

This means that a tension noted as a relatively high risk, for example, might still be unlikely to materialise, but is likely to be a higher risk than other tensions in the country.

Potential sources of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities	Poland	Slovakia	Czech Republic	Romania	Moldova
Legal status, welfare, and benefits					
Perception that Ukrainians abuse the benefits system (for example, entering a country just to obtain cash assistance).	🔘	🟢	🔘	🟢	🟢
Unknown, unclear, or bureaucratic procedures to register for TP and services; perceived lack of information on the rights and obligations of people with TP status.	🔘	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Infrastructure parallel to that of state institutions, created to support Ukrainian refugees.	🔘	🔘	🔘	🔘	🟢
Differences in welcome and support to refugee or migrant groups from countries other than Ukraine.	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔘	🟢
Ukrainian men allegedly cross borders clandestinely and work illegally in low-paid positions.	🔘	🟢	🔘	🔘	🟢
Healthcare					
Additional pressures on already challenged health systems (including long waiting times).	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟢	🟢
Differences in how services are used lead to a perceived abuse (unnecessary ambulance calls, visits to emergency rooms or doctors).	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔘
Ukrainians facing additional challenges or bureaucratic hurdles in receiving healthcare.	🔘	🟢	🔘	🟢	🟢
Housing					
Additional pressures on and rising costs of housing (also in the context of lack of social housing).	🟠	🟢	🟠	🟢	🟢
More support provided to Ukrainian refugees than other refugee groups, such as better housing options.	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Overcrowding of refugees in apartments and state-run dormitories, creating pressures on surrounding communities.	🟢	🟠	🔘	🔘	🟢
Ukrainian refugees (Roma in particular) seen as undesirable tenants.	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Uncertainty regarding length of Ukrainian refugees' stay in host country, leading to lack of commitment to long-term contracts.	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Education					
Ukrainians add to pressure on schools.	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔘
Ukrainians add to pressure on kindergartens and available spaces for children.	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔘
Integration issues in schools and a lack of specialised programmes, resulting in poor social experiences (such as bullying of Ukrainian children, especially in Russian schools).	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟠
Uncertainty regarding length of Ukrainian refugees' stay in host country, leading to poor school attendance and high dropout rates.	🟠	🟢	🔘	🟠	🟢

3. Potential sources of tensions

Potential sources of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities	Poland	Slovakia	Czech Republic	Romania	Moldova
Employment and income					
High inflation pressures on host and refugee communities.	orange	orange	green	orange	orange
Rising inequalities.	green	green	grey	green	green
Low Ukrainian engagement in the labour market and entrepreneurial activities.	grey	green	green	orange	orange
Tensions over distribution of scarce resources amongst disadvantaged local populations and Ukrainians, including poverty among local populations.	green	green	orange	orange	orange
Reduced financial assistance to refugees could lead to higher incidence of poverty and the need for the state (or other organisations) to step in to support vulnerable refugees.	green	green	green	green	green
High and rising unemployment strains host community and Ukrainian refugees and could lead to scapegoating of refugees.	green	green	orange	grey	green
Underemployment of refugees, including difficulties with recognition of qualifications.	green	green	green	green	green
Funds received by NGOs is earmarked for Ukrainians and cannot be used for local populations.	grey	green	green	grey	green
Ukrainians receiving higher benefits than host communities, including poor communication about the amount and sources of support.	grey	green	green	green	green
Ukrainian refugees receiving more support (such as financial support and labour market access) than other refugee groups, including third-country nationals from Ukraine.	green	green	green	green	grey
Uncertainty regarding length of Ukrainian refugees' stay in host country, leading to low job retention.	green	grey	green	grey	green
Brain drain to multilaterals and international NGOs from the public sector.	grey	grey	grey	grey	green
Community, social and political life					
Negative views of Ukrainians provoked by political discourses and parties.	green	orange	green	grey	orange
Lack of integration of Ukrainian refugees into host society.	green	green	green	green	green
Language barriers or not learning local language (lack of opportunity or difficulty of language).	green	green	green	orange	green
Differences between Ukrainians' experiences (including origins in Ukraine, pre- and post-war arrivals, level of integration in host countries, etc.).	green	green	green	green	green
Cultural differences and lack of cultural understanding.	grey	grey	green	green	grey
Lack of understanding of Ukrainian trauma and its consequences.	green	green	green	green	green
Protracted crisis in Transnistria (Moldova).	grey	grey	grey	grey	green
Fear of insecurity and war; refugees seen as making the situation worse.	green	green	orange	green	green
Tensions between Ukrainians and host communities about who started, is responsible for, or should de-escalate the war and how, leading to tensions between host communities and refugees.	grey	orange	grey	grey	green
Historic grievances over the Volhynia massacre in Poland.	orange	grey	grey	grey	grey
Perception of poor or poorer treatment of, for example, Romanian communities in Ukraine than Ukrainian communities in Romania.	grey	grey	grey	green	grey
Locals' fatigue in supporting refugees.	green	green	green	green	green
Expectation of more gratitude from refugees.	green	green	green	green	green
Single incidents that harm people (e.g., car crashes) framing Ukrainians as a danger to host society.	green	green	green	green	grey
Conceptions prior to the Russian invasion of Ukrainians as economic migrants.	green	grey	green	grey	grey
Stereotypes of Ukrainians as 'low-skilled'.	green	grey	green	grey	grey
Xenophobia and discrimination.	green	green	green	green	green

