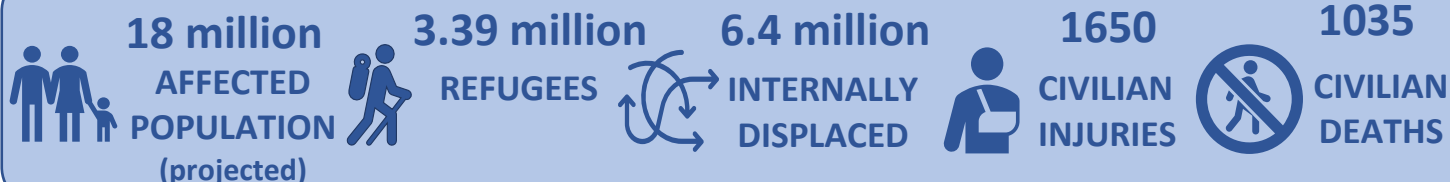


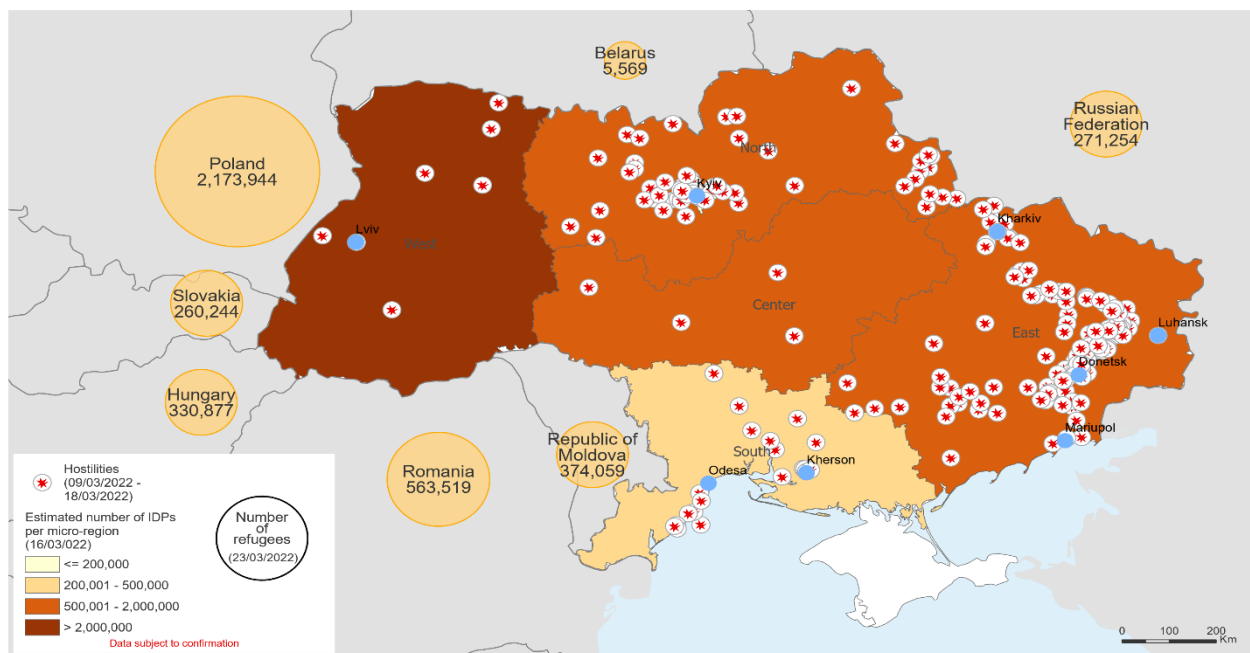
# Emergency in Ukraine

External Situation Report #4, published 24 March 2022  
Reporting period: 17–23 March 2022



## 1. SITUATION UPDATE

**Figure 1. Distribution of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in Ukraine and neighbouring countries as of 23 March 2022**



The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of WHO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted and dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

Data Source: World Health Organization, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, ACLED, International Organization for Migration  
Map Production: WHO Health Emergencies Programme  
Map Projection: WGS 1984 World Mercator

### 1.1 Population displacement and refugees

The overall situation continues to deteriorate across Ukraine. To date, over 18 million people have been affected by the conflict. According to the latest government data compiled by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over three million refugees have now left Ukraine for surrounding countries, with 59% of them in Poland followed by Romania (15%). It is estimated that over four million people could leave Ukraine and seek protection and support across the region.

