



# POLISH ACADEMIA EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Managing large-scale  
inflow of Ukrainian refugees  
in higher education  
institutions in Poland  
2022-2024

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

This publication is a result of the Erasmus+ AGILE project (“Higher education resilience in refugee crises: forging social inclusion through capacity building, civic engagement and skills recognition”, <http://www.agileproject-erasmus.eu/>), whose aim is to increase the resilience of HE systems to address the ongoing needs of refugees through social participation and skills recognition.

The AGILE project aims to enrich HE curricula by proposing new pedagogical designs that encourage grassroots and digitally enhanced actions in both formal and informal learning environments.

The project is coordinated by the University Paris 8. The consortium consists of six universities (University Paris 8, Bordeaux Montaigne, University, University of Hamburg, University of Ljubljana, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Kaunas University of Technology), one think tank (Polish Rectors Foundation), and one business partner (Web2Learn) specialised in open recognition systems and social learning.

## CONSORTIUM

Partner	Name	Short name	Country
 <p>UNIVERSITÉ <b>PARIS 8</b> DES CRÉATIONS</p>	University Paris 8	UP8	France
 <p>Université <b>BORDEAUX</b> <b>MONTAIGNE</b></p>	University Bordeaux Montaigne	UBM	France
 <p>Web2Learn Open. social learning</p>	Web2Learn	W2L	Greece
 <p><b>UNIVERZA</b> <b>V LJUBLJANI</b></p>	University of Ljubljana	UL	Slovenia
 <p>FUNDACJA REKTORÓW POLSKICH</p>	Polish Rectors Foundation	PRF	Poland
 <p>НАЦІОНАЛЬНИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ ЛЬВІВСЬКА ПОЛІТЕХНІКА 1818</p>	Lviv Polytechnic National University	LPNU	Ukraine
 <p><b>UH</b> Universität Hamburg DER FORSCHUNG   DER LEHRE   DER BILDUNG</p>	University of Hamburg	UH	Germany
 <p><b>ktu</b> kaunas university of technology 1922</p>	Kaunas University of Technology	KTU	Lithuania

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following list presents the acronyms used in the deliverable in alphabetical order.

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
CRASP	Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IDP	Internally displaced person
IDUB	Initiative “Research Excellence – Research Intensive Universities in Poland”
NAWA	Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange
NMT	Ukrainian external examination for school leavers
NCN	National Science Centre Poland
NCBR	National Centre for Research and Development
PAN	Polish Academy of Sciences
PRF	Polish Rectors Foundation
RGNiSW	National Council of Science and Higher Education in Poland
UNHCR	The UN Refugee Agency
URHEIU	The Union of Rectors of HEIs of Ukraine





## Executive summary

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Polish academia was among those communities that immediately addressed the challenges that emerged due to the outbreak of the full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Since then, it has remained particularly supportive of Ukrainian refugees, ordinary citizens who bring also a dynamic academic background (students, doctoral candidates and researchers). Acting as unilaterally as institutions but also as a collaborative, collegial network established by the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland, Polish universities, research institutions, funding organisations and the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education (previously Ministry of Education and Science) managed to handle this unprecedented situation. Collective leadership demonstrated during the crisis by the academic community helped to establish effective mechanisms, legal regulations and platform for communication and sharing the experience. Engagement of the National Rectors' Conference – Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP) since day one ensured a comprehensive and coordinated approach to tackling the crisis that allowed all stakeholders (e.g. including Polish Academy of Sciences, Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange NAWA, research funding agencies National Science Centre NCN, National Centre for Research and Development NCBR) to exchange the knowledge and good practices and establish efficient communication network to ensure better support for Ukrainian refugees in Polish universities.

Polish Universities' first response to the war took the form of clear statements in solidarity with Ukraine, condemning the Russian war of aggression and termination of collaboration with Russian institutions. Polish higher education institutions immediately launched their aid activities focusing on two main directions: first, acting as a humanitarian hub providing help to refugees from Ukraine, and second, supporting by all possible means their students, doctoral candidates and researchers of Ukrainian origin from before the war. One of the biggest challenges in this regard was the remaining of some of those students on the territory of Ukraine at the moment of the outburst of the full-scale war. According to data from CRASP, unfortunately, not all of them returned and continued their studies, due to security issues, voluntary mobilisation, formal restrictions for male students or even death or injury due to the war. Polish universities also assisted third-countries foreign students at Ukrainian universities to get evacuated from Ukraine and transported to their countries.

Emergency management was organised in formal ways, such as establishing a crisis group as a grassroots movement. Strong leadership of senior university leaders (rectors and chancellors) was a distinctive feature of the response strategy. Additionally, Polish universities established and implemented special programmes to support Ukrainian students and researchers, including exemption or reduction of tuition fees, language courses, and dedicated support services and projects.

Furthermore Polish universities engaged in crisis response actions on the local and regional level by providing accommodation in the student dormitories and necessary aid to the refugees as ordinary citizens, mostly women with children. Polish universities were engaged



in the organisation of the State External Examination, so-called NMT for Ukrainian school leavers in Poland all around the country, at the request of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and facilitated by the Ministry of Education and Science (from 2023 – Ministry of Science and Higher Education) in Poland.

Moreover Polish universities and research institutions provided academic support that accounted for over 300 000 000 Polish zlotys that covered waiving or reduction of tuition fees and dormitory fees, salaries for displaced researchers, support to Ukrainian universities, etc. Together with all main funders' programmes, the Polish academic response is about half a billion Polish zlotys (more than 100,000 000 Euro) for 2022-2024.

Summing it up, the experience of Polish universities in managing an emergency influx of refugees highlights best practices for crisis response in higher education that can be transferred and applied by other EU HEIs as well (or a sentence that emphasises the value of the Polish experience and actions for other EU HEIs). Strong leadership and the active involvement of university administration have been crucial in mobilising academic communities for effective aid. Pre-existing support for Ukrainian students and staff, including financial assistance, psychological counselling, and legal aid, proved essential in addressing immediate needs. Developing a comprehensive crisis management strategy and establishing a dedicated crisis team enable swift and coordinated actions. Legal adaptations, centralised decision-making, and clear communication help maintain efficiency and transparency. Language courses and psychological support facilitate refugee integration, while flexible funding and technological solutions enhance the organisation of aid. Lastly, collaboration with external partners, including NGOs and international institutions, strengthens the overall response and supports long-term strategies for refugee integration in higher education across Europe. These measures contribute to a more resilient and inclusive academic environment.



# Introduction. General background

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On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a brutal full-scale invasion of Ukraine, triggering one of Europe's largest refugee and humanitarian crises since World War II. The military aggression forced millions of Ukrainians to abandon their homes in search of safety, with many seeking refuge inside the country (becoming internally displaced persons, IDPs) or moving to neighbouring countries and beyond. According to the UNHCR reports, by the end of 2022, *“an estimated 5.9 million people were internally displaced by the war, while nearly 5.7 million refugees and asylum-seekers from Ukraine were recorded across Europe”*<sup>1</sup>.

Poland naturally emerged as a key destination, not only because of its geographical position as the biggest escape window from Ukraine to Europe, to the world but also because of the substantial number of Ukrainian labour migrants residing and working in Poland before the war (appr. 1 500 000). Such a large number of Ukrainian migrants (with a high share of male migrants) was not only due to economic reasons but as a consequence of active higher education policy attracting Ukrainian students and the first wave of forced migrants after the annexation of Crimea and military actions on Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in 2014<sup>2</sup>.

Polish – Ukrainian state border overcrowded with millions of Ukrainian refugees<sup>3</sup> with children and their pets became a symbol of this human tragedy, and Polish reception centres at the train stations or bus stations since day one showed the scale of challenges affecting the European countries by the Russian aggression. By the end of the invasion's first year, more than 1,000,000 Ukrainians found their refuge in Poland, and this dynamic remained the same or even decreased to 985 104 as of December 2024<sup>4</sup>. The influx of refugees from Ukraine was quite massive during the first period – between February and June 2022 (see figure 1), with the maximum maximum number of refugees arriving in Poland being reached in March 2022<sup>5</sup>. It is worth mentioning that a massive influx of refugees was happening during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, and legal solutions should have taken this into account.

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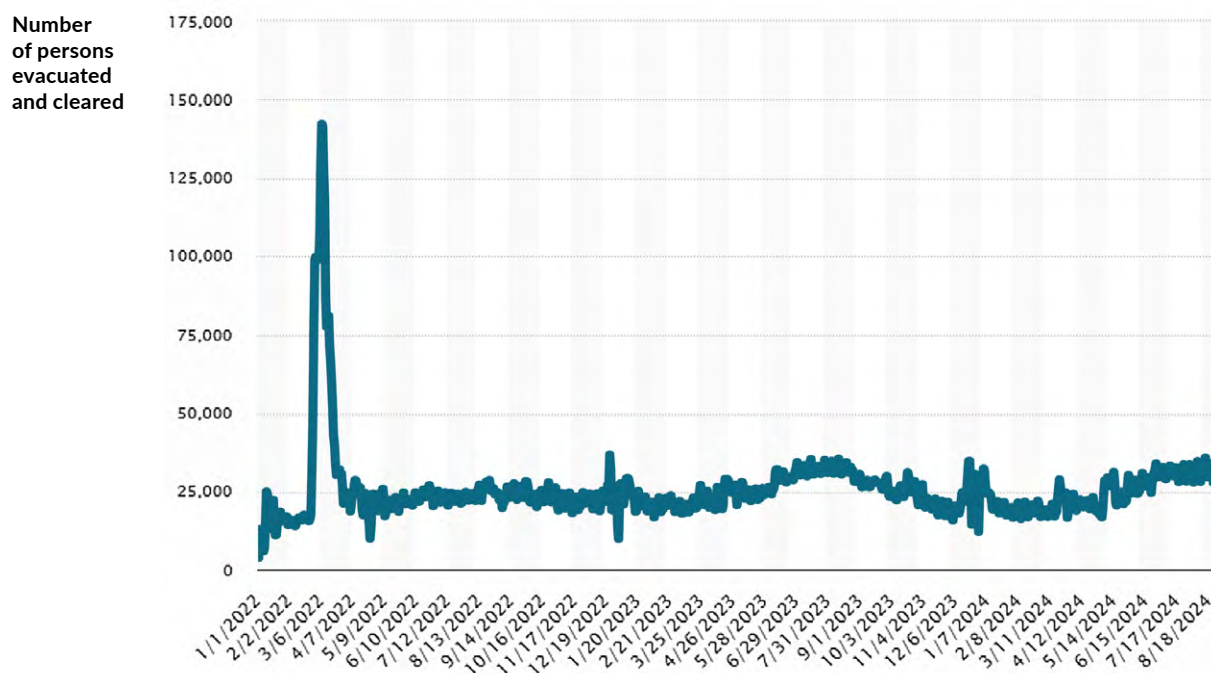
<sup>1</sup> Ukraine situation. Global Report 2022, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/ukraine-situation-global-report-2022>, access 20.10.2024.

<sup>2</sup> Duszczyk, M., Kaczmarczyk, P. (2022), CMR Spotlight: Wojna i migracja: napływ uchodźców wojennych z Ukrainy i możliwe scenariusze na przyszłość, CMR Spotlight 4(39), kwiecień 2022, <https://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/publikacje/cmr-spotlight-war-and-migration-the-recent-influx-from-ukraine-into-poland-and-possible-scenarios-for-the-future/>, access 20.10.2024.

<sup>3</sup> The word “refugees” in this Report is understood as forced migrants from Ukraine, and does not correspond with the legal definition of persons who were granted a refugee status.

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR data, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>, access 22.12.2024

<sup>5</sup> Fomina, J., & Pachocka, M. (2024). Polish society's initial responses to the arrival of forced migrants from Ukraine in early 2022. Canadian Foreign Policy Journal, 30(1), 52–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11926422.2024.2310245>



**Figure 1. Dynamics in the number of Ukrainian refugees in Poland since the Russian invasion**

Source: Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1293564/ukrainian-refugees-in-poland/>, access: 11.10.2024

Poland's response to this influx was notable<sup>6</sup>. Despite the challenges of reception and providing help to such a large number of refugees, the Polish civil society, people and government demonstrated remarkable solidarity with Ukraine and did their best to deliver all necessary support<sup>7</sup> and help with further integration<sup>8</sup>. Ukrainian refugees in Poland received assistance in various forms, including housing, healthcare, and access to education and employment, and were granted a special legal status due to the Temporary Protection EU Directive<sup>9</sup>. It is worth mentioning that the very first response to the crisis and aid to refugees during the first weeks was provided spontaneously by individual citizens and social actors, different institutions<sup>10</sup>, cities and regions<sup>11</sup>, including universities. This huge “expression of solidarity and responsibility was an important signal to the authorities (with a previous negative track record on migration). Also, it provided them with precious time to develop and implement

<sup>6</sup>Jaroszewicz, M., Krępa, M., Nowosielski, M., Pachocka, M., Wach, D. (2022), Agresja rosyjska na Ukrainę i migracja przymusowa: rola Polski w pierwszych dniach kryzysu, [in:] CMR Spotlight # 3 (37), marzec 2022, Center for Migration Research University of Warsaw, <https://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Spotlight-Wydanie-Specjalne-2022.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup>Downarowicz, P., Wydra, A. (2022), Zaangażowanie Polaków w aktywną pomoc uchodźcom z Ukrainy. COPOCS Research Brief 1. Warsaw: University of Warsaw, Faculty of Sociology, <https://copocsproject.eu/new-copocs-research-brief-involvement-of-poles-in-active-assistance-to-refugees-from-ukraine-by-pawel-downarowicz-and-anna-wydra>.

<sup>8</sup>Sobczak-Szelc, K., Pachocka, M., Pędziwiatr, K., Szałańska, J., Szulecka M. (2023), Reception to Integration of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Poland, Routledge.

<sup>9</sup>Temporary protection for foreigners, <https://www.gov.pl/web/ochrona-en>

<sup>10</sup>Jarosz, S. & Klaus, W. (2023) The Polish School of Assistance. Reception and integration of refugees from Ukraine in Poland in 2022. Warsaw: Migration Consortium, Centre of Migration Research Foundation, Centre for Migration Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, <https://konsorcjum.org.pl/storage/2023/05/The-Polish-School-of-Assistance-Report.pdf>

<sup>11</sup>Pachocka, M., Lewandowski, A., Nowosielski, M., Popławska, J.Z. & Wach, D. (2025) Resilient responses to the massive influx of forced migrants: A case study of medium-sized cities in Poland. *International Migration*, 63, e13372. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.13372>



formal procedures, introduce legal measures, and create and activate relevant public bodies to produce a more systemic and coordinated response”<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, the Polish government created a webpage in the Ukrainian language <https://www.gov.pl/web/ua>, ensuring translation of all important official information related to the border crossing, humanitarian and social assistance for Ukrainian forced migrants in Poland, contact points and organisations delivering help<sup>13</sup>, which is still being updated to keep Ukrainians informed.

The current situation regarding Ukrainian refugees is presented by UNHCR (fig. 2).

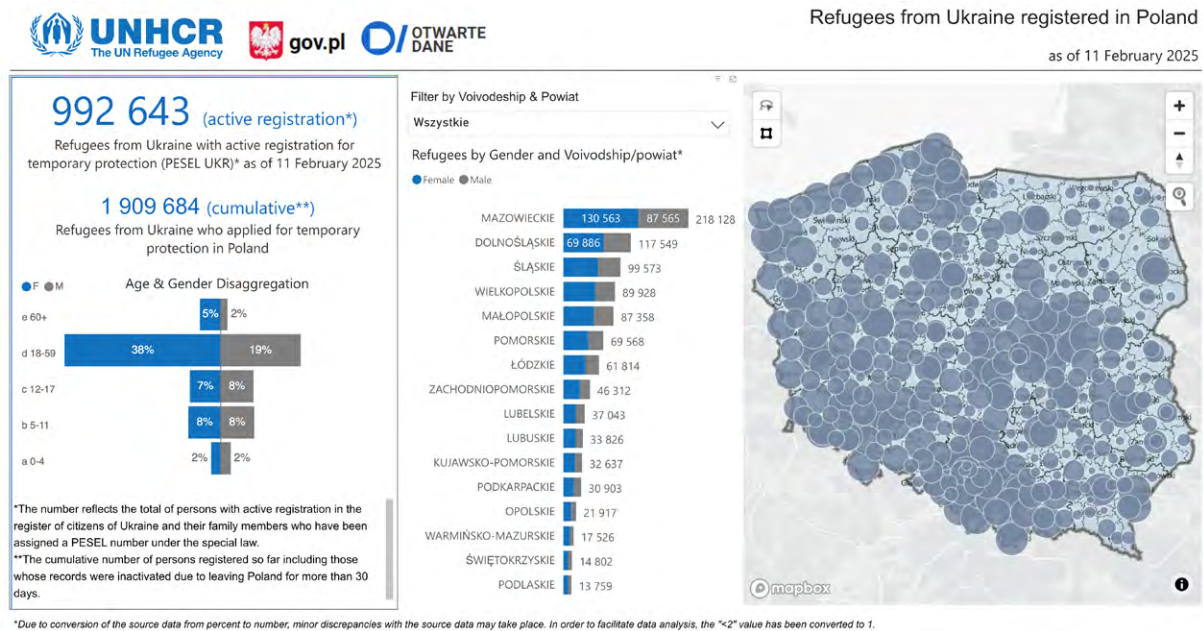


Figure 2. Ukrainian refugees in Poland as of December 22, 2024, UNHCR<sup>14</sup>  
Source: <https://dane.gov.pl/en/dataset/2715,zarejestrowane-wnioski-o-nadanie-statusu-ukr>

The Special Act on Assistance to Ukrainian Citizens in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that country (so-called Special Act)<sup>15</sup> was adopted on March 12, 2022, almost three weeks after the invasion started and eight days after the activation of the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive<sup>16</sup> to the situation of Ukrainian refugees<sup>17</sup>. The Special Act

<sup>12</sup> Fomina, J., & Pachocka, M. (2024). Polish society’s initial responses to the arrival of forced migrants from Ukraine in early 2022. *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, 30(1), 52–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11926422.2024.2310245>, access 22.12.2024.