4. Programmatic approach recommendations

This brief and the accompanying report represent overarching recommendations to facilitate the Ukrainian and host communities to get to know one another better and develop strong relationships and trust, as well as operational recommendations for each stage of the refugee journey.

Cross-cutting programmatic approaches

1. Apply conflict and context analyses to the design of programmes, communications, and policies.

At a minimum, the analysis should include (1) a situation profile or overview of relevant historic, economic, security, socio-cultural, and environmental contexts; (2) a causal analysis of conflict factors; (3) a mapping and analysis of stakeholders and their relationships that might directly or indirectly influence or be affected by the topic; and (4) conflict dynamics or drivers of change.

2. Share positive stories about Ukrainian refugees through social media.

Plan the dynamics for the sharing of stories, including which ones to share, by whom, and though what outlets, around the most effective ways to penetrate information bubbles. Develop positive stories and messages around Ukrainians' contributions to the host country's economy and society.

3. Implement strategic communications to reach target audiences and penetrate information bubbles.

Tactics to counteract misleading and incendiary discourses include proactive efforts to 'pre-bunk', or increase society's resilience to misleading content. Tailor these communications to specific audience groups and their interests, values, language, norms, and beliefs.

4. Organise joint activities that enable refugees and host populations to get to know each other.

Such activities are shown to reduce prejudice.

5. Offer additional free or affordable after-school activities.

Such activities can help bridge the gap between the school and work days, enabling mothers to work without seeking childcare or incurring additional costs. They also create opportunities for Ukrainian and local students to get to know one another.

6. Train search engines and generative artificial intelligence to recognise bias and potential abuse.

Digital advances, including in social media, enable disinformation to spread increasingly rapidly. This facilitates the development of echo chambers where anti-refugee biases and abuse can flourish. Some technological advances, such as ChatGPT, incorporate safeguards to limit the spread of negative rumours and abuse, and these can be replicated.

Legal status, welfare, and benefits

1. Phase programmes to focus continually on the most vulnerable.

This involves adapting programmes to target support to more vulnerable people over time after a conflict or natural disaster.

2. Link humanitarian cash to social protection.

Channelling humanitarian support through current national social protection and contributory benefit schemes could help alleviate concerns about inequality. Host country citizens and Ukrainians would be subject to the same type of means of testing and receive benefits through the same systems.

3. Use inclusive beneficiary accountability and feedback mechanisms.

Beneficiary accountability and feedback mechanisms should focus on inclusivity to ensure complaints from the host community and refugees are registered, for instance, within the education system. Such mechanisms could be linked with a wider effort to regularly monitor tensions at the community level.

Healthcare

1. Streamline hiring to involve skilled Ukrainians in the health sector.

Programmes could involve outreach to identify qualified Ukrainians, processes to speed recognition of skills and qualifications, tailored language training, and placement in national hospitals and clinics.