## 1.2 Current risk assessment and priority public health concerns in Ukraine

### 1.2.1 Access to health care

There are many challenges to accessing health care, with active hostilities and a lack of public transport restricting movement. More than 300 health-care facilities are in areas experiencing active hostilities and approximately 600 facilities are located within 10 kilometres of ongoing conflict, leaving the health system vulnerable to infrastructural damages and severe disruptions of critical services. WHO has verified 64 attacks on health care since 24 February, resulting in 37 injuries and 15 deaths. Further attacks are being verified. Interruptions in supply of medicines have been reported in cities with active hostilities. Some areas, such as the city of Mariupol in the south, have suffered critical shortages of medical supplies.

The overall number of beds available for patients with COVID-19 has decreased by 27% from 23 February to 23 March; differences are seen between oblasts, with the largest decrease (80%) reported in the Luhansk oblast, followed by the Volyn (69%) and Chernihiv (56%) oblasts. Furthermore, the number of beds occupied by COVID-19 patients has decreased nationally by 83%, reflecting potential challenges in accessing hospitals, limited data reporting, and a potential decrease in actual hospitalizations following the peak of the Omicron wave earlier in February.



A visit to one of the Ukraine refugee reception points in Poland. The WHO team met Yana, whose young daughter Olha will soon need her second dose of the diphtheria vaccine. Ensuring access to routine immunization is vital to keep everyone safe from preventable diseases. © WHO/Agata

## 1.2.2 Priority public health concerns

Current health priorities are described below, while WHO awaits a response from the Government of Ukraine regarding the collection of health emergency data from health facilities.

|   |   |
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| Conflict-related trauma and injuries                | <p>Between 24 February and 23 March 2022, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recorded at least 2685 civilian casualties in Ukraine, including 1035 deaths.</p> <p>Civilian casualties continue to be caused by the use of explosive weapons. Limited access to health care may increase the risk of wound infections and trauma-related deaths. Furthermore, given the previous high rates of over-the-counter antimicrobials and limited access to treatment, the potential for multidrug-resistant infections remains a big concern.</p>  |
| Maternal and newborn health                         | <p>It is estimated that 80 000 women will give birth in Ukraine over the next three months. Disruptions to antenatal care may increase the risk of obstetric and neonatal complications. There is also a reduced ability to manage obstetric complications, including performing procedures such as caesarean sections, and providing neonatal intensive care due to challenges in accessing health care, limited power and oxygen supply, and attacks on health-care centres, including maternity hospitals.</p>   |
| Food security and nutrition                         | <p>The large-scale population displacement, damage to agricultural infrastructure, disruption to markets and food supply chains are likely to have significant impacts on food security and agriculture-based livelihoods in Ukraine, specifically in rural communities, home to one third of the population (12.6 million people). It is estimated that over two million children under the age of five and pregnant and breastfeeding women in Ukraine are in need of life-saving nutrition assistance. One of the key issues of importance is to ensure breastmilk substitutes and distribution.</p>   |
| Risk of emergence and spread of infectious diseases | <p><b>Ongoing epidemics</b></p> <p>The incidence of COVID-19 continues to decrease, with 27 671 new cases and 384 new deaths reported between 17 and 23 March. However, these numbers should be interpreted carefully as from 23 February to 23 March, the seven-day average number of polymerase chain reaction tests and antigen-rapid diagnostic tests has dropped significantly, with a 96% (from 42 460 to 1634) and 88% (from 51 484 to 6047) decrease respectively suggesting underreporting of COVID-19 cases and deaths. Private laboratories in most of the regions in Ukraine did not report or conduct any tests. The vaccination uptake remains low, particularly in vulnerable populations, and the disruption in testing and treatment puts those most vulnerable at increased risk of severe illness and death.</p> <p><b>Epidemic risk</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor ventilation and overcrowding increase the risk of spread of respiratory infections, including COVID-19. Lack of access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) heightens the risk of emergence of foodborne and waterborne diseases. Of note, an outbreak of cholera was identified in Ukraine in 2011 in the Mariupol region, an area currently experiencing armed conflict. A single case of cholera was also detected in the Zaporizhzhia oblast in 2016, highlighting the risk of cholera outbreak.</li> <li>• Suboptimal vaccination coverage for routine and childhood immunizations, including measles and poliomyelitis (polio), increases the risk of re-emergence and transmission of vaccine-preventable diseases.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Notably, two cases of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) were reported in Ukraine in 2021. On 1 February 2022, a national supplemental polio immunization campaign targeting nearly 140 000 children was launched, but due to the current situation it has been deprioritized and significantly slowed down. Surveillance activities to detect and report new cases have also</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