<sup>13</sup> Сайт для громадян України, <https://www.gov.pl/web/ua>, access 22.12.2024.

<sup>14</sup> Ukraine Refugee Situation. Poland, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10781>, access 22.12.2024.

<sup>15</sup> Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2022 r. o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa, Dz.U. 2022 poz. 583, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20220000583>, access 22.12.2024.

<sup>16</sup> Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32001L0055&qid=1648223587338>, access 22.12.2024.

<sup>17</sup> Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection, ST/6846/2022/INIT, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L\\_.2022.071.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ%3AL%3A2022%3A071%3ATOC](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2022.071.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ%3AL%3A2022%3A071%3ATOC), access 22.12.2024.

introduced the special status of Ukrainian refugees under temporary protection – status UKR, which should be confirmed within the legalisation procedure and obtaining their registration number PESEL<sup>18</sup>. First three weeks after the invasion and the beginning of a mass influx of refugees in Poland, Polish institutions, local governments, schools and universities acted mostly ad-hoc, on their own, and had to rely on the institutional decisions mostly<sup>19</sup>. But even after the adoption of the Special Act, the process of its implementation, especially related to acquiring the status PESEL UKR under temporary protection, legal amendments related to higher education and science took time and required own universities activities in place.

Our study is dedicated specifically to the analysis of the ways the Polish academic sector handled the emergency and refugee influx, what actions were undertaken, how the crisis management looked like in the first weeks of the war and how it has evolved since 2022.

It should be mentioned that the legal status granted to Ukrainian refugees made them equal to the regular migrants and citizens when it comes to access to the labour market, a system of social protection, healthcare and financial allowances, which meant the need for a serious funds allocation from the Government. The official website of the President of the Republic of Poland states that Poland allocated 4.2% of its GDP to assist Ukrainian refugees<sup>20</sup>.

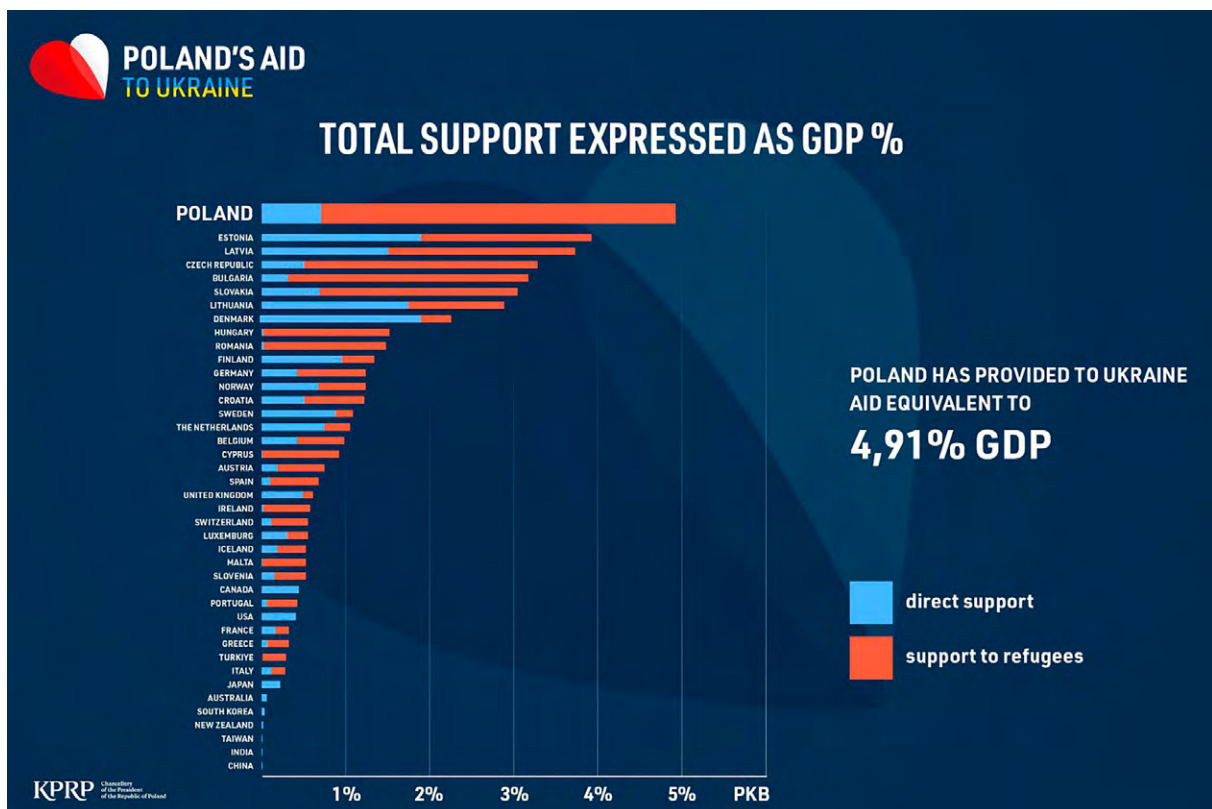


Figure 3. Poland's help to Ukraine, 2024<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> PESEL Number - Polish acronym for „Universal Electronic System for Registration of the Population”, <https://www.gov.pl/web/gov/uzyskaj-numer-pesel--uslugu-dla-cudzoziemcow-en>, access 22.12.2024.

<sup>19</sup> Pachocka, M., Lewandowski, A., Nowosielski, M., Popławska, J.Z. & Wach, D. (2025) Resilient responses to the massive influx of forced migrants: A case study of medium-sized cities in Poland. *International Migration*, 63, e13372. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.13372>, access 12.02.2025.

<sup>20</sup> Poland's aid to Ukraine, <https://www.president.pl/news/polish-aid-for-ukraine,93908>, access 22.12.2024.

<sup>21</sup> ibidem



At the same time, Ukrainian refugees in Poland constitute a group with high employment rates (65%), and a level of financial and social independence, which results also in taxation data 2 years later<sup>22</sup>. This general social and employment activity of Ukrainian refugees in Poland is seen also in the academic sector from the perspective of the third year since the full-scale war. Polish society, in general, has a positive attitude toward the Ukrainian refugees, however, tensions and challenges have been constantly appearing<sup>23</sup>. This general data provides an important background for analysing the situation of Ukrainian academic refugees and the reaction of the Polish academic community to the emergency and elaboration of the crisis management strategies for refugees.

### **Ukrainian “academic” refugees in Polish universities – first numbers**

Among the refugees, many students and researchers naturally seek support in the communities that they belong to – in Polish academia, where they want to continue their education and academic work in Poland<sup>24</sup>. Universities and research institutions have also opened their doors to Ukrainian scholars immediately, offering them different kinds of support and foremost humanitarian aid<sup>25</sup>, as well as Polish schools and kindergartens, welcomed schoolchildren from Ukraine that not only provided immediate help but also facilitated their integration into Polish society and a new reality<sup>26</sup>. Data collected by the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools of Poland on the numbers of students, doctoral candidates and researchers from Ukraine who applied to Polish universities for any kind of help show the gap between the need and actual capacity to provide it (figures 4-6). The data and activities to support academic refugees were monitored and presented<sup>27</sup> by the Head of the CRASP Committee for International Relations Prof. Jerzy Lis<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Deloitte & UNHCR (2024), Analysis of the impact of refugees from Ukraine on the economy of Poland, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/106993>, access 20.12.2024.

<sup>23</sup> CBOS (2023), Wojna na Ukrainie i dystans społeczny wobec Ukraińców, Komunikat z badań, Nr 84/2023, [https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2023/K\\_084\\_23.PDF](https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2023/K_084_23.PDF)

<sup>24</sup> Chmielewska-Kalińska I., Dudek B., Strzelecki P. (2022), The living and economic situation of Ukrainian refugees in Poland. Report of the questionnaire survey conducted by NBP Regional Branches, Warsaw, National bank of Poland, <https://nbp.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/ukrainian-refugees-2022.pdf>, access: 11.10.2024.

<sup>25</sup> CRASP data and [https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/special-report-refugees-ukraine-poland\\_en](https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/special-report-refugees-ukraine-poland_en)

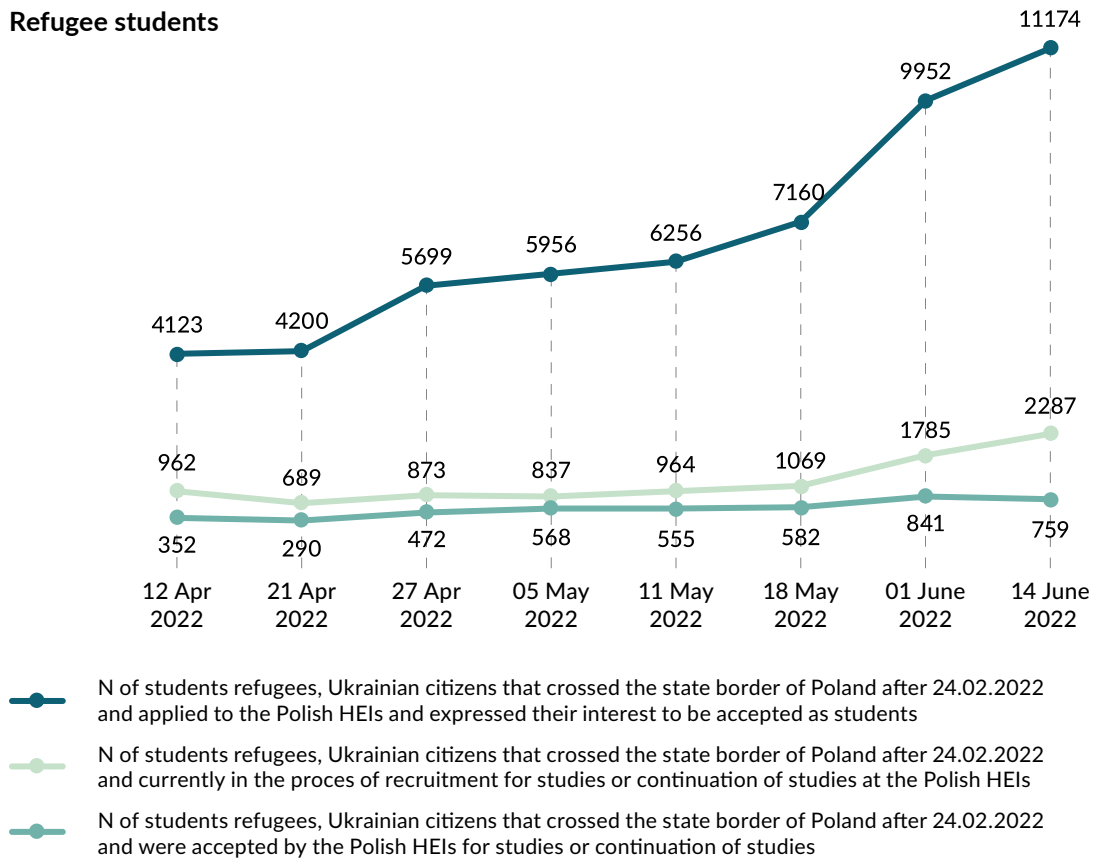
<sup>26</sup> Poland: Refugee students from Ukraine in the Polish education system [in:] European Portal on Integration, July 15, 2024, [https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/poland-refugee-students-ukraine-polish-education-system\\_en](https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/poland-refugee-students-ukraine-polish-education-system_en)

<sup>27</sup> 2022 EUA Annual Conference - Spotlight on Ukraine, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVdTQvga7bI>

<sup>28</sup> <https://forumakademickie.pl/zycie-akademickie/zaczyn-na-przyszlosc/>

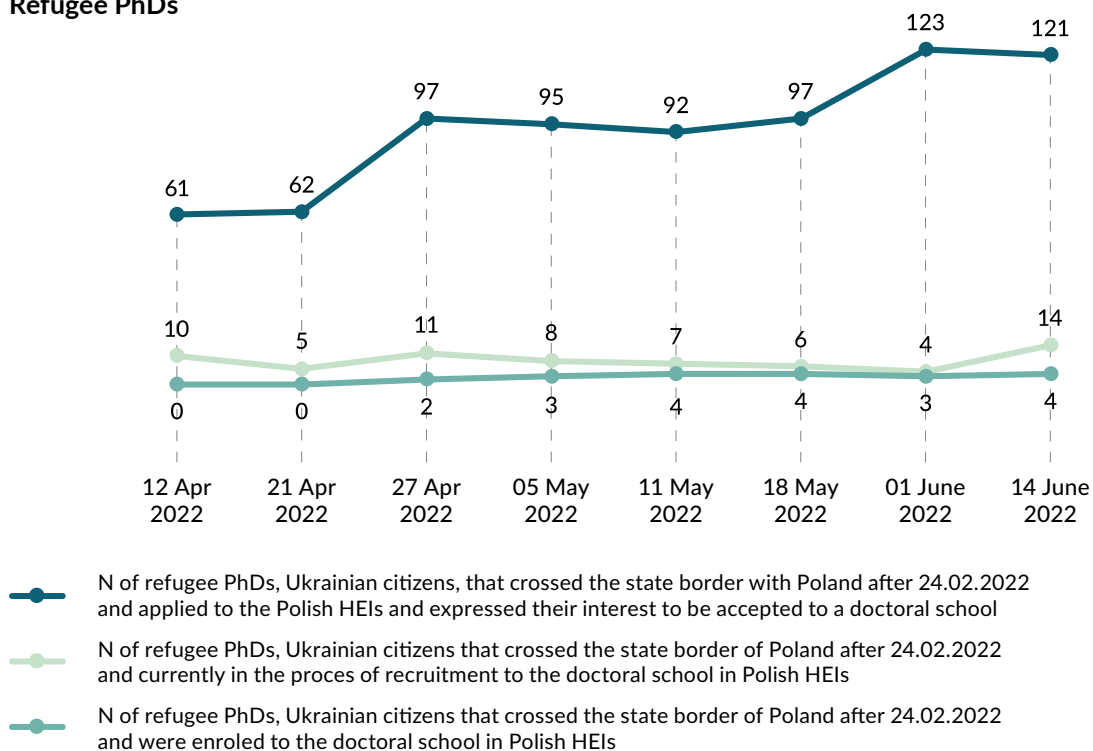


### Refugee students



**Figure 4. The beginning: April-June 2022 – Number of Ukrainian refugee students in Polish universities**  
 Source: CRASP data, June 2022

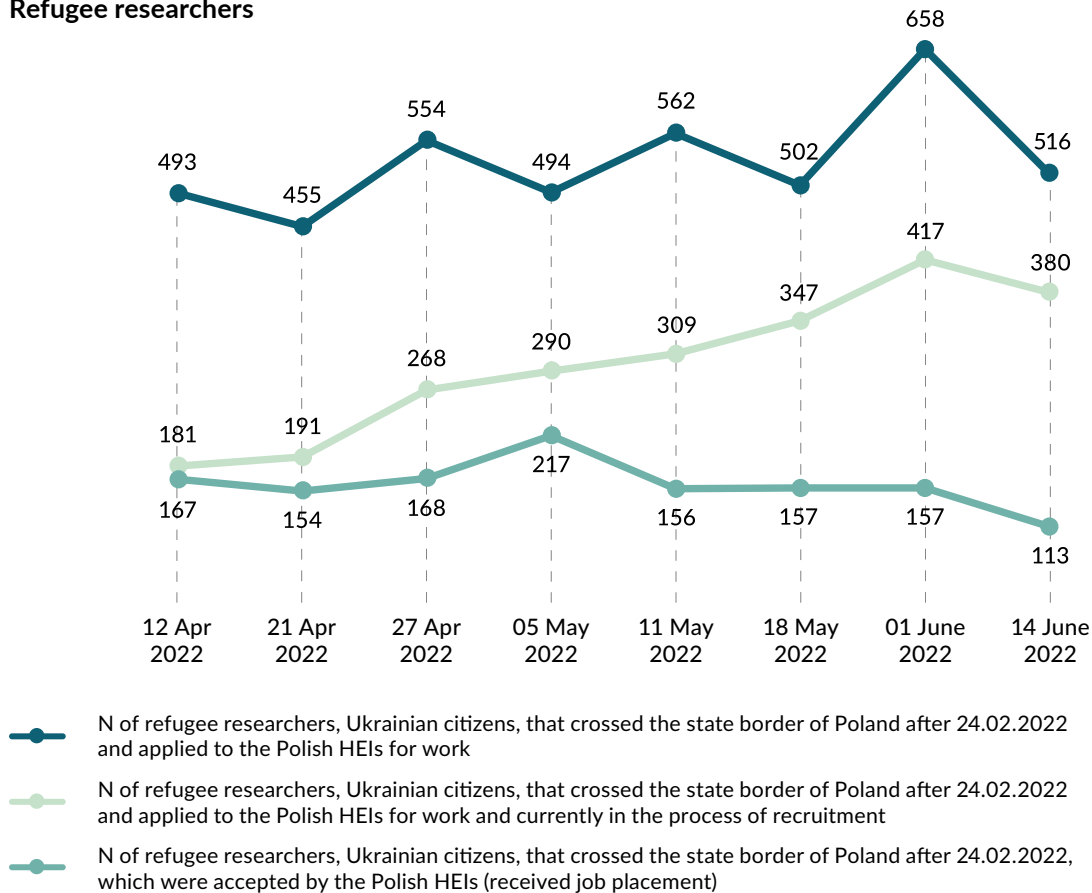
### Refugee PhDs



**Figure 5. The beginning: April-June 2022 – Number of Ukrainian refugee PhDs in Polish universities**  
 Source: CRASP data, June 2022



### Refugee researchers



**Figure 6. The beginning: April-June 2022 - Number of Ukrainian refugee academic staff in Polish universities**  
 Source: CRASP data, June 2022

These figures show the dynamic changes in the situation almost every day in the first period, which required a huge collaborative effort of the Polish universities inside and outside, to act individually but also as a collegial representative body, CRASP mitigating the crisis and searching for more stable and efficient solutions. Educational institutions played a key role in socialising Ukrainian refugees in Poland that goes beyond their purely education / academic mission.

Analysing the crisis response of Polish academia required multilevel research. First, we studied the national legislation directed to refugees from Ukraine with a specific focus on higher education (so-called Special Act). Second, desk research of the universities, academic stakeholders and funders' websites was done to analyse their activities in handling the crisis. Third, we surveyed Polish HEIs dedicated to emergency management and crisis response to the Ukrainian refugee influx and good practices and challenges in their integration.