2. Increase the number of interpreters

to make it easier for doctors to communicate with patients. This is particularly important in Romania, given the linguistic challenges that Ukrainian refugees face in the country.

Housing

1. Provide viable opportunities for people to live, work, and go to school outside of major cities.

2. Support social intermediaries in rental processes.

In such processes, the intermediary guarantees rent payments and minimum tenancy standards to owners, who in turn discount rents and guarantee stable, affordable, and quality accommodation to tenants.

4. Programmatic approach recommendations

Education

1. Provide language support for Ukrainian children.

2. Embed mental health support into the education system.

3. Train teachers and educational staff to better support Ukrainian students.

Training teachers to support Ukrainian refugees could help mitigate conflict between Ukrainian and local children, provide support for refugees' psychosocial issues, and tailor pedagogical methods to language learners.

4. Provide spaces in schools, libraries, and community centres for refugee children to follow the Ukrainian curriculum online in a social setting.

This could foster social interaction and bonding amongst Ukrainian students and local students. This approach could also enable parents to work more easily.

Employment and income

1. Establish employment creation programmes with flexible work structures.

Such programmes could focus on areas with labour shortfalls, such as healthcare and construction. They could be combined with language support, more accessible job advertisements, interview support, and a streamlined process for recognising qualifications.

2. Increase day care provision, possibly by employers.

Possibilities include (1) subsidising care for refugee children, (2) assisting Ukrainian refugees to start day care centres (supporting both businesses and day care needs), and (3) encouraging businesses to provide day care, along with conflict sensitivity training.

3. Provide community facilitators and peer support groups for parents.

To ease their entry into the labour market, provide coaching, and support network-building for new arrivals.

4. Increase job advertising in Ukrainian, or offer language and job counselling support programmes.

To enable refugees to respond to advertisements and interview for jobs.

Develop codes of conduct for organisations that work in politics, data, and media.

To limit the effects of disinformation.

6. Train business leaders and managers in conflict sensitivity.

Emphasising conflict analysis, communication skills, and cultural awareness. For example, pre-investment considerations should include a conflict analysis that considers matters such as how the investment will affect host and refugee communities and identification of suppliers.

7. Introduce and publicise incentives to start businesses.

8. Engage with businesses and organisations to make the most of a more diverse workforce.

This includes training businesses on working in diverse environments and identifying and addressing potential bias in recruiting processes.

9. Streamline procedures to recognise professional qualifications.

Particularly in key sectors.

10. Educate employers and job-seekers about decent labour conditions, including employment agency contract risks

Training about decent labour conditions and contract types, risks, and mitigation could reduce vulnerabilities.

Community, social, and political life

1. Establish an infrastructure to support refugees' dialogue with local and national governments.

2. Foster community dialogues.

Community dialogue programming brings members of a community together to exchange information, experiences, and stories around specific topics.

3. Address tensions through radio and TV programming.

That focusses, for example, on understanding the refugee experience and fosters intercultural understanding.

4. Work with the media to avoid spreading incendiary messages.

This includes tracking disinformation sources, sharing intelligence, and enhancing information literacy.

5. Review school curricula, including in history and digital literacy.

History education can play a role in helping students better understand the past, approach information critically, analyse sources, and reduce prejudice and discrimination.

6. Increase opportunities for Ukrainians and host community members to meet and learn each other's languages.

About Palladium

Palladium is a leading implementer of international development programmes. Working in over 90 countries and across a broad range of sectors, we offer donor agencies a balance of global scale and in-house technical expertise. Aid is a critical component of our shared pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals, and we bring our knowledge of the private sector to bear in designing solutions that use aid to spark lasting social and economic development.

About IFES

IFES advances democracy for a better future. We collaborate with civil society, public institutions, and the private sector to build democracies that deliver for everyone. Since 1987, IFES has worked in more than 145 countries, from developing to mature democracies. IFES is a global, nonpartisan organization based in Arlington, Virginia, USA, and registered as a non-profit organisation [501(c)(3)] under the United States tax code.

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