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|---|---|
|   | <p>been disrupted, increasing the risk of undetected spread of the disease among vulnerable populations.<sup>1</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ On 22 March 2022, media reported three suspected cases of measles detected among Ukrainian refugees arriving to Romania and staying in camp settings. WHO has verified these suspected measles cases were not among the Ukrainian refugee population, but Romanian residents, and were eventually laboratory confirmed. To date, WHO is not aware of any confirmed measles cases among the Ukrainian refugee population in Romania. This alert highlights the importance of strong surveillance to detect and investigate suspected (measles) cases and of providing vaccines to all unimmunized persons—refugee or domestic—to ensure access to health care services.</li> <li>• With the arrival of spring and rising temperatures, disrupted access to WASH and damage to homes may increase the risk of vector-borne diseases such as West Nile fever and tick-borne encephalitis. As of 18 March, an estimated 120 000 people do not have access to water in the Luhansk oblast, while around 460 000 across non-Government-controlled areas are short of water supply.</li> <li>• Lack of access to contraception and increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) increases the risk of sexually transmitted infections.</li> </ul> |
| Management of chronic diseases  | <p>The provision of medicines and care for patients with chronic communicable diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis (TB) and with noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including but not limited to cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, chronic respiratory disease, epilepsy and cancer, remains challenging. Interruptions in treatment for NCDs can result in life-threatening complications. Long-term disruption to treatment for HIV or TB may result in the development of drug resistance and poor disease outcomes. Meeting the medical needs of people with long-term illnesses such as mental illness, renal disease, diabetes, and cancer in Ukraine and neighbouring countries is a key priority.</p> <p>Outreach to older people in remote areas, who belong to the most vulnerable groups, and provision of basic commodities including water and food, and urgently needed medicines to continue treatment of chronic diseases, is hampered by security concerns and destruction of infrastructure.</p>   |
| Environmental health risks  | <p>There are four operational nuclear power plants (NPPs) in Ukraine and a decommissioned NPP at Chernobyl. There were concerns about the nuclear safety of the Chernobyl and Zaporizhzhia NPP facilities following recent power outages, and the risk to health, safety and well-being of the workers of these facilities. Power is reported to have been restored and workers are allowed to rotate. As of 21 March there has been no documented increase in radiation levels reported in Ukraine around any of the NPPs or sites. However, the risk of a nuclear emergency as a result of direct damage due to shelling of NPPs or failure of a reactor's power supply, or the inability to provide regular maintenance, remains a concern, as stated by the <a href="#">UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs on 11 March 2022</a> and as underlined in <a href="#">IAEA's daily updates</a>.</p>  |
| Mental health and psychosocial health                                   | <p>As the conflict continues, the risk of development or exacerbation of mental health problems including anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and depression increases.</p>   |
| Protection issues: risk of human trafficking and escalated risk of SGBV | <p>As people leave their homes to flee the conflict, there is a risk of human trafficking. There are numerous children and young women travelling unaccompanied to countries receiving refugees, who are at particular risk. The risk of SGBV increases during periods of conflict as a result of insecurity and absence of law. Most of those fleeing Ukraine are women and children, often travelling alone and therefore particularly vulnerable.</p>  |

<sup>1</sup>Global Polio Eradication Initiative: <https://polioeradication.org/ukraine/>



### 1.3 Current risk assessment and priority public health concerns among refugee populations in refugee-receiving countries

The [Public Health Situation Analysis](#) (PHSA) for refugee-receiving countries was published on 17 March and contains a detailed analysis of the key public health priorities and health risks faced by refugees leaving Ukraine. The health threats are similar to those for Ukraine but need to be interpreted in the light of the population demographics (with proportionally more children and women than for the general population in Ukraine) and factors linked to displacement that may worsen health conditions or increase the risk of disease.

## 2. WHO ACTIONS IN UKRAINE TO DATE

### Leadership and coordination

- WHO has reviewed the priority needs for staff supporting the response both in Ukraine and remotely.
- WHO continues to engage with the Government of Ukraine to allow direct access to health facility data.

### Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

- **RCCE material production, including health information and tracking health information gaps and misinformation**
  - Weekly social listening is in place, using various digital tools to monitor priority health information needs, sentiment, priority misinformation and disinformation, and information voids.
  - Messages and materials on priority health topics are in process (available on [Canto](#), including on mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), preventing and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, and attacks on health, and maternal health).
- **Sociobehavioural insights**
  - The RCCE and Behavioural and Cultural Insights teams are developing a rapid message testing protocol to improve the effectiveness of RCCE public health advice to at-risk communities. The first pilot will take place next week.
- **Civil society organizations (CSOs)**
  - A community engagement mission is ongoing in Poland and the Republic of Moldova, from 22 March to 1 April. The mission aims to assess civil society capacities and capabilities to respond to the arrival of large numbers of refugees from Ukraine, as well as explore opportunities for dialogue between health authorities and civil society.
- **Partners**
  - WHO is coordinating RCCE efforts in collaboration with UNHCR, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN). Coordination will also include Collective Service partners who focus on risk communication and community engagement expertise.

### External communications

- The following stories were published on 17–23 March:
  - [Poland: Understanding the mental health and psychosocial needs of Ukraine's refugees – Olga's story](#)
  - [Running the health response to Ukraine's emergency: Interview with WHO Representative Jarno Habicht](#)
  - [Hungary: the importance of mental health and psychosocial support to refugees and displaced people – one mother's story of a life upended through the Ukraine war](#)
  - [Prioritizing the health of refugees and migrants: an urgent, necessary plan of action for countries and regions in our interconnected world](#)

- [Press releases](#)
  - [“Ukraine: 28 days of war, 64 verified attacks on health care, and 18 million people affected”](#), published on 24 March.

## Health information

### Publications

- A [PHSA](#) for the refugee-hosting countries was published on 17 March with key health risks, recommendations and priority considerations due to population displacement to neighbouring countries.

### Activities

- WHO is developing a checklist to assess the current status and needs of the regional Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. This checklist will be presented to the Communicable Disease Technical Working Group.
- WHO is supporting the development of tools for surveillance, including a compendium of communicable diseases/syndromes of which those who are internally displaced may be at risk.
- The mapping of health facilities and other key information is ongoing, with WHO supporting the assessment of health facilities. A needs assessment tool has been developed, and as of 18 March 125 health facilities have submitted data.
- Event-based surveillance activities continue for the various potential hazards. These include the use of Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources.
- Health facility baseline data have been established, including the types of service packages and number of patients before the conflict, including data from the National Health Service of Ukraine.

## Health operations

- Support was provided to the Ministry of Health (MoH) in establishing a referral pathway for patients in need of medical care within Ukraine and their transfer to countries in the European Union.
- Developed a package to prepare and respond to chemical exposure, targeted to Ukraine.
- Coordinated the deployment of 15 Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) of experts to provide support for Ukrainian hospitals and evacuations of patients from different regions.
- Compiled a list of health-care resources requested by the MoH, such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and mobility aids.
- Mapping of the needs for insulin, renal dialysis, cancer treatment is ongoing to determine the locations and types of support needed to address supply requirements and identify needs for medical evacuations.
- Psychiatric hospitals are being integrated into the Health Cluster's health facility needs mapping. The MHPSS team continues to support the MoH in the assessment process to include not only psychiatric needs but also basic needs at the residential facilities.

## Supplies and logistics

- On 8 March five metric tonnes of trauma and emergency medical supplies were delivered to Kyiv. Furthermore, as of 22 March WHO has delivered about 150 metric tonnes of medical supplies to support trauma, surgical and primary health care in Ukraine. The shipments include oxygen, insulin, surgical supplies, anaesthetics, and transfusion kits to collect, test and safely transfuse blood. Additionally, defibrillators, monitors, rehydration salts, gauze and bandages, have also been delivered.
- On 22 March WHO delivered 25 000 vials of anti-tetanus immunoglobulin to Lviv. The distribution of life-saving medical supplies to various locations in Ukraine hardest hit by the conflict is ongoing. WHO has successfully delivered trauma and emergency medical supplies to: Cherkasy, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv, Odesa, Sumy, Zaporizhzhia and Zhytomyr.
- On 18 March a United Nations (UN) humanitarian convoy arrived safely in the city of Sumy. It included a WHO truck carrying five metric tonnes of trauma (TESK) and interagency emergency medical supplies (IEHK).
  - On 22 March 3.6 metric tonnes of trauma and emergency supplies were successfully delivered to the city of Kharkiv.
  - Additional shipments of medical supplies have been dispatched to various destinations across Ukraine.