## Analysis of the Polish legislation on the reception and integration of Ukrainian refugees – focus on higher education

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The regular legal framework – Act on Higher Education and Science (2018)<sup>29</sup> within general provisions regarding foreigners in the system of higher education and science (Part VIII) states that foreigners (no matter of what category) can study or work based on the bilateral agreement, decision of minister, rector, director of research institute or institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences, heads of National Agency of Academic Exchanges NAWA and National Science Centre (related to their scholarship holders), etc. This regulation provides certain flexibility within the university's autonomy in shaping their policies to support refugees in higher education and science (art. 323 sec. 1 and art. 324). The Act exempts foreigners with the status of refugee, temporary protection or subsidiary protection in the Republic of Poland from paying tuition fees for full-time studies in the Polish language (art. 325 sec. 2 p. 3-4). The Act on Foreigners<sup>30</sup> defines these different categories of foreigners in exile and their basic rights, as well as education and employment. However, universities were limited in terms of social support for students in exile before the war. Thus, the immediate response of the Polish universities during the first days and weeks was mainly humanitarian (reception of refugees, including academic refugees) and on the other hand, all efforts were directed to the adoption of the new regulations (university level and national level) enabling Polish HEIs to provide the necessary support (in the form of recruitment, transfer, or other types of assistance)<sup>31</sup>.

The Special Act adopted on March 12, 2022, following the Temporary Protection Directive activated by the European Commission on March 4, 2022, aimed at handling the crisis response in Poland, providing legal and financial support for the refugees under temporary protection (PESEL UKR status), including their educational and employment needs, also in the academic sector. Since then, it has been amended several times to adjust to the situation. The Special Law introduced regulations regarding residence permits and the reasons for their loss (because of leaving Poland for more than 30 days), which was found challenging in higher education due to the limitation of international mobility for students.

Legal provisions for universities and research institutions to support refugees focused on students, doctoral candidates, academic staff, and Ukrainian school-leavers (entrants to Polish universities), and can be seen through the lenses of short-term solutions – provisions that had to be introduced urgently to enable handling the humanitarian crisis and ensure academic support for refugees in the first period, by the end of 2021/2022 academic year; medium and long term solutions of temporary and more sustainable character.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/d6975935-4b24-4be3-96f1-09c51589958a>

<sup>30</sup> [https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/act-foreigners-2013-amended\\_en](https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/act-foreigners-2013-amended_en), [https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/act-foreigners-2013\\_en](https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/act-foreigners-2013_en)

<sup>31</sup> <https://sip.lex.pl/komentarze-i-publikacje/komentarze-praktyczne/zasady-organizacji-i-funkcjonowania-uczelni-w-zwiazku-470178313>



## SPECIAL LAW AND SPECIAL STATUS<sup>32</sup>

**The Special Act (with amendments)** defined the legal framework for universities enabling continuation of studies and providing social assistance to refugee students, regulations regarding their enrolment and waving tuition fees, employment of academic staff from Ukraine in Polish universities and research institutions, as well as some issues related to recognition of prior learning, studies or learning outcomes. The Special Act introduced legal solutions necessary for making amendments in the internal university acts regarding the organisation of the academic year, enrolment, and study regulations – on the first hand concerning the ongoing academic year 2021/2022 and the next academic year 2022/2023.

As for researchers, the Special Act implemented important solutions for the employment of researchers and academic teachers in higher education institutions or research institutions, e.g. the possibility to employ researchers without legal diploma recognition (procedure of nostrification)<sup>33</sup> or a competition (open call or a specific position). For doctoral candidates, later amendments introduced regulations regarding social benefits (social scholarships, financial aid) and the possibility of recruitment to doctoral schools. But the most important legal solution was the status “UKR” that has been granted to the Ukrainian citizens (and certain members of their families) who in the period from February 24, 2022, came to Poland in connection with military operations conducted in Ukraine, and legal stay of has been extended until September 30, 2025. Legal provisions were aimed at preventing Ukrainian citizens from falling into illegal stay and supporting the legalisation of their stay on the territory of Poland.

It should be noted, that the biggest actor that played a huge role in emergency management was the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland<sup>34</sup>, which immediately organised a centralised network and started to collect data on the numbers of refugees (students, PhDs, staff) that applied to the universities and research institutions and asked for academic support.

## SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENTS

There are three groups of students of Ukrainian HEIs, that have different statuses:

1. students of Ukrainian HEIs – citizens of Ukraine.
2. students of Ukrainian HEIs – citizens of Poland.
3. students of Ukrainian HEIs – citizens of the third countries.

These three groups were offered diverse kinds of academic support. It created a lot of challenges both for students and for the institutions. Only the first group of students were considered refugees and were eligible for the state-guaranteed support, the situation with the second group was more complicated. Support could be with or without granting a student status. Academic support for refugees without granting student status could be done in the form of providing short-term mobility schemes, enrolment into courses and training, zero/bridge year or preparatory programs.

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<sup>32</sup> MNiSW (2022), Rozwiązania w zakresie szkolnictwa wyższego i nauki zawarte w ustawie o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy, 13.03.2022, <https://www.gov.pl/web/nauka/rozwiązania-w-zakresie-szkolnictwa-wyższego-i-nauki-zawarte-w-ustawie-o-pomocy-obywatelom-ukrainy>

<sup>33</sup> <https://study.gov.pl/nostrification-higher-education-diplomas>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crtxycORkxU&cbrd=1>

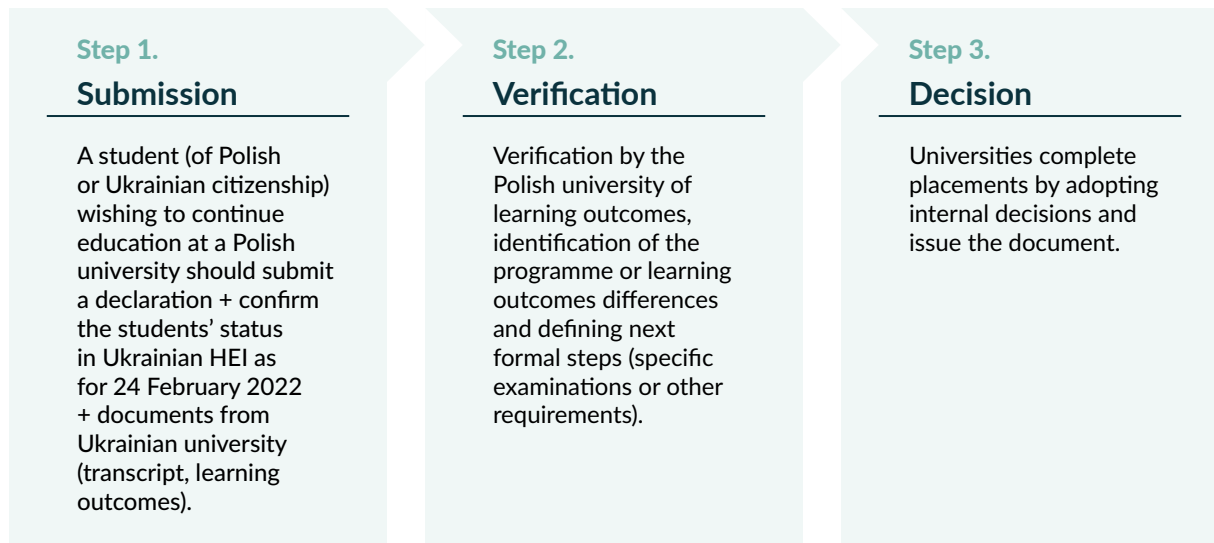


Figure 7. The scheme of granting student's status to Ukrainian refugees in Polish universities

Due to the Act, Polish universities could amend their enrolment rules, study regulations and the organisation of the academic year (which is normally not allowed) concerning studies starting in the second semester of the academic year 2021/2022 and in the academic year 2022/2023), to use a special mode of amending the study regulations to the extent necessary for the admission of persons who, as of February 24, 2022, were students of HEIs operating on the territory of Ukraine (changes to be made until September 30, 2022), change in the organisation of the academic year 2021/2022 by the Rector (e.g. postponement of the examination session).

The Act provided for special regulations for acceptance/enrolment of students of medicine and dentistry, as well as medical qualifications recognition. The basic condition to be met before admission is knowledge of the Polish language (if the studies are conducted in such a language). Candidates who do not know it may be admitted to preparatory courses (also as supplementary courses within the study program).

The Act also introduces facilitation in the field of continuing studies at Polish universities for people who do not have documents confirming the results achieved, completed internships, etc. The Act states, that refugee students after confirmation of their legal status UKR, who do not have education documents but declare that as of February 24, 2022, they studied in a specific year of study in a given field of study and level of study at a university operating in Ukraine, the relevant periods of these studies may be recognised by verifying the achieved learning outcomes. The rules for verifying learning outcomes are set by the university, which may oblige the student to make up for curriculum differences. Moreover, the Special Act introduced the material benefits for students and the possibility of applying for a student loan.



## SPECIAL ACT – MAIN PROVISIONS FOR STUDENTS

(art. 41, 45, art. 93, art. 96)<sup>35</sup>

### 1. Admissions and Continuation of Studies - Special Rules for University Operations (Articles 45, 93, and 96 of the Act):

- The act introduces measures allowing universities to set special rules for their organization and functioning to enable studies for individuals forced to leave Ukraine due to the war.
- Polish universities can admit Polish and Ukrainian citizens who were students at Ukrainian universities on February 24, 2022, even if they lack documentation of their previous education. Universities will verify learning outcomes and may require additional exams or internships.
- Universities can amend recruitment resolutions for the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 academic years to accommodate students from Ukraine, including lowering admission thresholds.
- Changes to study regulations necessary for admitting students from Ukraine can be made until September 30, 2022, without the usual five-month notice period.
- Rectors can modify the academic calendar for the 2021/2022 year, including exam session dates.
- Joint classes for full-time and part-time students can be conducted to facilitate studies for those from Ukraine.
- Polish universities can confirm the completion of studies for individuals without diplomas, extending this to Polish citizens who entered Poland from Ukraine and Ukrainian citizens legally residing in Poland.
- Special regulations should be applied to medical students from Ukraine<sup>36</sup>

### 2. Tuition fees:

- Ukrainian students at public universities in Poland will not be charged tuition fees for full-time studies in Polish.
- The rector can reduce the tuition fee for full-time studies for Ukrainian refugees.
- Polish citizens who were medical students in Ukraine on February 24, 2022, and are now studying in Poland will pay tuition fees not exceeding their previous fees in Ukraine. Refunds are available for universities that do not charge these fees.

### 3. Student benefits and loans:

- Ukrainian students covered by the act can apply for social scholarships and student loans based on their family and financial situation.
- They can also apply for rector's scholarships, scholarships for disabled students, and emergency grants without the usual limitations on the number of grants.
- Students have the right to be accommodated with their family members in the student's dormitory

These measures aim to adapt university regulations to the situation, facilitating the admission and continuation of studies for Ukrainian students in Poland.

<sup>35</sup> Rozwiązania w zakresie szkolnictwa wyższego i nauki zawarte w ustawie o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy, <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja/rozwiązania-w-zakresie-szkolnictwa-wyższego-i-nauki-zawarte-w-ustawie-o-pomocy-obywatelom-ukrainy>, access: 22.12.2024

<sup>36</sup> MEiN (2022), Komunikat w sprawie dalszych działań umożliwiających kontynuowanie studiów na kierunku lekarskim i lekarsko-dentystycznym (oraz innych medycznych) w Polsce przez studentów kształcących się dotychczas na Ukrainie, 13.03.2022, <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja/komunikat-w-sprawie-mozliwosci-kontynuowania-studiow-na-kierunku-lekarskim-w-polsce-przez-studentow-ksztalcacych-sie-dotychczas-w-ukrainie>



## SOLUTIONS FOR DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND RESEARCHERS

### **Situation of academic teachers and researchers**

The Special Law refers to employment in institutions of the higher education system and science (universities, institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences, research institutes and the institutes of the Łukasiewicz Research Network and the Łukasiewicz Centre). The Act provides special facilities for academic teachers and researchers wishing to practice their profession in Poland. Academic teachers possessing the PESEL UKR status may be employed at a university as an academic teacher without conducting an open competition, if he/she declares that on February 24, 2022, he/she worked as an academic teacher at a university operating in Ukraine and has the required professional title, academic degree, degree in the field of art or the title of professor and appropriate qualifications for the position. On the same terms (i.e. without conducting an open competition, based on a declaration of a citizen of Ukraine), a researcher from Ukraine may be employed in research units and other organizational units of the Polish Academy of Sciences and a research institute.

In addition, when hiring an academic teacher for the position of professor, university professor, assistant professor, assistant, a citizen of Ukraine who has obtained the title of professor, academic degree, degree in art or professional title abroad, the requirements for this title may be waived, or degrees specified in the Law on Higher Education and Science (Article 116(2)).

This includes, as in the above-described situation of students, and citizens (Ukrainian or Polish) who have made a declaration that on February 24, 2022, they have worked as academic teachers or research staff in the territory of Ukraine and have the required professional title, degree, degree in art or title of professor and the relevant qualifications to hold the position. However, there was a lack of regulations concerning doctoral candidates and the possibility for them to continue PhD programs in Polish universities and possibly defend the thesis, but it was amended quite quickly.

Universities should meet the requirements of the Special Act regarding employment (hiring, equal number of hours, remuneration, notification to the district labour office competent for the registered office or place of residence of the displaced person). In addition, a citizen of Ukraine legally residing in the territory of the Republic of Poland may register with the Labor Office as an unemployed person. This also applies to Ukrainian citizens of retirement age, i.e. 65 (men) and 60 (women). Ukrainian refugees are entitled to health insurance and social benefits: family benefits, 800+ benefits for minors under 18, social assistance benefits (e.g. benefits, intervention assistance), Good Start (pol. Dobry Start) for the beginning of the school year, family care capital, co-financing the reduction of parents' fee for a child's stay in a nursery.



## SPECIAL ACT – MAIN PROVISIONS FOR DOCTORAL CANDIDATES AND RESEARCHERS<sup>37</sup>

### 1. Nostrification:

- Unemployed individuals can apply for funding from the Labor Fund to cover nostrification fees.

### 2. Continuation of employment (art. 46-49)

- Polish or Ukrainian citizens who entered Poland legally from Ukraine on or after February 24, 2022, and were academic teachers or researchers in Ukraine can be employed in Polish universities or research institutions without competition.
- Regulations regarding the necessary qualification – scientific title and degree can be omitted by the Universities and research institutions.

### 3. Doctoral Schools (art. 96):

- Institutions running doctoral schools can implement special rules for organising and operating these schools to accommodate Ukrainian citizens affected by the war.
- Changes to recruitment rules and training programs for doctoral schools can be made without the usual five-month notice period until September 30, 2022.
- Doctoral candidates from Ukraine have access to financial benefits and additional social allowances.
- Doctoral candidates have the right to be accommodated with their family members in the students' dormitory

<sup>37</sup> Rozwiązania w zakresie szkolnictwa wyższego i nauki zawarte w ustawie o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy, <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja/rozwiązania-w-zakresie-szkolnictwa-wyższego-i-nauki-zawarte-w-ustawie-o-pomocy-obywatelom-ukrainy>, access: 22.12.2024

## CHAPTER 3

# Handling massive influx of Ukrainian refugees by Polish academia

## UNIVERSITIES AND CRASP LEADERSHIP IN THE CRISIS RESPONSE

All key Polish stakeholders and representative organisations came together in a collective effort to effectively response to the humanitarian crisis: Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland, National Council of Science and Higher Education of Poland (RGNiSW), Conferences of Rectors of Public and Non-Public Vocational HEIs, Polish Academy of Sciences, The Young Scientists Council, Parliament of Students of Poland, National Representation of Doctoral Students of Poland, Academy of Young Scientists. Altogether, the Polish academic community issued several statements:

- **POLISH ACADEMIC COMMUNITY STATEMENT ON RUSSIAN AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE FROM 24.02.2022<sup>38</sup>**



*In view of Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine and its brutal violation of international agreements and standards binding in the civilised world, the Polish academic community strongly condemns the attack on our neighbour and the use of violence against it.*

*We express our full solidarity with the entire Ukrainian people and support for Ukraine as a sovereign state and pledge all possible assistance in these difficult times. At the same time, we appeal to the authorities of the Ministry of Education and Science to mobilise, in cooperation with the National Agency for Academic Exchange, special measures, including legal ones, to support Ukrainian scientists, doctoral students and students who express a desire to continue their activities in Polish universities.*

*The Polish academic community will further intensify and develop cooperation in all forms with our Ukrainian academic partners.*

Figure 8. Statement of the Polish academic community condemning Russian aggression against Ukraine, 24.02.2022

<sup>38</sup> Oświadczenie środowiska akademickiego w związku z agresją Rosji na Ukrainę, 24.02.2022, [https://www.krasp.org.pl/resources/upload/aktualnosci/2020-2024/Oswiadczenie\\_srodowiska\\_akademickiego\\_Ukraina\\_rozsz.pdf](https://www.krasp.org.pl/resources/upload/aktualnosci/2020-2024/Oswiadczenie_srodowiska_akademickiego_Ukraina_rozsz.pdf)



● **APPEAL TO POLISH ACADEMIA AND INTELLECTUAL ELITES IN THE FACE OF RUSSIA'S AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE, MARCH 2, 2022<sup>39</sup>**



The second Appeal called for stop any kind of cooperation of the Polish scientific community, Polish universities and units of the Polish Academy of Sciences with any governmental organisation of the Russian Federation or of any other country that supports the Russian invasion of Ukraine with the idea of respect for the academic values.

Figure 9. Appeal to academia and intellectual elites in the face of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, March 2, 2022

As CRASP reported in 2022<sup>40</sup> and 2023<sup>41</sup>, the inherent activity of CRASP is also reaction to crisis and collective emergency management, especially in situations requiring a rapid and agreed response, e.g. COVID-19 pandemic, and Russian aggression on Ukraine and massive refugee influx in Poland. For better coordination of the crisis response and data collection in the Polish higher education and research sector, the CRASP and the Polish Ministry of Education and Science (MEiN, later – Ministry for Science and Higher Education) broadened the scope of the actions of the **Regional Coordinators Network** initially focused on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>42</sup> and since March 4, 2022 it included also support for students, PhDs or academic staff from Ukraine who fled due to the war and asked/received some kind of support from the Polish institutions of higher education and research. Thus, the CRASP appointed Rector Jerzy Lis (AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow) as the Network

<sup>39</sup> [Apel do środowisk akademickich i elit intelektualnych w związku z agresją Rosji na Ukrainę, 3.03.2022, https://www.krasp.org.pl/aktualnosci/wpis,apel-do-srodowisk-akademickich-i-elit-intelektualnych-w-zwiazku-z-agresja-rosji-na-ukraine,783](https://www.krasp.org.pl/aktualnosci/wpis,apel-do-srodowisk-akademickich-i-elit-intelektualnych-w-zwiazku-z-agresja-rosji-na-ukraine,783)

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.krasp.org.pl/dokumenty/dokument,sprawozdanie-z-dzialalnoci-konferencji-rektorow-akademickich-szk-polskich-za-rok-2022,661>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.krasp.org.pl/dokumenty/dokument,sprawozdanie-z-dzia%C5%81alno%C5%9Aci-konferencji-rektor%C3%93w-akademickich-szk%C3%93%C5%81-polskich-za-rok-2023,875>

<sup>42</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8\\_kktD2qG4A&list=PLq0J1sJGsmQ5WK6R-i1MxR7cTiEbYMw-T&index=9](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_kktD2qG4A&list=PLq0J1sJGsmQ5WK6R-i1MxR7cTiEbYMw-T&index=9)



coordinator for Ukraine-related matters<sup>43</sup>. It is worth mentioning, that the **Network collected and analysed data regarding the situation of Ukrainian students, doctoral candidates, and staff in Polish universities and research institutes**, including additional surveys related to exams and costs incurred by universities. The Ministry of Education and Science attributed some financial resources to support the technical process of data collection. 310 institutions and organizations took part in the Network, including higher education institutions, members of CRASP, research institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Ministry of Education and Science, governmental institutions (Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange NAWA, National Science Centre NCN), Erasmus+ office (FRSE), other organisations (Perspektywy Foundation, Polish Rectors Foundation)<sup>44</sup>. Thus, the Network allowed to conduct ongoing situation monitoring and discussions and to convert them into concrete activities and programmes both at the institutional level and national, including the legal and financial framework for supporting refugees and cooperation with Ukrainian academia. Among urgent issues, there were regular updates on the situation in Ukraine, support for Ukrainian refugees, diploma or education recognition, and recruitment of Ukrainian high school graduates for the 2022/2023 academic year. This highlights the flexibility of Polish educational institutions in responding to the crises as well as the strong and ongoing commitment of Polish universities to help Ukrainian refugees, highlighting a long-term approach to supporting academic integration amidst both the pandemic and the war.

At the first stage of the massive influx of Ukrainian refugees in Polish academia, **a nationwide recruitment platform was created** ([ukraina.irk.edu.pl](http://ukraina.irk.edu.pl)), allowing Ukrainian citizens to access educational and job opportunities, as well as internships and scholarships in Poland. The creation of a shared recruitment online platform for Ukrainian citizens was a significant step in integrating academic refugees and facilitating their access to the Polish education system and labour market<sup>45</sup>. However, aftermath regular recruitment via university recruitment offices became the dominant form.

On March 24, 2022, a **Joint Meeting of the Presidium of the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP) and Union of Rectors of HEIs of Ukraine (URHEIU) and the Polish Rectors Foundation (PRF)**<sup>46</sup> was organised under the project ‘Polish-Ukrainian cooperation of stakeholder organisations representing rectors for improvement of universities’ functioning” implemented by Warsaw University of Technology, PRF under the funding of Ministry of Education and Science<sup>47</sup>. This meeting was of strategic significance and helped to conduct a needs assessment and establish support programs for the future and clearly define their direction and priorities (e.g. residential and non-residential scholarships by the NCBR, Solidarity with Ukraine – European universities by NAWA, membership for URHEIU and Ukrainian universities in EUA, etc.). Key statements were adopted by the CRASP in the Resolution on supporting the activities of Ukraine in the field of higher education, science and innovation

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<sup>43</sup> <https://youtu.be/crtyxcORkxU?feature=shared>

<sup>44</sup> Lis J., Koordynacja działań uczelni w zakresie współpracy z Ukrainą, 27.06.2024, Zgromadzenie Plenarne KRASP, [https://www.krasp.org.pl/files/public/prezentacje%20ZP/ZP/prezentacje\\_SGHNowyFolder/KRASP\\_27\\_06\\_24\\_JLis.pdf](https://www.krasp.org.pl/files/public/prezentacje%20ZP/ZP/prezentacje_SGHNowyFolder/KRASP_27_06_24_JLis.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.krasp.org.pl/dokumenty/dokument,sprawozdanie-z-dzialalnoci-konferencji-rectorow-akademickich-szk-polskich-za-rok-2022,661>

<sup>46</sup> <https://gazeta.sgh.waw.pl/konferencje-debaty-spotkania/rozmowy-przy-drugiej-kawie-rozmowy-o-ukrainie-w-czas-wojny>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.ans.pw.edu.pl/Nauka/Projekty-naukowe/Projekt-MNiSW-PW>



from March 31, 2022<sup>48</sup> On June 9, 2022, at the initiative of the CRASP and PRF, an international meeting took place in Warsaw with representatives from the European University Association (EUA), CRASP, the Ukrainian Rectors' Union and the French and German conferences of rectors. During the meeting, the President of EUA informed participants about the possibility for Ukrainian partners to apply for membership in EUA, with exemption from membership fee charges and establishment of a special fund to support the participation of Ukrainian partners in the EUA events.

Moreover, EUA created the Ukraine Task Force, which includes also Polish representative (Rector Jerzy Lis), its goal was to provide strategic advice in supporting Ukrainian universities both individually and collectively during the war and as they transition to normal operations after the war. This process involves rebuilding and the long-term development of Ukraine's higher education system. The establishment of the Ukraine Task Force and the inclusion of CRASP representatives highlight the significant role Polish universities are playing in supporting Ukrainian higher education during the war and in the post-war recovery phase.

The CRASP efforts, in collaboration with EUA and other European academic bodies, reflect a comprehensive and strategic approach to supporting Ukraine during the war and its recovery period. These initiatives, including the special fund for Ukrainian universities and the creation of the Ukraine Task Force, demonstrate a commitment to long-term academic cooperation and rebuilding efforts, with the great role of Poland's leadership.

The CRASP's involvement in these high-level discussions, along with its collaborations with European counterparts, underscores Poland's leadership in supporting Ukraine during the ongoing war. The focus on protecting Ukrainian universities, along with broader initiatives to support European higher education, highlights the importance of keeping academic cooperation during times of crisis. The Joint Declaration signed by the rector conferences of France, Germany, and Poland<sup>49</sup> further solidifies this commitment, ensuring that Ukraine's recovery, especially in the educational sector, is still a priority on the European agenda. These actions, combined with the ongoing support for Ukrainian academics and universities, illustrate a long-term vision for rebuilding and strengthening Ukraine's higher education system in the post-war period.<sup>50</sup>

## RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS AND FUNDING ORGANISATIONS' REACTION AND PROGRAMMES.

Based on the publicly available data, we tried to summarise the major programmes targeting Ukrainian students, doctoral candidates and researchers in 2022-2024, while assessing the estimated costs.

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<sup>48</sup> Document No. 24/VIII: Resolution of the Presidium of CRASP of 31 March 2022 on supporting the activities of Ukraine in the field of higher education, science and innovation, [https://www.krasp.org.pl/files/public/resources/upload/dokumenty/Uchwa%C5%82y/kadencja%202020-2024/dok\\_24.VIII.pdf](https://www.krasp.org.pl/files/public/resources/upload/dokumenty/Uchwa%C5%82y/kadencja%202020-2024/dok_24.VIII.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Joint Declaration of the Rectors' Conferences of France, Germany and Poland on the occasion of the International Expert Conference on the Recovery, Reconstruction and Modernisation of Ukraine hosted by the G7 Presidency and the European Commission in Berlin on 25 October 2022, [https://www.krasp.org.pl/files/public/resources/upload/aktualnosci/Trilateral%20Statement\\_FU\\_HRK\\_KRASP\\_25.10.2022.pdf](https://www.krasp.org.pl/files/public/resources/upload/aktualnosci/Trilateral%20Statement_FU_HRK_KRASP_25.10.2022.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> CRASP (2023), CRASP practices on emergency management | Support for Ukraine, NEWLEAD project video, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8\\_kktD2qG4A&list=PLq0J1sJGsmQ5WK6R-i1MxR7cTiEbYmW-T&index=6](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_kktD2qG4A&list=PLq0J1sJGsmQ5WK6R-i1MxR7cTiEbYmW-T&index=6)

**TABLE 1. ACADEMIC SUPPORT IN POLAND 2022-2024 – MAIN INSTITUTIONS**

Organisation	Activity	Launch	Cont.	Budget (if applicable), PLN / USD / EUR	Sources of funding	Number of targeted Ukrainian researchers/projects	Type of support residential*
Polish Academy of Sciences <sup>51</sup>	Solidarity with Ukraine	28.03. 2022	Ongoing	12000000 PLN 8000000 USD	Fundraising, including US. Academy of Sciences	250 researchers	R/NR
FNP <sup>52</sup> – Foundation for Polish Science	FOR UKRAINE programme	March 2022	Yes (4 editions so far)	2 948 000 PLN (268,800 PLN per project)	Open fundraising	11: 2024 – 2 projects (pairs of researchers UA-PL) 2023 – 6 projects 2022 – 3 projects	R
NCN <sup>53</sup> – National Science Centre	Support for Ukrainian researchers under ongoing research projects <sup>54</sup> ; for early career researchers (PhDs) <sup>55</sup>	28.03. 2022	Until 2023	6 000 000 PLN <sup>56</sup> 1 200 000 PLN 215 000 Euro	NCN funds Norway grants Fundraising	51 researchers 111 40	R/NR
NCN together with National Science Foundation (USA)	International Multilateral Partnerships for Resilient Education and Science System in Ukraine (IMPRESS-U) <sup>57</sup>	3.08. 2023	Ongoing	10 000 000 PLN	NSF, academies of sciences		
NCBiR – National Centre for Research and Development	“Scheme: Support for Ukrainian researchers” (under Bilateral Fund of ‘Applied Research’ Programme) <sup>58</sup>	24.06. 2022	Finished in 2024 (1 call)	380 000 EUR	Polish-Norwegian research projects funded by the Norway Grants	14 researchers	R/NR

\* R – residential, NR – non-residential

cont.

<sup>51</sup> <https://pan.pl/en/initiatives-of-the-polish-academy-of-sciences-in-support-of-ukraine/><sup>52</sup> <https://www.fnp.org.pl/en/oferta/for-ukraine/><sup>53</sup> <https://www.gov.pl/web/nauka/dodatkowe-stypendia-ncn-dla-pocztakujacych-naukowcow-z-ukrainy><sup>54</sup> <https://www.ncn.gov.pl/oferty-pracy-ukraina><sup>55</sup> <https://ncn.gov.pl/konkursy/program-stypendialny-dla-naukowcow-z-ukrainy><sup>56</sup> <https://www.gov.pl/web/nauka/wsparcie-mnisw-dla-studentow-i-naukowcow-z-ukrainy><sup>57</sup> <https://www.ncn.gov.pl/ogloszenia/konkursy/impress-u><sup>58</sup> <https://www.gov.pl/web/ncbr/fundusz-wspolpracy-dwustronnej>



Organisation	Activity	Launch	Cont.	Budget (if applicable), PLN / USD / EUR	Sources of funding	Number of targeted Ukrainian researchers/projects	Type of support residential*
NAWA – Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange	Solidarity with Ukraine	15.03.2022	Closed on autumn 2022	25 700 000	Polish public funds	6288 students, PhDs <sup>59</sup>	R
NAWA	Solidarity with Ukraine – European Universities	2023-2024	Finalising	Call 2022 (implemented in 2023) – 16 000 000 PLN for 18 Polish universities <sup>60</sup> Call 2023 (implemented in 2024) – 17 703 274,04 PLN for 23 Polish universities <sup>61</sup>	Polish public funds	2 233 mobilities, 58 Ukrainian HEIs <sup>62</sup>  1582 mobilities, 75 Ukrainian HEIs <sup>63</sup>	NR
HEIs and research institutions, according to CRASP data collection <sup>64</sup>	Internal funds of the Polish HEIs and research institutions	2022-2024	Ongoing, due to the Special Act regulations	326 464 480 PLN	Institutional funds		R/NR
<b>In total</b>				<b>Appr.</b>			
					<b>452 514 754 PLN (= 107 741 608 EUR)</b>		

\* R – residential, NR – non-residential

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.gov.pl/web/ncbr-en/solidarity-in-research-and-development>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.gov.pl/web/nauka/solidarni-z-ukraina--uniwersytety-europejskie--kolejna-odslona-programu-nawa>

<sup>61</sup> <https://nawa.gov.pl/images/Aktualnosci/2024/PLAN-DZIALANIA-NAWA-na-2024.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> NAWA Presentation at the CRASP Conversatorium in Cracow, 01.03.2024

<sup>63</sup> Ibidem

<sup>64</sup> [https://www.krasp.org.pl/files/public/prezentacje%20ZP/ZP/prezentacje\\_SGHNowyFolder/KRASP\\_27\\_06\\_24\\_JLis.pdf](https://www.krasp.org.pl/files/public/prezentacje%20ZP/ZP/prezentacje_SGHNowyFolder/KRASP_27_06_24_JLis.pdf)

# Managing the massive number of unexpected refugees from Ukraine in Polish HEIs: the survey analysis

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## RESEARCH SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

### DATA COLLECTION

The Polish Rectors Foundation conducted a survey entitled *Managing the massive number of unexpected refugees from Ukraine in Polish HEIs in the first period after the outbreak of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022*. The survey aimed to identify the reaction of Polish universities, their activities and good practices in an emergency/crisis in the face of an influx of refugees fleeing Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The survey was conducted from July to December 2024 in the Polish language on the platform Webankieta.pl.

The survey was addressed to the Rectors and Vice-Rectors of the HEIs members of the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland with one answer expected from each university. Rectors could delegate the survey to another person from the university involved in managing activities for refugees from Ukraine. The survey was not anonymous, in the metric we asked for the name of the HEI and the function of the persons filling in the questionnaire, only for identification and analysis of good practices and solutions of specific HEIs. However, all other data were analysed collectively, without showing the name of the university. For indicating quotes, only the type of HEI and number of the responses in the survey are mentioned in the report.

The survey used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The questionnaire<sup>65</sup> was designed in five parts and included thirty-six questions:

- Part I. The first reaction of Polish HEIs to the outbreak of the Russian full-scale invasion to Ukraine and the influx of refugees –the biggest section, 16 questions, regarding actions and key decisions of the Polish universities in the first weeks after the outbreak of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine, emergency management, mode of operation and leadership in the University, challenges, internal communication and cooperation.
- Part II. Crisis management and support for academic refugees – 9 questions about different forms of support to the students, doctoral candidates and staff of Ukrainian origin from before the war, as well as newcomers, and refugees after February 24, 2022. It was also important to ask about challenges and barriers for Polish universities.

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<sup>65</sup> The questionnaire is in Annex 1.

- Part III. Crisis management and support for non-academic refugees – 5 questions regarding general aid of Polish universities for Ukrainian refugees in Poland, their actions as humanitarian organisations, including volunteering and cooperation with other stakeholders outside the academic community.
- Part IV. Good practices in managing massive influx of refugees – 3 open questions about the most effective actions of the Polish universities, their reflection on what could be done better, lessons learnt, and recommendations for other universities.
- Metrics and general information – the name of the university, position of the respondent and general number of Ukrainian students were collected and then anonymised for the analysis.

The questionnaire was a mix of close-ended questions and open-ended questions, with one or multiple options for answers. Open questions allowed the universities to elaborate more on their activities and share the links or any relevant information. Several questions were designed as a matrix, e.g. evaluation of the challenges or diversity of forms of support in different academic years.

### PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The response rate was around 50%, half the CRASP members responded to the survey – 51 higher education institutions of different types and from different regions and different cities<sup>66</sup>. The biggest number of respondents came from the big academic cities, such as: Warsaw (12), Kraków (8) and Silesia region (6), Wrocław (5), Poznań (5). The universities from the regions that are close to the Polish-Ukrainian border were from Lublin (3), Rzeszów (2), Białystok (1). Łódź was represented by two universities as well as Kielce. Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Olsztyn, Dąbrowa Górnicza and Siedlce were represented by one HEI answering the survey.

According to the types there were: universities (14), universities of technology (11), medical universities (5), schools of art (5), universities of natural sciences and agriculture (5), schools of economics (4), pedagogical HEI (1), as well as 5 non-public HEIs and one associated member.

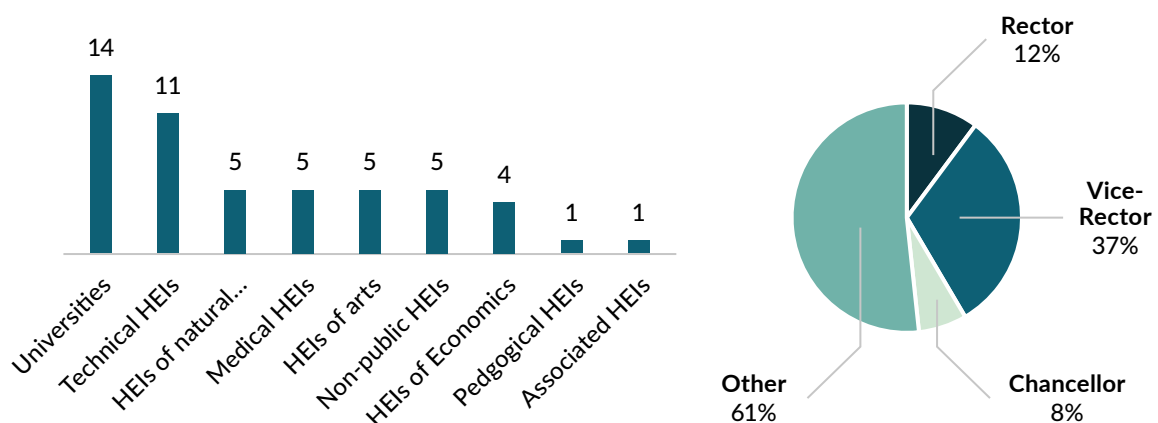


Figure 10. Respondents: types of HEIs, function

<sup>66</sup>List of HEIs respondents is in Annex 2.