- WHO has also sent medical supplies to nongovernmental organization (NGO) partners in Ukraine, including Médecins Sans Frontières and INTERSOS, to support the emergency response.
- WHO has issued guidelines for supply donations to support the Ukraine emergency response, including a list of critical supplies for which support is urgently needed. The [Guidance Note for Medical Supply Donations](#) is now available on the WHO website.

### Operational partnerships

- EMT Coordination Cells have been established to coordinate operations in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries. More than 10 EMTs are present in Ukraine and Poland and another cell has been established in the Republic of Moldova to coordinate EMTs with a focus on MHPSS and primary care.
- The teams in Ukraine are focused on providing services to IDPs, as well as managing trauma and providing rehabilitation and medical evacuation.
- More than 66 individuals from 24 partner institutions have expressed interest in being deployed through the GOARN mechanism to support the response in Ukraine and affected countries in the area of case management, coordination, data management, epidemiology, lab, operations management, Infection prevention and control (IPC), RCCE and information management.
- On 18 March a Technical Working Group on Displacement and Health was launched in coordination with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
- The Health Cluster continues to engage with both national and international NGOs to support health activities in Ukraine.

### Funding

- To support the response efforts, WHO has so far released US\$ 10.2 million from the Contingency Fund for Emergencies (CFE). Additional funds may be released from the CFE to address increasing needs.
- To date, WHO has only received US\$ 9.6 million against its appeal for US\$ 57.5 million over the next three months.
- WHO would like to thank Norway, Switzerland and the UN Central Emergency Response Fund for their timely contributions. However, WHO continues to face a huge funding gap that prevents it from delivering urgent life-saving assistance



The largest hospital in the Polish border town of Przemyśl tackled SARS-CoV-2 for two years. © WHO/Uka Borregaard

### 3. SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES IN REFUGEE-RECEIVING COUNTRIES

Countries neighbouring or close to Ukraine have triggered emergency response systems for receiving refugees. In other countries WHO is strengthening operations to support the needs of refugees. Updates on the situation in these countries and key WHO actions are given below.

#### Czechia

##### **Situation update**

- Between 24 February and 23 March 2022 approximately 300 000 Ukrainian refugees entered Czechia.
- The Ministry of Interior has declared a limit of 250 000 people for whom the country is able to provide a basic standard of living. The state's refugee absorption capacities are therefore at their limit, with about 300 000 refugees currently in the country.
- A package of legislation aimed at helping Ukrainian refugees to integrate in Czechia came into force on 22 March. Collectively known as Lex Ukraine, it covers access to health care, among other benefits.

##### **WHO actions to date**

- The WHO Regional Director for Europe will visit Czechia from 24 to 25 March to hold discussions with the MoH and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and country efforts in the health sector.
- WHO has negotiated with the Ministry of Interior, Department of Health Facilities, regarding the provision of 140 NCD supply kits.

#### Hungary

##### **Situation update**

- Between 24 February and 23 March 2022 approximately 330 877 Ukrainian refugees entered Hungary. Hungary has the fourth largest number of refugees arriving from Ukraine, accounting for 9% of the total refugee population.
- Upon registration for temporary protection all refugees are granted full access to health services in the Hungarian health care system.

##### **WHO actions to date**

- WHO is mapping cancer treatment facilities within Hungary as part of a broader development strategy in the WHO European Region to provide services for cancer patients arriving from Ukraine.
- WHO continues to engage with the Government across multiple sectors, including health, foreign affairs, interior, and the National Emergency Command Centre.
- WHO deployed a MHPSS coordination focal point to Hungary to support the MHPSS response with partners in Romania and Slovakia. A technical forum is being established to serve as a technical discussion platform for MHPSS actors.
- WHO is regularly participating in UN partner coordination meetings and will co-chair a working group on health with the Hungarian health authorities.

#### Poland

##### **Situation update**

- Between 24 February and 23 March 2022 approximately 2 173 944 Ukrainian refugees entered Poland, accounting for 59% of the total refugee population. Warsaw has received and accommodated approximately 300 000 Ukrainian refugees while Kraków has received and accommodated approximately 130 000 Ukrainian refugees since 24 February.
- Poland has published a law that requires Ukrainian children intending to stay in Poland longer than three months to be immunized according to the Polish vaccination calendar.



- The Polish Government has allocated nearly US\$ 2 billion for health services from the Polish Health Care Fund.
- A new law was passed by the Polish Government stipulating open access to practise medicine in Poland for Ukrainian doctors and nurses.