There was a diversity among survey respondents from the Polish universities, mostly it was senior management staff: vice-rectors (37%) (for studies, students, science, international cooperation, university development), rectors (12%), chancellors (8%), but the majority (61%) there were specially designated persons such as rector's plenipotentiaries for assistance or cooperation with Ukraine, heads/chairmen of dedicated teams (for aid to Ukraine, for the Ukrainian community, for coordinating and initiating activities to support Ukrainian citizens), directors/heads of the International Centres/Departments and their deputies, heads of organisational units, departments for analysis, employees of the Rector's office (managers, plenipotentiaries, assistants), heads of the International Students' Office or their deputies, crisis management specialists. Sometimes several persons participated in answering the survey, so several options were chosen.

## SURVEY ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### POLISH UNIVERSITIES' FIRST REACTION TO THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

In the first weeks after February 24, 2022, the emergency situation in the Polish universities was mainly managed by the university authorities – personally rector, vice-rectors and the chancellor, with the involvement of other university staff (58%), members of student governments and student organisations, as well as specially established crisis teams, such as the University committee of solidarity with Ukraine or the humanitarian aid team. A significant role was also played by people performing managerial functions at the university – directors and heads of various units, e.g. the Study/Student Service Centre. The university's spokespersons and staff of the marketing/promotion and recruitment office were also involved in the activities. In one-fourth of the responding universities, people such as deans or directors of International Centres were mentioned. The bursar, senate or volunteer centre managers were less often indicated by the respondents.

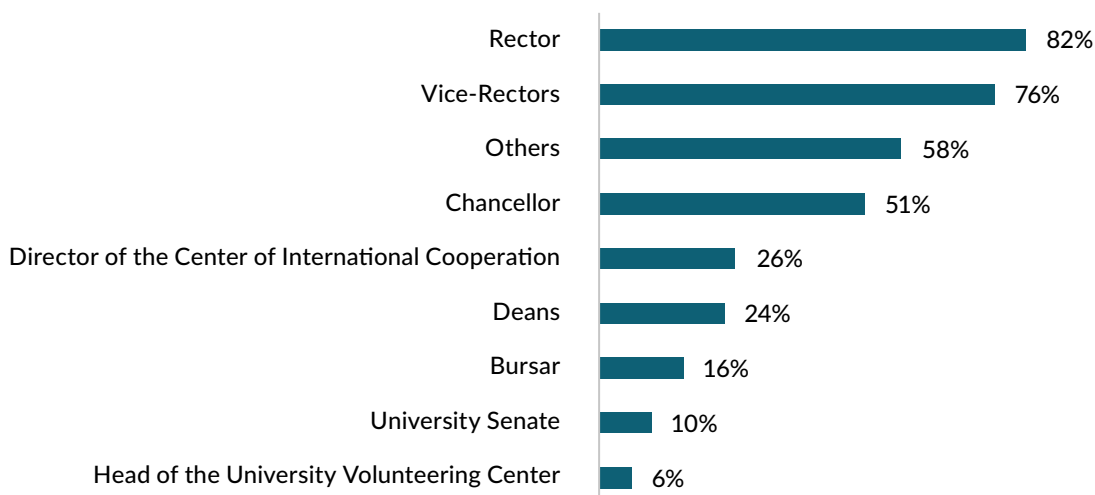


Figure 11. Who in the University played a key role in the emergency actions in the first weeks of the full-scale invasion of Russia on Ukraine?





In the first weeks after the outbreak of the war, Polish universities took a number of measures to support both Ukrainian citizens and members of the academic community affected by the war.

University management was focused on creating a proper organisational framework, and legal regulations and improving communication channels. Regular meetings of university authorities were organised to set priorities and ensure consistency of activities. Universities publicly condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine, suspended cooperation with Russian institutions, and terminated bilateral agreements. One of the challenging tasks however was to bring the Polish students who had been in Russian universities on exchange programs at the moment of the outbreak of the war back to Poland and settle the formalities related to those mobilities.

### LEGAL REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIC DECISIONS

One of the first steps taken by universities was the introduction of new legal regulations and systemic solutions that enabled quick decision-making. They were aimed at organising humanitarian aid, cooperation with partner universities from Ukraine, and simplification of procedures related to the admission of Ukrainian students and providing them with financial support.

*The basic issues to be determined were legal and systemic regulations enabling immediate action, including cooperation with partner universities. (...) Informing the academic community about the situation and standing in solidarity with Ukraine. (Medical University/12)*

### ESTABLISHMENT OF CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS AND STRUCTURES

Many universities created dedicated organisational structures that coordinated aid activities. These were both collective bodies, such as emergency response groups, crisis teams, humanitarian aid teams, a team for helping the Ukrainian community, teams for coordinating activities, as well as individual positions, such as the Rector's plenipotentiaries for aid to Ukraine or coordinators for refugees.

*A Team for Aid to Ukraine was established to coordinate all activities related to help to Ukrainian citizens – fundraising, assistance to students and scientists from Ukraine, local support related to the reception and accommodation of refugees in the city. (University of Natural Sciences /48)*

*The University authorities established a Group that was supposed to develop the internal procedures and forms of support (University/32)*

The activities of these teams included both the development of an aid strategy and the coordination of activities at the operational level, such as accommodation for refugees and the organization of donation collections.

### INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION OF ACTIVITIES

Universities have also improved their communication channels, which has enabled them to respond quickly to the needs of the Ukrainian community, in particular, for better coordination of aid activities universities created a dedicated e-mail address, "Solidarity



with Ukraine” tabs on the university’s websites, special online forms for reporting needs and offering help were launched, they published all necessary information and news in internal newsletters and on websites.

*A website was created in three languages: Polish, Ukrainian and English, which became an information centre for refugees and the academic community (Non-public HEI/29)*

Some universities established special contact points, which provided current information for both refugees and people from the academic community (students, doctoral candidates, researchers), making it easier for them to adapt to new conditions.

## **VOLUNTEERING AND SOCIAL INITIATIVES**

Universities or Volunteer Centres (operating at the university before the war or established because of the massive influx of refugees) immediately organised groups of volunteers from among students, employees, graduates and other people to help refugees. Student governments and university faculties were involved in volunteering activities, they also organised grassroots initiatives of individual staff members. Universities closely collaborated with local authorities and humanitarian organisations.

*University, in cooperation with the Ukrainian House, set up the Warsaw Support Centre for refugees in the first days after Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. The centre helped 340 Ukrainian families. It also immediately started collections and volunteer activities with 1 336 volunteers (Non-public HEI/3)*

*The Volunteer Centre (...) immediately organised a group of 30 volunteers (...) with knowledge of Polish and Ukrainian, including refugees from Ukraine willing to support activities for the benefit of their compatriots (Technical University/25).*

*The university organised a group of several hundred volunteers who were involved in the volunteer work coordinated not only by the university but also by public institutions, local hospitals or non-governmental organizations (University/33)*

**Types of help provided** included humanitarian aid, financial assistance, accommodation, adaptation and integration. The university’s support was organised both for refugees in Poland and for people staying in Ukraine.

If a Polish university cooperated with Ukrainian universities before the outbreak of the war, supporting the partners was among its priorities. Cooperation with partner universities in Ukraine was based on the flexible adaptation of activities to their current needs and situation. It was crucial to keep constant contact and identify the areas where support was most needed. In response to the reported needs, Polish universities coordinated humanitarian, financial and academic actions, considering the exceptional conditions of war and the specificity of the functioning of Ukrainian universities, trying to avoid brain drain.

*Regular contact with partner Ukrainian universities in matters of teaching and stay of students from Ukraine in Poland, formal arrangements with respect for the situation of HEIs in Ukraine, their internal regulations*



*and Ukrainian legislation in the field of science and higher education, especially in the context of martial law and the future of Ukraine. (University/30)*

## **HUMANITARIAN AND MATERIAL SUPPORT**

One of the key actions was the organisation of collections of material and financial aid at the faculties, in the libraries, in the main buildings of universities, and more over organisation of humanitarian aid transports to Ukrainian universities. Universities in border regions and towns (Lublin, Rzeszów) and metropolies(Warsaw, Krakow) opened reception points for refugees.

*A collection took place at the University in five rooms: food, medicines, dressing and sanitary products, clothing and other useful goods. The collected goods were then transported both to the west of Ukraine (Polish - Ukrainian border) and the east (Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro, Mariupol and several smaller towns). In total, we managed to organise more than 30 convoys carrying the collected goods. Each convoy contained between 3 and 7 trucks of various capacity. The entire operation lasted from February 26, 2022, to March 14, 2022 (Non-public HEI/2)*

In addition, Polish Universities opened dedicated bank accounts for raising funds for refugees and Ukrainian universities and conducted auctions or charity events accompanied by cultural events (e.g. auctions of artistic works or the organization of concerts). The collected funds were donated to help refugees, but also Ukrainian students, doctoral candidates, university staff and their families.

Medical universities and some other universities that have medical studies became involved in delivering healthcare support and organised medical goods shipping to Ukraine:

*The widely promoted 'Ambulance for Lviv' campaign was launched. It succeeded in buying a transport ambulance for the hospital in Lviv. Its purchase was financed by a collection from the academic community and contributions from university companies. We raised as much as a quarter of a million zloty for this purpose! (Medical University/50)*

## **ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES**

Universities provided their premises such as student dormitories and residences, branches, and leisure centres to accommodate refugees and families of students and employees from Ukraine. Some HEIs on demand by local authorities offered an additional space for accommodation for refugees.

*For the needs of families with children, the university prepared one of the sports halls (space for approximately 200 people). More than 230 people from Ukraine, including 80 children, were accommodated in other facilities (University/7)*

Some Polish universities cooperated with the Polish Army and NATO armed forces by providing the university's infrastructure for their usage.



## ADAPTATION OF REFUGEES

Better to rephrase like “Facilitating Ukrainian refugees’ adaptation to new living conditions included linguistic, psychological, legal, medical, and professional support.

*Support for communication in Ukrainian..., free intensive courses in Polish, and organisation of legal advice within the framework of duty hours of employees (University/11)*

*24h psychological assistance was provided for war victims and people hosting refugees (Technical University/25).*

Some universities provided support for the professional adaptation/activation of refugees, e.g. a consultation point, a job point or entrepreneurship counselling, and a “bank” of job offers for refugees. Some universities provided jobs for refugees (e.g. for Ukrainian psychologists, teachers, cleaning services). Universities helped in providing translation assistance for refugees in local government administration units, aid points, and medical institutions.

Universities were actively involved in helping refugee children. Childcare was organised both as part of volunteering activities and with the participation of specialists. The activities included: educational and creative activities conducted by volunteers, help in learning and doing homework, organization of language courses for children, provision of psychological care and therapeutic activities.

*Volunteers conducted classes for children and young people, helping them find themselves in the new reality and mitigate the effects of war trauma (University of Arts/14)*

The universities also took care of refugee children staying in dormitories, organising daily care and integration activities for them.

## ACADEMIC SUPPORT TO EXISTING AND NEW REFUGEE STUDENTS / RESEARCHERS FROM UKRAINE.

The universities have directed special efforts to Ukrainian students who had already started studying in Poland before the war. A number of financial measures were introduced, such as waiving or reducing tuition fees, the possibility of applying for exemption from accommodation fees in dormitories, and material support under the regulations of student allowances. In addition, students were offered psychological assistance in Polish, Ukrainian, English and Russian languages, and food was provided for those most in need, which helped them survive the most difficult time.

Universities introduced financial support for newly accepted Ukrainian students, such as the possibility of continuing their studies, transferring to a Polish university, and simplified recruitment procedures. Financial support, exemption or reduction of tuition fees and places in student dormitories were also offered. For Ukrainian researchers, Polish universities offered different internship programs and employment support.

*Job offers for refugees were provided, including teachers from partner universities (University of Natural Sciences/13)*

Some universities also organised transport from the border, and designated employees in dean's offices helping new students with administrative processes. These facilitations allowed hundreds of young people to continue their education and gain new perspectives in the face of the war crisis.

The emergency management in Polish universities in the first weeks of the Russian invasion of Ukraine was aimed not only at helping in academic activities but primarily at the need to cope with crisis and challenges of the unprecedented influx of refugees into the country such as, humanitarian assistance. The introduction of necessary university regulations, establishment of dedicated crisis teams and the creation of effective communication channels made it possible to quickly take action responding the needs of the Ukrainian civilian refugees and academic community. This allowed universities to manage the crisis more effectively, involving both their resources and the academic community.

### CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN POLISH UNIVERSITIES

Most of the surveyed universities (69%) formally established a special crisis team to manage the emergency of the massive influx of refugees. In the remaining HEIs (31%), actions were taken without the creation of a formal body, at the level of the university authorities (Rector, Vice-Rectors, Chancellor) cooperating with other decision-makers, e.g. deans, coordinators for helping refugees, plenipotentiaries, student government. The meetings were organised ad hoc, depending on the needs and the current situation.

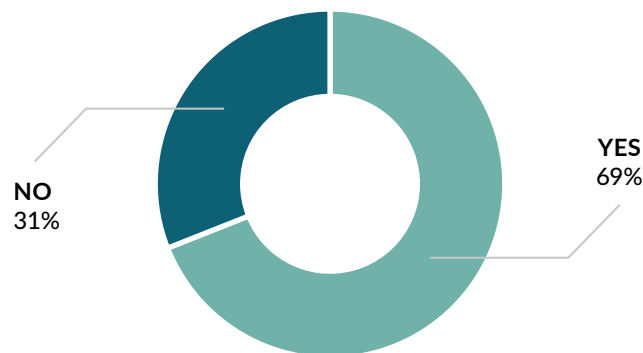


Figure 12. Did the University formally set up a crisis/emergency team?

### COMPOSITION OF THE CRISIS/EMERGENCY TEAM

Based on an analysis of the composition of crisis teams established at universities, several main types of teams can be distinguished by the functions performed by their members, with the participation of the university authorities (in various configurations), academic community and experts.

**TABLE 2. TYPES OF CRISIS TEAMS AT POLISH UNIVERSITIES**

<b>High-level centralised emergency management</b>	
<p><b>Teams composed exclusively of representatives of the university authorities.</b>                      The composition of the team is formed by the senior university management, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rector</li> <li>• Vice-rectors (especially for student affairs and international cooperation),</li> <li>• The chancellor and/or bursar (their deputies)</li> </ul>	
<b>Academic community-based emergency management</b>	
<p><b>Administrative and expert teams:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heads of departments (international cooperation, education, student affairs, organizational and legal, promotion, IT),</li> <li>• Representatives of support offices and centres (e.g. Centre for Persons with disabilities, International Centre, Crisis Management Office).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teams with the participation of the academic community:</b>                      The teams include representatives of various groups of universities, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representatives of the student government and doctoral students,</li> <li>• Trade union representatives,</li> <li>• Academics from units relevant to aid activities ( e.g. psychologists, legal and pedagogical experts),</li> <li>• Social responsibility coordinators</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hybrid teams</b>                      (combining different divisions and roles):                      Created by the authorities of organizational units, representatives of the administration and the student community m.in.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deans of faculties/vice-deans,</li> <li>• Employees of the relevant departments,</li> <li>• Press officers,</li> <li>• Coordinators for assistance and communication with international partners.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teams with the participation of specialists and dedicated persons:</b>                      The teams included people with specific competences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experts in international cooperation,</li> <li>• Communication coordinators,</li> <li>• People who speak Ukrainian or have Ukrainian roots.</li> </ul>

The presence of representatives of the university authorities was a permanent element of each type of crisis team, which emphasised the importance of the actions taken and the need for coordination at the highest level. The authorities played both a decision-making and representative role, ensuring effective and coordinated support.



**Figure 13. The main tasks of the University crisis/emergency team**



There are 4 main tasks of the crisis team established at Polish universities: coordination of humanitarian activities for refugees (86%), providing support for members of the university community of Ukrainian origin (83%), coordination of activities for the admission of Ukrainian refugee students, doctoral candidates and researchers (80%) and cooperation with external actors in providing help to refugees (80%).

The survey showed that a key task of the team was to coordinate large-scale humanitarian aid to refugees from Ukraine arriving in Poland while supporting members of their own academic community – Ukrainian students, doctoral candidates and staff from the pre-war period. Massive academic activities were also undertaken for new arrivals – refugees from Ukraine, refugee students, PhDs and staff as well. This shows that universities acted on diverse levels – from the local (within their community) to more global (in humanitarian aid).

The emergency response teams approached the crisis in a multidimensional way. An important task was to build networks with government institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the private sector and businesses. The universities functioned as a link between the different actors. A high percentage of responses means that universities realise that in the face of such a major crisis, they should not act alone. External cooperation was necessary to mobilise resources, coordinate large-scale activities and obtain financial and organisational support. This is also due to the role and mission of HEIs as public entities operating in close connection with other institutions.

The cooperation of crisis teams with the CRASP teams (57%) shows that HEIs required systemic support at the level of the representative institution, were looking for common solutions regarding the coordination of activities, and the exchange of good practices in shaping institutional response and policies for refugees.

The task of the crisis teams was also to adapt administrative and organizational procedures to the extraordinary situation. In more than half of the surveyed universities, the teams were responsible for drafting internal legal acts (54%) and managing material and financial resources (51%). Universities had to develop new regulations and manage their resources effectively.

To a lesser extent, crisis teams were involved in coordinating aid activities on the Polish-Ukrainian border (31%). Other activities included organization and coordination of accommodation, organization of psychological and pedagogical support, and coordination of all initiatives at the university regarding refugees in general (20%).

Crisis teams at universities focused primarily on the coordination of aid and adaptation, both within the academic community and towards regular refugees. The key was to combine a quick operational response (humanitarian aid, admission of students) with strategic activities (cooperation with institutions and creation of regulations).

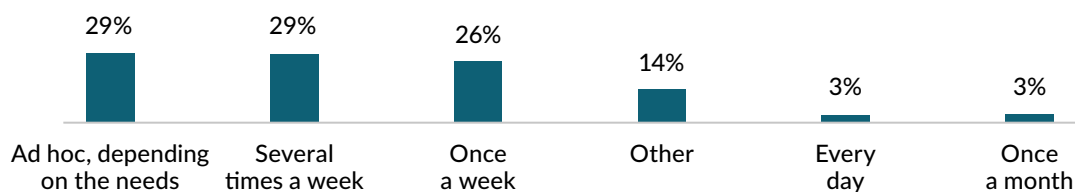


Figure 14. Frequency of the meetings of the University crisis team

The frequency of meetings of crisis teams at universities was adapted to the dynamics of the situation and current needs. Most often, meetings were held ad hoc, depending on the needs (29%), or several times a week (29%), especially in the beginning. Some HEIs adopted a fixed rhythm, holding meetings once a week (26%), and in a few cases meetings were held daily (3%) or once a month (3%). Other options (14%) were more flexible solutions, e.g. higher dynamics in the first weeks of the war to respond to emerging challenges, and lower after the stabilization, but team members remained ready to act quickly if necessary.

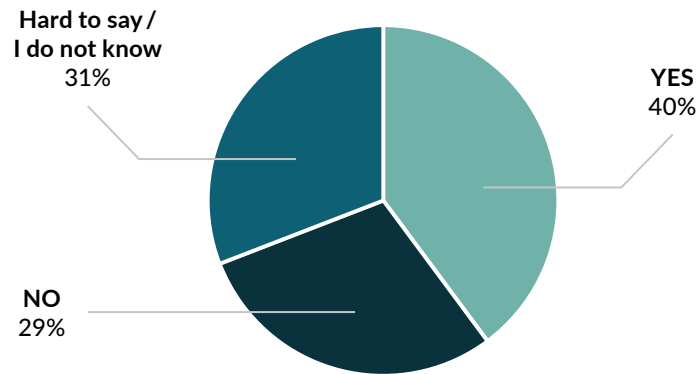


Figure 15. Self-evaluation of the University crisis team

In some of the surveyed universities (40%), crisis teams evaluated their activities, 29% did not take such steps, and 31% of the respondents had difficulties with answering this question or did not have information about such team activity.

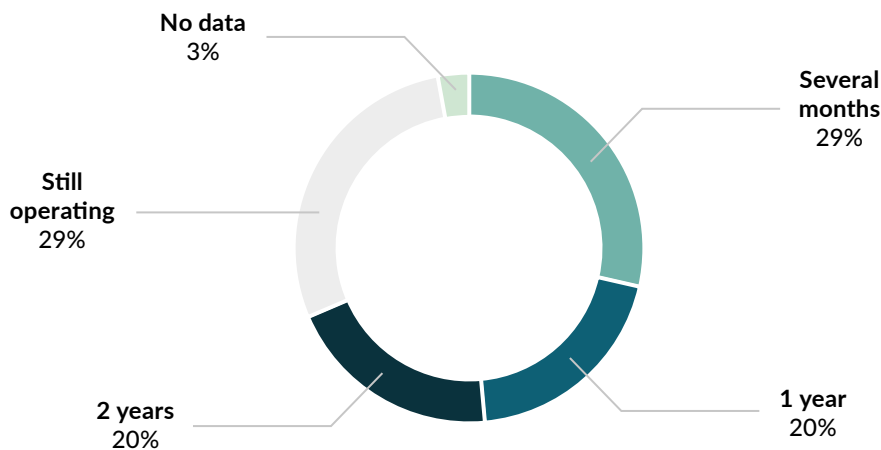


Figure 16. Duration of the crisis team operation at Polish universities

Crisis teams at Polish universities were most often operating for several months (29%), indicating their intensive intervention during the period of greatest need for help actions, and for a longer period, as they are still active in 29% of surveyed universities, that proves the need for continuous preparedness and response to ongoing challenges. In 20% of universities, teams operated for one year or two years (20%) showing that the crisis required a long-term commitment. One HEI did not provide any information on the duration of the team's activities.



The surveyed universities used a variety of approaches to crisis management. Although some of them (31%) did not set up a dedicated crisis team, they responded to situations and challenges on an ongoing basis. Crisis management was carried out at the collegial and individual levels. The responsibility for the decisions made rested with the university authorities – the rector, vice-rectors, and chancellor, who acted in the formula of “working meetings.” They cooperated with representatives of the university administration, deans, and employees responsible for individual units. In many cases, the coordinating functions were performed by senior university management, e.g. vice-rector for the organisation and development, the vice-rector for student affairs, the chancellor, or specially appointed plenipotentiaries.

At the individual level, a special role was played by people responsible for specific tasks, such as the refugee coordinator, the plenipotentiary for foreign students or the occupational health and safety and fire protection specialist. These people monitored the situation, supported refugees in their living matters and cooperated with the university authorities in the implementation of the decisions made. For example, at one university, a refugee coordinator was appointed to deal with administrative formalities and report to the rector about important issues related to the crisis.

Informal teams or initiatives were also established in HEIs. One of the surveyed universities introduced a system of “permanent on-call duty,” in which various representatives of universities specially trained to act in a crisis situation were involved. The purpose of this system was to ensure the continuity of decision-making and information flow, as well as to prepare for the implementation of operational tasks in emergency situations.

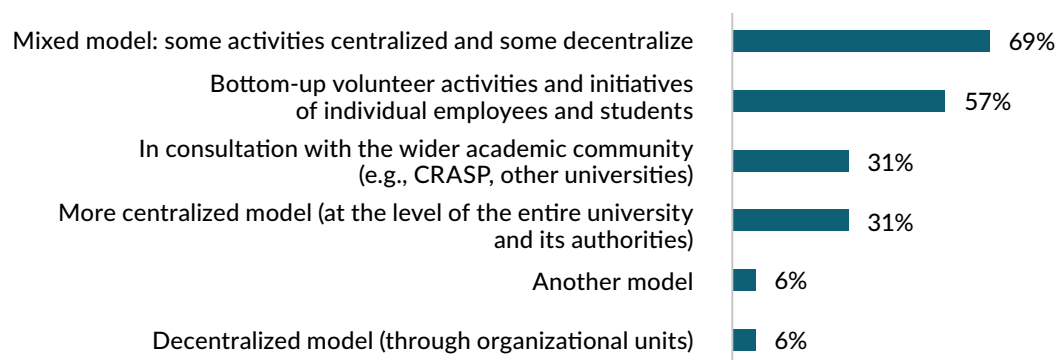
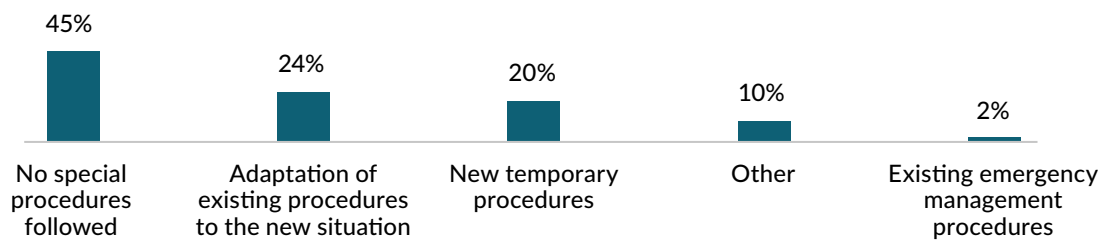


Figure 17. Model of operation of Polish universities in an emergency

Most of the surveyed universities (69%) facing unexpected emergencies operated according to a mixed model – some activities were centralised and some were decentralised, and at the same time, bottom-up activities and initiatives of individual employees and students (57%) were of great importance. The centralised model of emergency management was adopted by one-third of the responding Polish HEIs (31%), as well as one-third of the universities took actions in consultation with the academic community – national rectors’ conference or other universities. Only three of the surveyed universities operated according to a decentralised model, and one of them drew attention to the significant role of cooperation with local governments.



**Figure 18. Crisis response procedures applied by the emergency team in Polish HEIs**

Quite a big part of the surveyed Polish universities (45%) said that they did not use any special procedures in response to a crisis situation, which may indicate insufficient preparation for crises or the ability to cope with problems as part of standard functioning.

However, most universities have decided to change their current procedures or introduce new, temporary solutions:

- 24% of universities have adapted their existing procedures to the new situation, made changes to the university regulations, including study regulations and the regulations of students allowances, changes in the recruitment rules – simplification of procedures related to admission, changes in the rules for providing financial support – introduction of faster decision-making paths in the field of allowances, rescue procedures and procedures related to health and safety;
- 20% of universities implemented completely new, temporary solutions, e.g. common actions included fee waivers, procedures for transferring students from Ukraine, material and psychological support, as well as the establishment of crisis teams.
- 10% of the surveyed universities adopted other solutions, e.g. rector’s ordinances responding to current problems, e.g. the introduction of mandatory free Polish language courses for refugees, using the experience and methods of operation of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis team, implementation of the projects in cooperation with European University Alliances. According to one of these universities, procedures were not used because “any formalisation or forcing into rigid procedures would only dilute our actions.”

A small percentage of universities (2%) indicated the use of already existing, formal crisis management procedures, such as the permanent duty of the specialists on civil defence. This may mean the need to review actions and develop more comprehensive action plans for the future based on current experience.

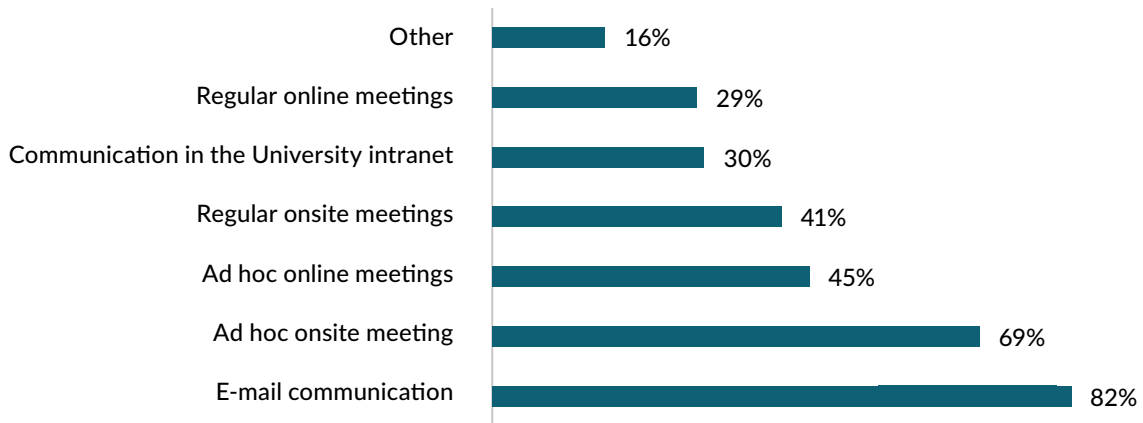


Figure 19. Main channels of internal communication in the University

The main communication channels at universities were based on e-mail communication (82%) and face-to-face and online meetings. As one can see, universities were acting more ad hoc in the first period, both on-site and online: on-site ad-hoc meetings (69%) were organised more frequently than regular ones (41%). Direct contact was considered more effective in dynamically changing circumstances. Ad hoc online meetings were used more often (45%) than regular online meetings (29%). The university's intranet (30%) was used for communication, but much less often than communication via e-mail. Other solutions (16%) included communication channels such as internal groups on messengers, e.g. WhatsApp, internal channels on Microsoft Teams, social media, or telephone contact.

According to the collected data, ad hoc meetings, especially on-site, were organised in urgent situations requiring immediate action, while regular meetings, both online and in-person were of supporting and operational character. E-mails were the basic communication channel in crisis response actions ensuring a quick flow of information at universities.

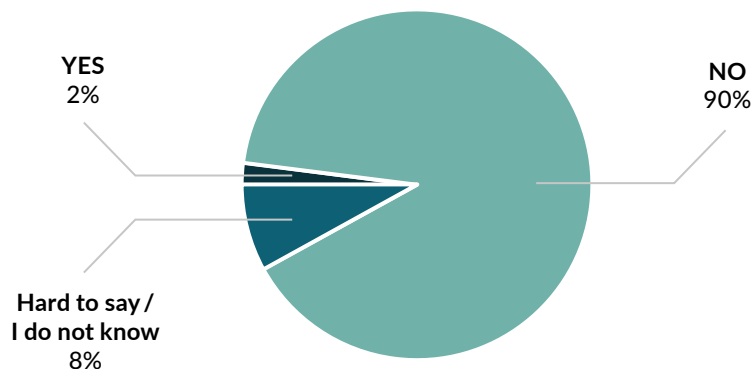


Figure 20. Involvement of external experts in crisis management

According to the collected data, the vast majority (90%) of the surveyed universities did not involve external crisis management specialists. Only one university decided on such a solution, and three did not give a clear answer. Among external crisis management experts, doctors,



psychologists, or language assistants were mentioned, who are not exactly specialists in crisis management but rather the other kinds of aid specialists that were involved in crisis response also by other institutions. The lack of involvement of external crisis managers may be connected with the universities' confidence that the internal structures and staff of the university are sufficiently competent, as well as the avoidance of burdening the university with additional financial costs resulting from the need to employ an external specialist.

### POLISH UNIVERSITIES' ASSISTANCE TO UKRAINIAN REFUGEES (REGULAR CITIZENS, FROM OUTSIDE THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY)

The biggest challenge after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, according to the surveyed universities, was the rapidly changing situation (for 78%). This required the university to take actions under time pressure and in unpredictable circumstances. Similarly, the lack of adequate financial resources was a serious problem – 64% of universities indicated it as a major challenge, which means that universities need to have budgetary safeguards for crisis situations or to get funding from external sources (state budget, EU funds).

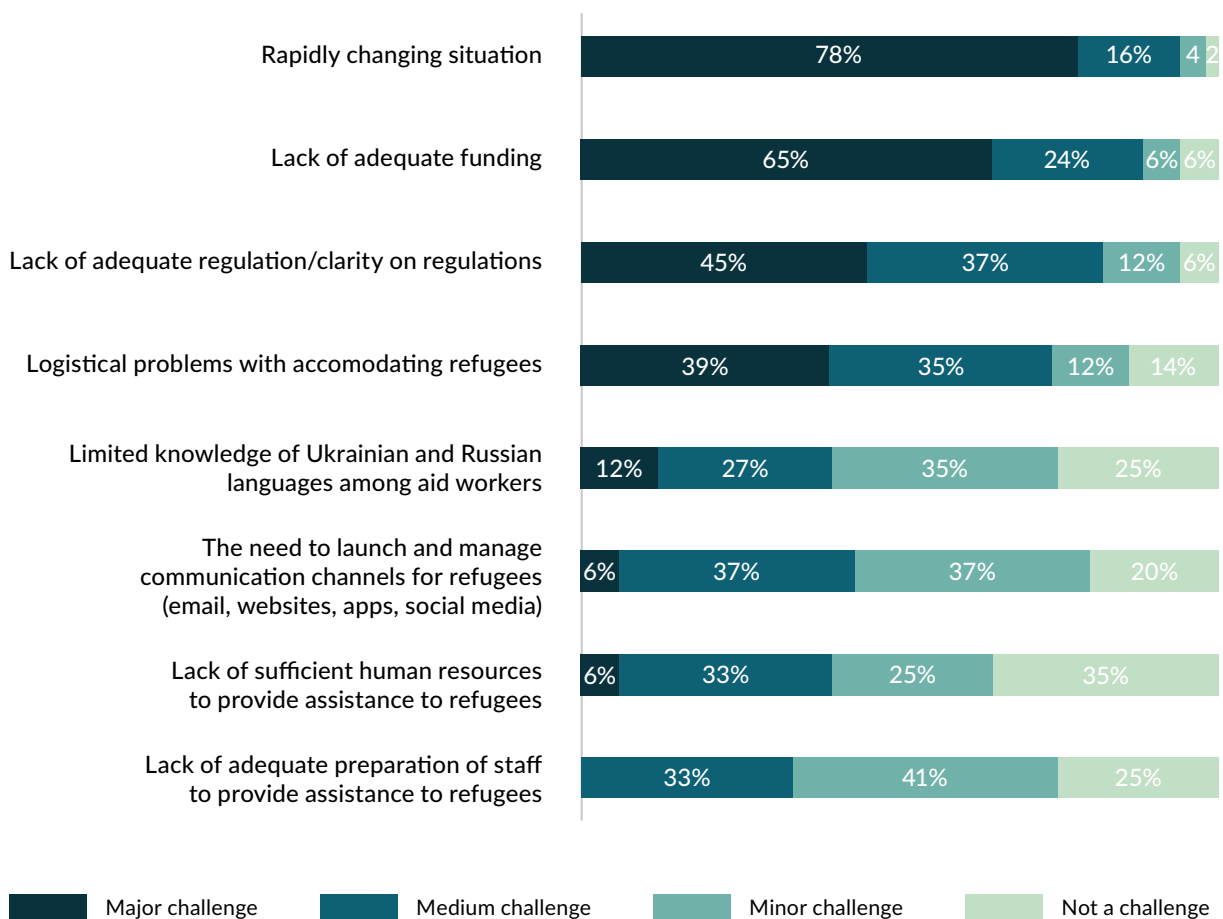


Figure 21. Challenges for Polish universities in emergency response after the outbreak of the war



Lack of necessary legal regulations in the first weeks after the invasion and logistical problems with the accommodation of refugees were assessed as a big challenge by 45% and 37% of universities, respectively, and the rest assessed them as medium-scale challenges. Emerging difficulties in organising aid and the lack of clear legal guidance could have made it significantly more difficult to act quickly and effectively in the face of the crisis.

Limited knowledge of Ukrainian or Russian and the lack of sufficient human resources were considered as less important challenges or even not a challenge at all.