#### **WHO actions to date**

- WHO is participating in meetings with CSOs on 22–28 March 2022, including meetings with international NGOs (Hope, CARE, MEDAIR, Polish Red Cross) and Polish civil societies to get an overview of needs and to check support for the future.
- WHO implemented the Blue Dot concept jointly with UNICEF. Blue dots include cash points and distribution of WHO-prepared health information leaflets and health questionnaires for refugees.
- WHO is working with UNICEF on scaling up childhood vaccinations for refugees in Poland.
- WHO is assessing specific drug needs for procurement in Poland and in neighbouring countries.
- WHO and UNHCR are working jointly on the MHPSS component and the health referral component to support refugees in finding the care or treatment they need. The MHPSS working group continues to operate with UNHCR co-leading alongside WHO with over 50 members from different agencies. Meetings have been held with relevant MoH officials in Poland to provide support and guidance on what is needed for MHPSS.

### **Republic of Moldova**

#### **Situation update**

- Between 24 February and 23 March 2022 approximately 374 059 refugees entered the Republic of Moldova.
- As of 17 March a total of 102 centres authorized by the Government to host refugees were functional – with a total capacity of 9245. They were occupied at 46% (4270 individuals).

#### **WHO actions to date**

- The WHO Regional Director for Europe visited the Republic of Moldova on 22 March 2022.
- As of 17 March there are 16 EMTs registered by the MoH. Of these, seven EMTs were authorized and designated to work in the refugee centres.
- WHO technical experts conducted a rapid assessment of WASH facilities in three temporary placement centres for refugees (Manej, MoldExpo and Popeasca) and at the Palanca point of entry from 14 to 17 March 2022. The purpose of the assessment was to take stock of the prevailing WASH conditions at the refugee centres and to provide recommendations on any potential improvements and interventions to improve the health, well-being and dignity of the residents.
- WHO has delivered a new batch of PPE, disinfectants and medical devices to the MoH to increase the infection prevention and control response capacities.
- A WHO nutrition specialist participated in a field visit to points of entry with the UNHCR nutrition surge team.
- A new batch of WHO-standard IEHK, TESK and NCD medical supplies, as well as 300 000 units of rapid antigen tests for the detection of COVID-19 arrived in the Republic of Moldova on 18–19 March 2022.
- Ten trauma backpacks arrived in the Republic of Moldova on 21 March 2022.

### **Romania**

#### **Situation update**

Between 24 February and 23 March 2022 approximately 563 519 Ukrainian refugees entered Romania. However, most are in transit to other countries, primarily to Hungary (47%) and Bulgaria (19%). Overall, the occupancy rate at the accommodation centres is 23.8%. As of 22 March 49 refugees have received medical care in hospitals.

### **WHO actions to date**

- WHO continues to liaise with UNHCR and partners within the interagency coordination model and attended the first interagency coordination meeting on 18 March. Through this group WHO will contribute to the development of the refugees' needs assessment survey.
- WHO will co-lead the health working group with the MoH.
- WHO discussed vaccination needs with the National Institute of Public Health and the MoH. A stock estimate for additional vaccines needed was shared with WHO and UNICEF.
- On 24 March MHPSS experts met with focal points from partner agencies and the Government of Romania. In Romania WHO is leading the MHPSS work.

## **Slovakia**

### **Situation update**

- Between 24 February and 23 March 2022 approximately 260 244 Ukrainian refugees entered Slovakia. There are three open border crossings between Slovakia and Ukraine: Ubl'a-Malyj Bereznyj, Veľké Slemence-Mali Selmenci, Vyšné Nemecké-Užhorod. The Veľké Slemence border crossing is open only for pedestrians, with the remaining two open for cars.
- In Slovakia, refugee health care is being provided for free for the first 30 days. It is paid for by the state through the General Health Insurance Company.
- There are 17 hospitals in eastern Slovakia dedicated to the treatment of refugees arriving from Ukraine.
- Psychologists working at the border have reported treating an increasing number of people experiencing panic attacks.

### **WHO actions to date**

WHO is engaged with the national health authorities and with UNHCR in the overall UN coordination mechanism

## **Preparedness and operational readiness (national and neighbouring countries)**

- WHO continues to work across Ukraine and neighbouring countries prepositioning supplies, training health and front-line workers, and developing contingency plans in collaboration with other UN agencies and health partners.
- As events unfold, WHO continues to assess the health situation including elaborating the different possible scenarios to have response plans ready and is in standby position to support neighbouring countries receiving refugees to provide essential health services and public health interventions.

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