The need to launch and manage communication channels for refugees was assessed mainly as a challenge on a medium (37%) or smaller (37%) scale. For 20% of universities, this was not a difficulty, which may be due to earlier preparation in the field of digital communication, e.g. experience related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to research, in the face of unpredictable situations such as the outbreak of war, it is necessary to be able to react quickly to dynamic changes and to organise support with limited resources. Language and technological difficulties are less important because universities are better prepared in this area.

The surveyed universities also drew attention to other challenges, such as logistical, organisational, and social. There were problems with the distribution of material resources and the organization of aid activities, e.g. at the railway stations. Legal procedures limited the efficiency of organising fundraising or other collections. Some universities felt insufficient support from the central level, ministerial and governmental. The challenge was social tensions between people (also students) from Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus. This required the ability to resolve conflicts and the need for universities to provide the help of specialists, especially psychologists. The universities did their best to ensure the adaptation of refugees to the new socio-cultural environment, they organised individual consultations and involved their existing students and staff of Ukrainian origin in helping. The war also had a serious impact on the mental well-being of the university community in Polish universities, who were functioning in fear of escalating the conflict to other European countries and a constant feeling of threat and insecurity.

### **Forms of helping refugees**

Universities undertook a wide range of actions to help refugees (fig. 22), but humanitarian aid naturally dominated (84%). Accommodation was provided by 59% of the surveyed universities, which emphasises the importance of the infrastructure of universities in the face of the sudden influx of large numbers of refugees into the country.

An important activity was support in the adaptation of refugee children (53%), universities were involved in the organisation of care, integration and educational assistance. A similar percentage of universities (51%) provided psychological assistance, which is particularly important in the face of the need to cope with war trauma and adapt to new living conditions abroad. To help the daily functioning of refugees in Poland, 51% of surveyed universities launched language courses, and 41% provided food for refugees.

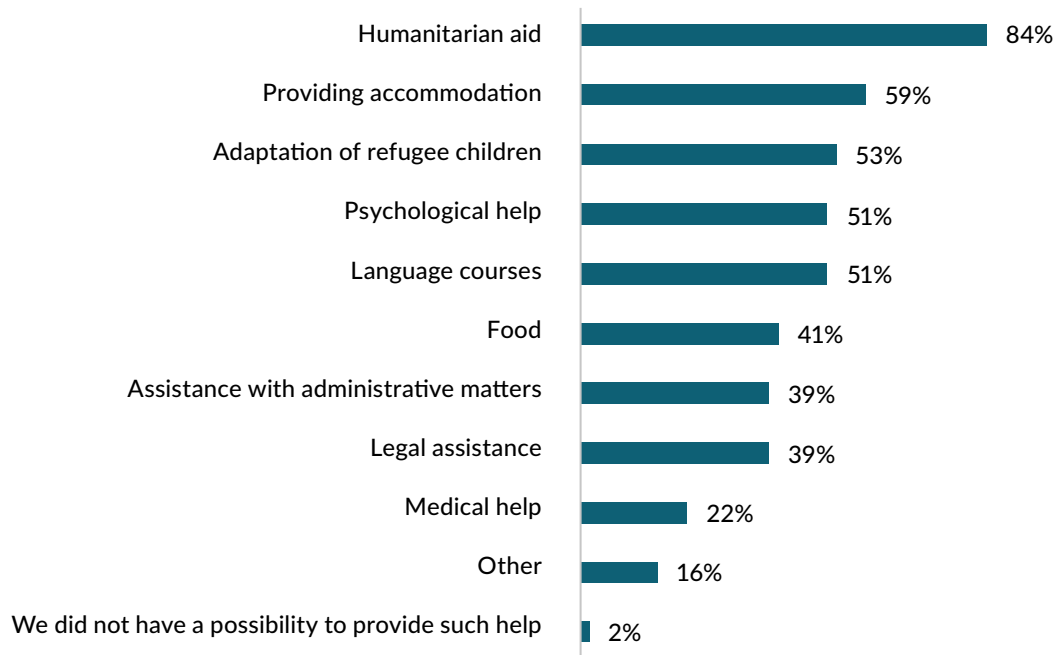


Figure 22. Forms of assistance to Ukrainian refugees (regular citizens, from outside the academic community)

Administrative and legal help (39% each) focused on supporting refugees in completing various administrative formalities and procedures in Poland. Medical assistance was less common, although important (22%), in particular, provided by medical universities or universities with departments of medicine (e.g. Jagiellonian University created a platform *lekarzedlaurainy.pl* that facilitated free medical appointments for refugees).

Among other activities (16%) universities mentioned implementation of government-funded programs, e.g. projects of the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange NAWA “Solidarity with Ukraine”, free veterinary assistance for animals, translation assistance, MOOC course “Poland in a nutshell”, audiobooks of fairytales in Ukrainian language, sports and leisure activities for refugee children, daycare for children in students dormitories where Ukrainian refugees were accommodated, organisation of fundraising campaigns, etc.

Summing it up, the forms of support offered by Polish universities to refugees from Ukraine were dominated by activities providing basic material and housing needs. At the same time, universities focused on psychological, educational, and administrative support, playing a vital role in the process of adaptation of refugees in Poland.

## Wider cooperation

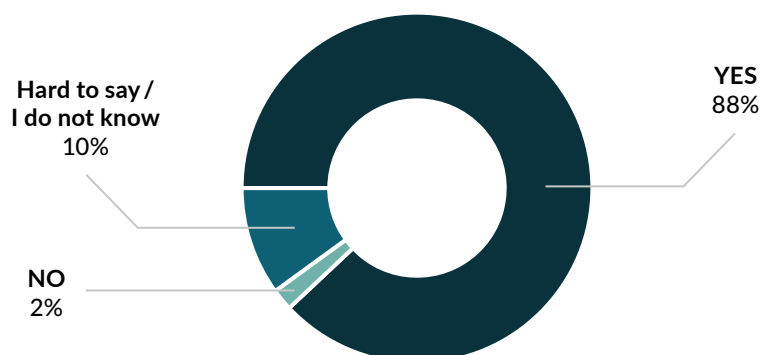


Figure 23. Cooperation with local authorities, NGOs, and businesses in providing help for Ukrainian refugees.

Most surveyed universities (88%) cooperated with local authorities, non-governmental organizations and businesses to help refugees, 10% of respondents did not have information on this subject, and only one university did not undertake such activities.

The universities described the forms of this cooperation and assessed the level of their satisfaction. Cooperation with local, regional, and central authorities had a strategic importance. The universities undertook activities together with voivodeship governments, city halls, district authorities as well as the Embassy of Ukraine in Poland and other embassies, e.g. in helping in the evacuation of foreign students from third countries, in particular from Africa (e.g. SGH Warsaw School of Economics<sup>67</sup>). In many cases, the result of this cooperation was the organisation of accommodation and subsistence for refugees and the raising of funds by universities for these activities. Some universities, in cooperation with the regional authorities, created information points for refugees, where they could obtain information on available services, legal support or help in dealing with formalities related to their stay in Poland. Universities took part in the preparation of the emergency psychological brigades in cooperation with the local authorities. Students and lecturers of Ukrainian and Russian philology were also involved in translations. Some universities joined global humanitarian actions (e.g. UN Global Compact Network Poland, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights), cooperated with the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and their department in Poland informally and formally (by signing a formal agreement). Most universities were satisfied with the cooperation with the authorities, only one university pointed out that:

*Both the local and central authorities (from the Voivode to the Mayor) did not support us in our activities. (Technical University/8)*

Universities were actively cooperating with non-governmental organizations for the whole crisis period, (e.g. *Homo Faber, Kamionek, Ukrainian House, Partytura, All in Music, Coalition Open Cracow, Gentes Foundation, Humanosz Foundation, The Foundation Aid to Poles in the East, etc.*) in organising the transport of refugees from the border, collecting material donations, transporting equipment (e.g. power generators) to Ukraine or preparing

<sup>67</sup> <https://gazeta.sgh.waw.pl/aktualnosci/sgh-solidaryzuje-sie-z-ukraina-i-podejmuje-dzialania-pomocowe>



integration activities for refugees in Poland. Cooperation with NGOs for all types of HEIs was mutually beneficial and allowed for better responses to the refugees' needs:

*Partnerships with local authorities and NGOs – enabled the rapid organisation of collection and distribution points for donations and the provision of space for relief activities. (Non-public HEI/3)*

*University cooperated with NGOs acting in our city to ensure synergy of the activities undertaken and maximise using of our joint potential... In planning our activities, the University was using NGOs' knowledge of the actual urgent needs of refugees (University/51)*

The surveyed universities successfully used their contacts with the business world, local, national, and international companies. As a result, universities could get furniture, household appliances (e.g. IKEA Poland, Mavripol Development S.A., Toyota Motor Poland, etc.), mobile phones and SIM cards (e.g. PLAY), food (e.g. MAKRO Cash&Carry), books, stationary and creative materials (e.g. Empik, TALENS Poland, Tinta, etc.), medical support (e.g. LuxMed Group, etc.) well as co-financing, e.g. for language courses for refugees (e.g. Polish-Swiss Chamber of Commerce).

It was important that universities cooperated with professional organisations in delivering certain specific forms of support, e.g. in cooperation with local Bar Associations universities could organise free legal and administrative consultations for refugees.

Most universities positively evaluated the cooperation, especially with NGOs and local authorities, although stressed the importance of the need to improve this communication. Bottom-up initiatives and a “chain of people of goodwill” were considered the most effective, which allowed for a quick response depending on the current situation.

### **Organisation of volunteering work for Ukrainian refugees in Polish universities**

In response to the massive influx of Ukrainian forced migrants, universities across Poland mobilised students and staff to provide essential support. These voluntary activities were organised both spontaneously and through structured coordination, demonstrating solidarity and humanitarian commitment.

University volunteer work was based on individual willingness, with no fixed duration. Students and staff participated as long as they could, contributing their time and skills. Coordination was typically managed by university staff, student councils, or faculty representatives. Different universities adopted varied strategies for organising volunteer work. Some universities introduced a centralised management system, e.g. through crisis teams or teams for helping Ukraine. Some universities acted in a decentralised way when volunteers were more self-organised and implemented their activities voluntarily without formal university structures. Some institutions had pre-existing volunteer structures, while others relied on grassroots efforts.

The student government and students' association played a key role in the organization of volunteering. They initiated aid activities, coordinated donation collections, and undertook grassroots initiatives at the level of faculties and student dormitories.





Some universities created structures that allowed for quick recruitment of volunteers, e.g. Aid Banks where volunteers were divided into task groups, and special surveys were conducted to find volunteers and their area of competences.

*In the first days of the war, an online survey was created to assess the possibilities and methods of support for people arriving from Ukraine. The survey was sent to all students and university staff. Those interested in helping could specify the type of support they were willing to offer. Additionally, each faculty appointed a contact person for matters related to Ukrainian students. Faculties registered volunteers willing to help, and this database was then forwarded to the Rector's Representative for Aid to Ukraine (University/33)*

The help of students of pedagogical, psychological, and social work faculties was particularly useful:

*As a university, we organised training for 300 student volunteers from the psychology department at [our university] on providing psychological first aid to Ukrainian refugees. We also organised workshops on coping with stress for volunteers supporting Ukrainian refugees” (Non-public HEI/28)*

Some universities organised a volunteer activity based on formal volunteer agreements, allowing access to the university facilities, and also organised necessary training in psychological first aid, stress management and intercultural communication.

*Information campaigns were conducted among students and university staff to encourage participation in volunteering. Training sessions were organised to prepare volunteers for working with refugees, including intercultural communication, first aid, psychological support, and basic administrative procedures. (Technical University/40)*

Digital tools such as Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp groups and email were used to allow for better communication and division of responsibilities. Universities also sent volunteers to support non-governmental organizations or public institutions in their activities for refugees. They also cooperated with local institutions in the field of aid coordination.

To ensure efficiency, several universities implemented strategic solutions, including:

- rapid volunteer mobilization—some universities had hundreds of volunteers within days.
- shift systems: flexible schedules allowed volunteers to participate as per their availability.
- online registration: quick and easy volunteers sign-ups facilitated immediate response.
- introductory training: volunteers received guidance on refugee aid procedures and intercultural communication.
- task-specific volunteer assignments (e.g., food distribution, childcare, clothing warehouses).
- psychological support: universities provided emotional support to volunteers dealing with stressful situations.
- high adaptability: universities adjusted strategies based on feedback and changing refugee needs, ensuring effective long-term support.



Volunteers engaged in various tasks, including direct assistance to refugees:

- translation services for refugees,
- sorting and distributing humanitarian aid,
- assisting in temporary hospitals and refugee centres,
- providing guidance at university contact points,
- free legal consultations for refugees,
- psychological counselling services,
- language courses for Ukrainian students and refugees,
- social integration and adaptation,
- art therapy workshops for children,
- recreational and extracurricular activities to support refugee well-being,
- academic communities led fundraising and donation campaigns,
- academic support in studies,
- other student organisation initiatives.

Summing it up, Polish universities organised the volunteer work in different models: within formal structures as well as through grassroots self-organization activities. Digital tools (e.g. surveys, and communication platforms) were used to coordinate the work of volunteers, which improved the organisation of work, especially in large academic communities. University academic and administrative staff, students and other university groups were engaged in the volunteering community that created a sense of community and enabled the implementation of a wide range of aid activities. Despite the positive assessment of activities for the organisation of volunteering, some universities pointed to the need for greater formalization and coordination of activities in order to better respond to emergency situations in the future.

### **Innovative, original solutions/tools to support refugees from Ukraine.**

The first humanitarian hub for Ukrainian refugees in Warsaw was created by the University – Kozminski University, in cooperation with a major Ukrainian organisation in Poland – Ukrainian House and Foundation “Nasz wybór” (Our choice) and other partners<sup>68</sup>. The involvement of partner companies allowed the scale of support to be increased by providing donations and organising logistics.

Polish universities managed to implement multiple innovative initiatives aimed at supporting refugees, in particular children experiencing war trauma. For example, the Academy of Fine Arts (ASP) in Krakow created an “Open-Air House” in Zakopane, where mothers with children found shelter. They were provided with accommodation, food, financial and material support, as well as access to everyday items, clothing, and toys. Moreover, regular artistic workshops organised at the Academy of Fine Arts allowed children to cope or forget about difficult experiences for a while, developing their creativity under the supervision of students and doctoral candidates.

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<sup>68</sup> <https://www.kozminski.edu.pl/pl/news/zbiorka-srodkow-finansowych-i-punkt-wsparcia-uchodzcow-z-ukrainy>



SGH Warsaw School of Economics acted as a humanitarian organisation, ensuring the whole package of support for refugees from Ukraine: from the reception points at the Polish-Ukrainian border to accommodation in the students' dormitory, and their adaptation and integration. University network and business partners played a key role here, under the strong leadership of the university authorities<sup>69</sup>. This unique experience was also studied scientifically by the SGH research team within the project "SGH in Warsaw as a support centre for forced migrants from Ukraine" (Polish: "SGH w Warszawie jako centrum wsparcia migrantów przymusowych z Ukrainy") with the involvement of a student volunteer. The project resulted in the internal report<sup>70</sup> and Master thesis based on the collected researcher material<sup>71</sup>.

A good case of psychological support was the publication of the therapeutic fairy tale "Ola, Borys and their new friends"<sup>72</sup>, created by psychologists in cooperation with universities such as the University of Wrocław and the SWPS University. The book aims to help children accept new reality, bringing relief in stressful situations. These activities complemented other forms of care for the youngest, such as equipping common rooms and playrooms, organising educational activities or creating play corners combined with computer rooms, which enabled learning and entertainment at the same time.

John Paul II Catholic University in Lublin offered spiritual support, including religious services in the Ukrainian language and the possibility to arrange private meetings with the religious servants from the University. Moreover, they supported Catholic charitable organisations in their missions for refugees and Ukrainian people<sup>73</sup>.

Language initiatives also played a significant role. Free Polish language courses were organised both online and on-site, and information brochures about the life of the university and its surroundings were prepared in Ukrainian. Many of the activities were carried out in cooperation with Ukrainian students associated with organizations such as "Tryzub", who actively supported translation, for example at railway stations. A unique idea was also a mini-visual dictionary developed by students of the Faculty of Design at the School of Form<sup>74</sup>, which facilitated basic communication with refugees in several language versions.

Technological solutions were also an important support tool. Special tabs/subpages in Ukrainian were created on university websites, such as "Solidarity with Ukraine", which contained information about available aid programs, accommodation places or contact forms. For example, the Poznan University of Technology has joined the project "Time of Professionals Bis" („Czas zawodowców Bis"<sup>75</sup>), providing the Ukrainian version of its educational platform. Mobile applications aimed at Ukrainian students and university

<sup>69</sup> <https://gazeta.sgh.waw.pl/sgh-dla-ukrainy/sgh-dla-ukrainy-wsparcie-firm>; <https://gazeta.sgh.waw.pl/sgh-dla-ukrainy/sgh-dla-ukrainy-wspolpraca-z-fundacja-humanosh>, <https://gazeta.sgh.waw.pl/sgh-dla-ukrainy/wezwani-do-pomocy>

<sup>70</sup> Błędowski, P., Hrabarchuk, S., Kubicki, P., Pachocka, M., Wach, D., SGH w Warszawie jako centrum wsparcia migrantów przymusowych z Ukrainy – raport z grantu rektorskiego, SGH, Warszawa, wrzesień 2022 r., raport z badania, niepublikowany.

<sup>71</sup> [https://gazeta.sgh.waw.pl/absolwenci/absolwentka-sgh-z-nagroda-w-konkursie-instytutu-pracy-i-spraw-socjalnych?fbclid=IwY2xjawHU\\_B5leHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHUM\\_JI4JcvdgroC7lRKQQt8DmqdeuZ19Ra6-t9dGqzjXkwYYCJpVHA-Dw\\_aem\\_BxLzkulHBjHLuNptH0FSDQ](https://gazeta.sgh.waw.pl/absolwenci/absolwentka-sgh-z-nagroda-w-konkursie-instytutu-pracy-i-spraw-socjalnych?fbclid=IwY2xjawHU_B5leHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHUM_JI4JcvdgroC7lRKQQt8DmqdeuZ19Ra6-t9dGqzjXkwYYCJpVHA-Dw_aem_BxLzkulHBjHLuNptH0FSDQ)

<sup>72</sup> [https://swps.pl/images/DOKUMENTY/Polish\\_Edition\\_illustrated.pdf](https://swps.pl/images/DOKUMENTY/Polish_Edition_illustrated.pdf)

<sup>73</sup> [https://www.kul.pl/kul-wspiera-braci-albertynow-niosacych-pomoc-ukrainie,art\\_101850.html](https://www.kul.pl/kul-wspiera-braci-albertynow-niosacych-pomoc-ukrainie,art_101850.html)

<sup>74</sup> <https://swps.pl/my-uniwersytet/aktualnosci/aktualnosci/32413-powstala-strona-internetowa-ze-slowniczkim-wizualnym-stworzonym-przez-studentki-school-of-form-dla-osob-przybywajacych-z-ukrainy>

<sup>75</sup> <https://zawodowcy.org/>



candidates have also been developed. The University of Warsaw created a platform for the online recruitment of candidates from Ukraine (IRK Ukraine), which was used by other Polish universities and became a centralised national platform.

The help offered by the University of Warsaw was also aimed at Ukrainian universities. It proved necessary to ensure the IT security of universities in Ukraine. For this purpose, the Interdisciplinary Centre for Mathematical and Computational Modelling of UW prepared space on the Ceph cluster, which has a capacity of 203 TB with the possibility of increasing it. This made it possible to store the most important electronic data of the universities from Ukraine in a fully secure way, preventing its destruction due to the ongoing hostilities.

In the field of healthcare, some medical universities or faculties organised tactical rescue training for Ukrainian doctors and paramedics conducted both in Poland and Ukraine in cooperation with American specialists. These activities were also accompanied by initiatives such as veterinary duty at railway stations, during which doctors and students helped refugees' animals. The support also included the organization of vaccination of refugees against COVID-19 and the distribution of first aid kits and sanitary products.

An unusual form of help was the collection of vegetable seeds for the elderly in Ukraine, who remained in their homes despite the war. The action organised by the Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences<sup>76</sup> made it possible to run home gardens, supporting the self-sufficiency of these people. In addition, farmers donated food, which was systematically delivered to refugees, combining humanitarian activities with local involvement.

These diverse initiatives, which include a comprehensive package of humanitarian and social support, help for children, language support, technological solutions, medical and community activities, show how universities managed to respond to the diverse needs of refugees on a massive scale. By combining academic resources, the local community, cooperation with social, business partners, and international partnerships, Polish universities created support systems that effectively responded to humanitarian challenges while integrating refugees into academic and social life in Poland.

## SUPPORT ACTIONS FOR ACADEMIC UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN POLISH UNIVERSITIES

### SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS, DOCTORAL STUDENTS, AND EMPLOYEES – MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY BEFORE THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR.

#### Students

The most frequently offered form of support for students from Ukraine already studying at Polish universities before the outbreak of the war was psychological assistance, provided by 92% of the surveyed universities. The high percentage of responses emphasises how important it was for the university to take care of the emotional state of its students, including mitigating the symptoms of stress caused by fear for loved ones affected by the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

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<sup>76</sup> <https://scienceinpoland.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C92298%2Cwroclaw-trwa-zbiorka-nasion-warzyw-dla-ukrainy.html>



Financial assistance offered by universities was an important means to support students. Social scholarships and allowances were granted by 80% of the universities that took part in the survey, which was necessary when the war made it difficult for them, for example, to receive financial support from parents remaining in Ukraine or fleeing the war. The majority of universities (64%) provided assistance in accommodating family members of students of Ukrainian origin. This indicates, a strong sense of solidarity among universities and responsibility for the situations of members of their community.

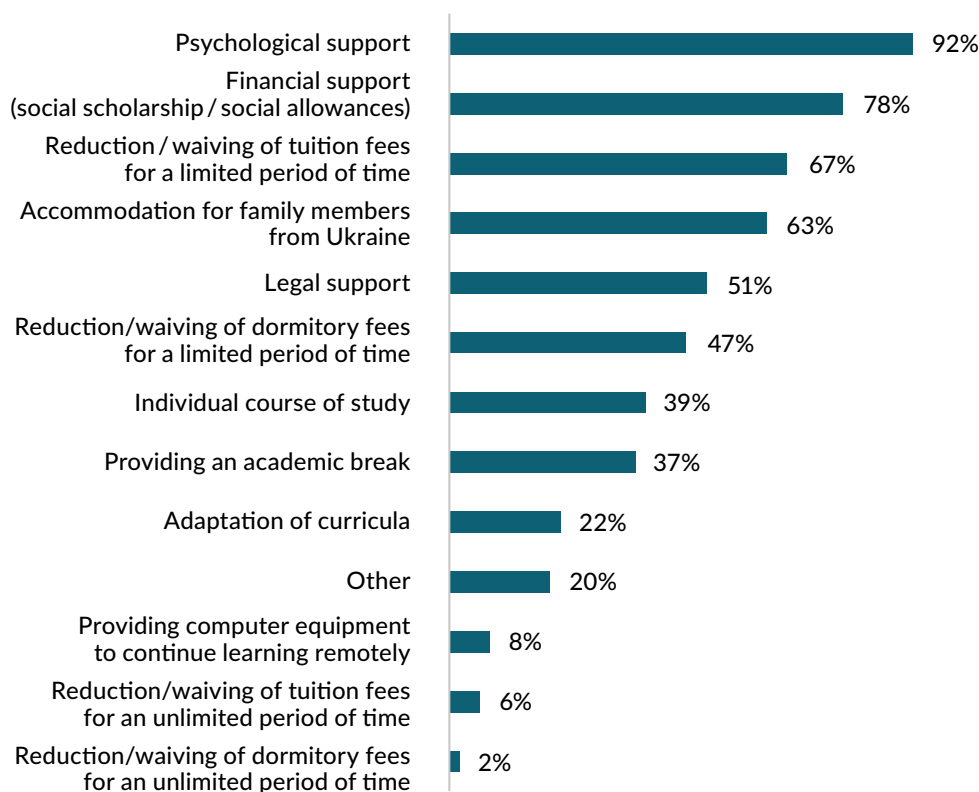


Figure 24. Forms of support for Ukrainian students, who began their studies before February 24, 2022.

The majority of universities (67%) reduced or waived tuition fees and reduced dormitory fees (47%) as a temporary measure, for a limited period, but just several as a permanent (unlimited time). This shows the budgetary limitations and the university's precaution in making long-term commitments.

Half of the surveyed universities (51%) provided students with legal advice, mostly in formal matters, such as regulations concerning the stay of family members in Poland or issues related to their status. Less popular forms of support included ensuring individualised learning (39%), granting academic leave (37%) (e.g. for those students who remained on the territory of Ukraine at the moment of the war outbreak), and adapting curricula (22%). This is probably because most students tried to continue their education in a standard mode while supporting their families in difficult situations.

The provision of computer equipment for remote learning by universities (8%) was not a priority – these students had already studied in Poland and were probably provided with basic learning tools, especially in the context of remote learning forced by the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Twenty per cent of the surveyed universities declared “other” type of support, but their character was quite similar to the above-mentioned.

The surveyed universities focused their activities on psychological, material, and humanitarian support, responding to the urgent needs of their students and their families. While short-term solutions have prevailed, there is also an attempt to create more comprehensive support, tailored to the exceptional situation of the war.

### Doctoral candidates and academic staff

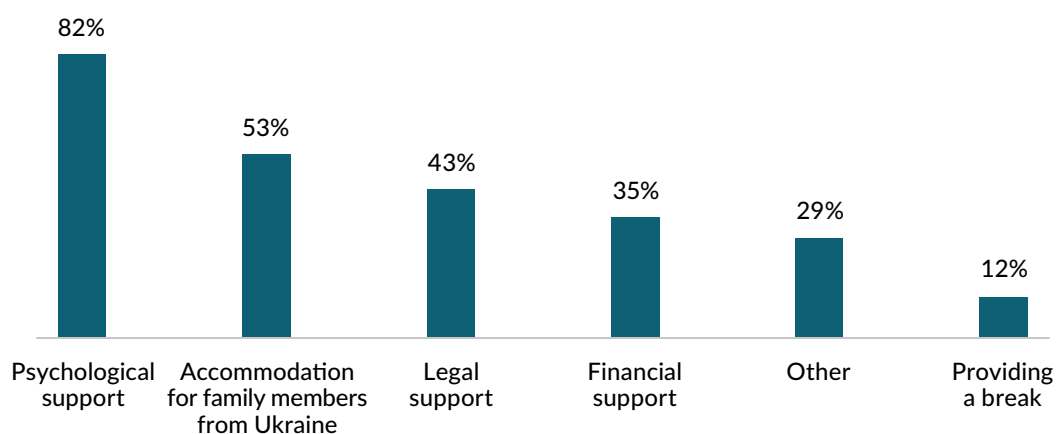


Figure 25. Forms of support for Ukrainian doctoral candidates and researchers who began their studies/work before February 24, 2022.

Polish universities provided a similar support to doctoral candidates and academic staff of Ukrainian origin, in particular psychological assistance was most often offered (82%), and accommodation for family members was provided in 53% of the surveyed universities, 43% of the surveyed universities provided legal support, at the similar level as it was done for the Ukrainian students.

Financial assistance for doctoral candidates and staff was offered by 35% of the surveyed universities, which is a twice lower percentage compared to students who were more widely provided with social scholarships and allowances (78%). This may be due, for example, to the greater financial stability of this group. Under “the other” option 29% of universities indicated that they did not have any doctoral candidates or employees from Ukraine, so they did not need to apply kind of support.

Academic leave was granted in 12% of the surveyed universities, which shows that doctoral candidates and researchers mostly continued their work and research despite difficult circumstances. In the case of students, academic breaks were needed to a greater extent (37%).



Concerning doctoral candidates and researchers, as in the case of students, universities focused primarily on providing psychological and material support. Differences in the intensity of some forms of assistance, such as financial or organizational support, may result from different life situations of these groups. Financial aid was provided according to the institutional regulations on social benefits.

## SUPPORT FOR NEW STUDENTS, DOCTORAL STUDENTS, RESEARCHERS – REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

### Students

Since the outbreak of the Russian aggression, Polish universities used a variety of forms of admission of new students from Ukraine, from recruitment to dedicated programs and short-term mobility (Fig. 26), that varied over three consecutive academic years.

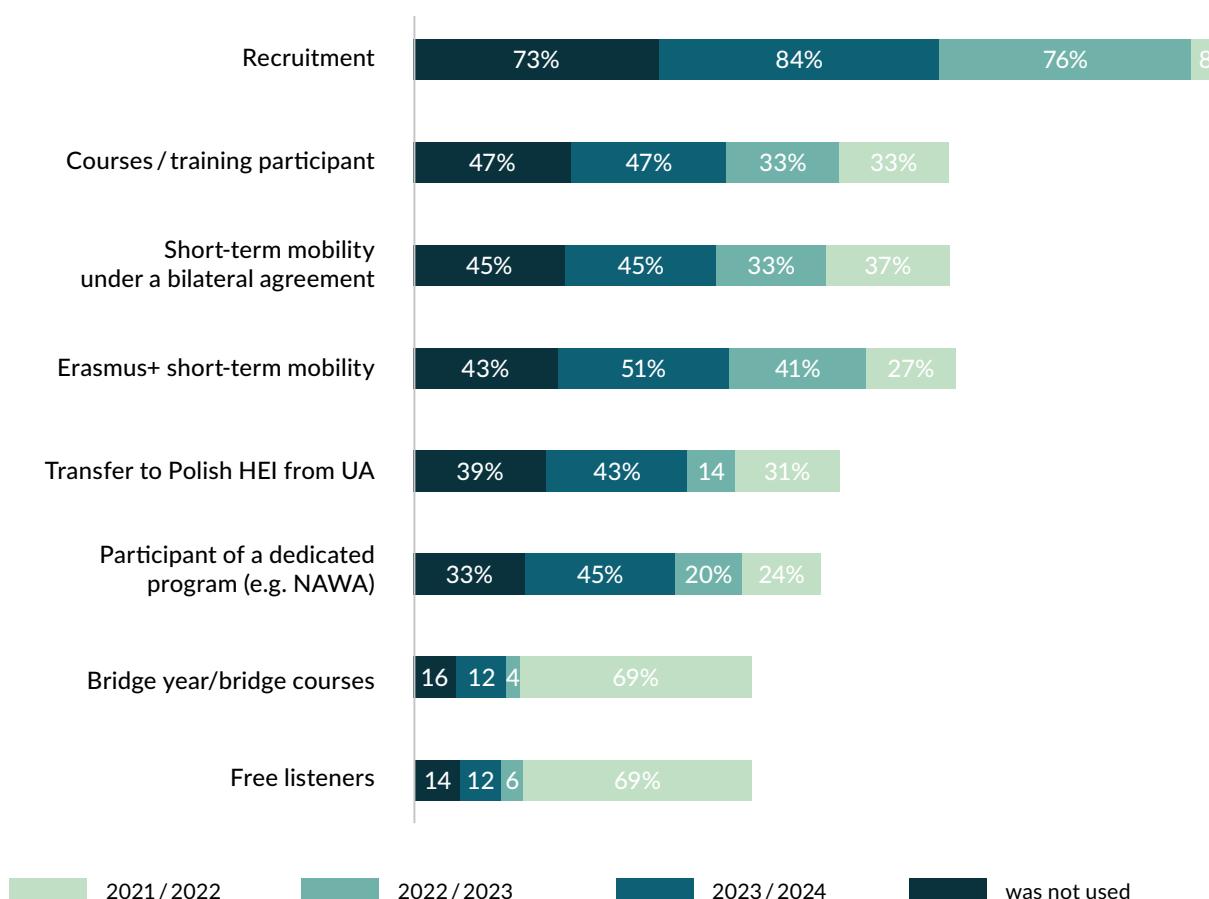


Figure 26. Forms of admission of refugee students from Ukraine after the outbreak of war on February 24, 2022.

Our study shows that the most popular and commonly used form of admission was regular recruitment, the share of which increased from 73% in the 2021/2022 academic year to 84% in 2022/2023 and fell to 76% the following year. This decline may say that the situation has stabilised or that the influx of new students has decreased.

Admission to courses and workshops/training remained the most popular form of admission for the first two years of the war (47%), only dropping by more than 10% in the 2023/2024 academic year. A similar trend can be seen for short-term mobility.

The least popular were bridge year/bridge courses and free listener status, which were used marginally and their share decreased significantly from an initial level of around 16% to 4% in the 2023/2024 academic year.

Mobility under bilateral agreements remained stable at 44% between 2021/2022 and 2022/2023, with a decrease in the 2023/2024 academic year. In contrast, short-term Erasmus+ mobilities were also a frequently used solution by 42% of Universities in the first year, then increased to 50% in 2022/2023, but the next academic year (2023/2024) decreased to 40%.

The transfer from the home university to the Polish university recorded a clear decrease – from 38% in 2021/2022 to 13% in 2023/2024. A similar trend is evident in the case of participation in the dedicated “Solidarity with Ukraine” NAWA programme, which was used by 34% of universities in the first year, peaked at 44% in 2022/2023, but fell to 20% in 2023/2024.

In general, surveyed Polish HEIs indicated, that since the outbreak of the war, the number of Ukrainian students increased (54% of universities) or remained the same (30%).

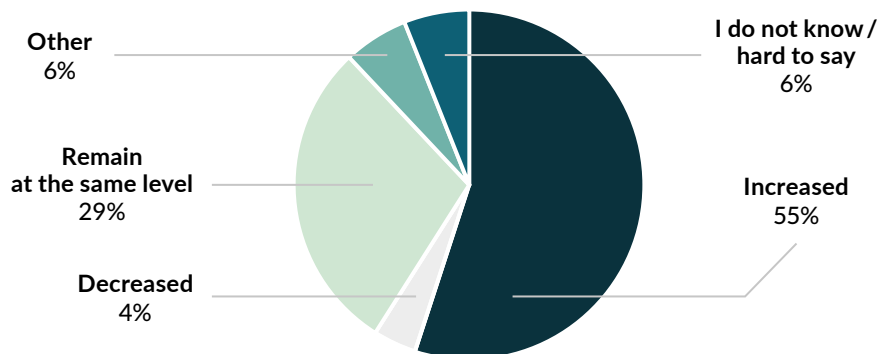


Figure 27. Changes in the number of Ukrainian students after the outbreak of the full-scale war

Summing it up, the study shows that recruitment is still the dominant form of admission for refugee students from Ukraine, which proves that universities choose long-term solutions. Short-term mobilities remain the dynamics, proving their effectiveness as a support tool in times of crisis. The decline in interest in dedicated programmes may result from the minimising crisis measures in favour of more permanent solutions. Forms such as a bridging year or a free listener were rarely offered to students at the surveyed universities. The decreasing number of transfers from Ukrainian universities suggests that the situation of students in Ukraine is stabilising or that they are meeting difficulties in finding their way into the Polish education system.



## Doctoral candidates

The study shows that the measures taken by the Polish universities for doctoral candidates (Fig. 28) were relatively limited, which is reflected both in the low percentage of use of individual forms and in the limited dynamics of changes in subsequent academic years.

Recruitment was the most used form of admission of doctoral candidates to universities, it increased from 39% in the 2021/2022 academic year to 49% in 2022/2023 and then decreased to 43% in 2023/2024. These percentages are much lower than in the case of students, which indicates the university's capacity to admit doctoral candidates in larger numbers or the lack of interest in PhDs to enter Polish universities but to continue their research work at their home universities in Ukraine.

Dedicated support programmes, such as “Solidarity with Ukraine” (NAWA), were implemented to a limited extent – their share fell from 13% in 2021/2022 to 8% in 2023/2024. These programmes, although relevant in the situation of the influx of refugees, did not cover a large number of doctoral candidates, which contrasts with their greater reach in the student group.

Short-term mobilities under Erasmus+ and based on bilateral agreements remained stable (11-15% in the analysed period). Although this is a flexible form and allows for the rapid inclusion of doctoral students in research work, it was used less often than in the case of students, which emphasises the limited scale of these activities for doctoral candidates.

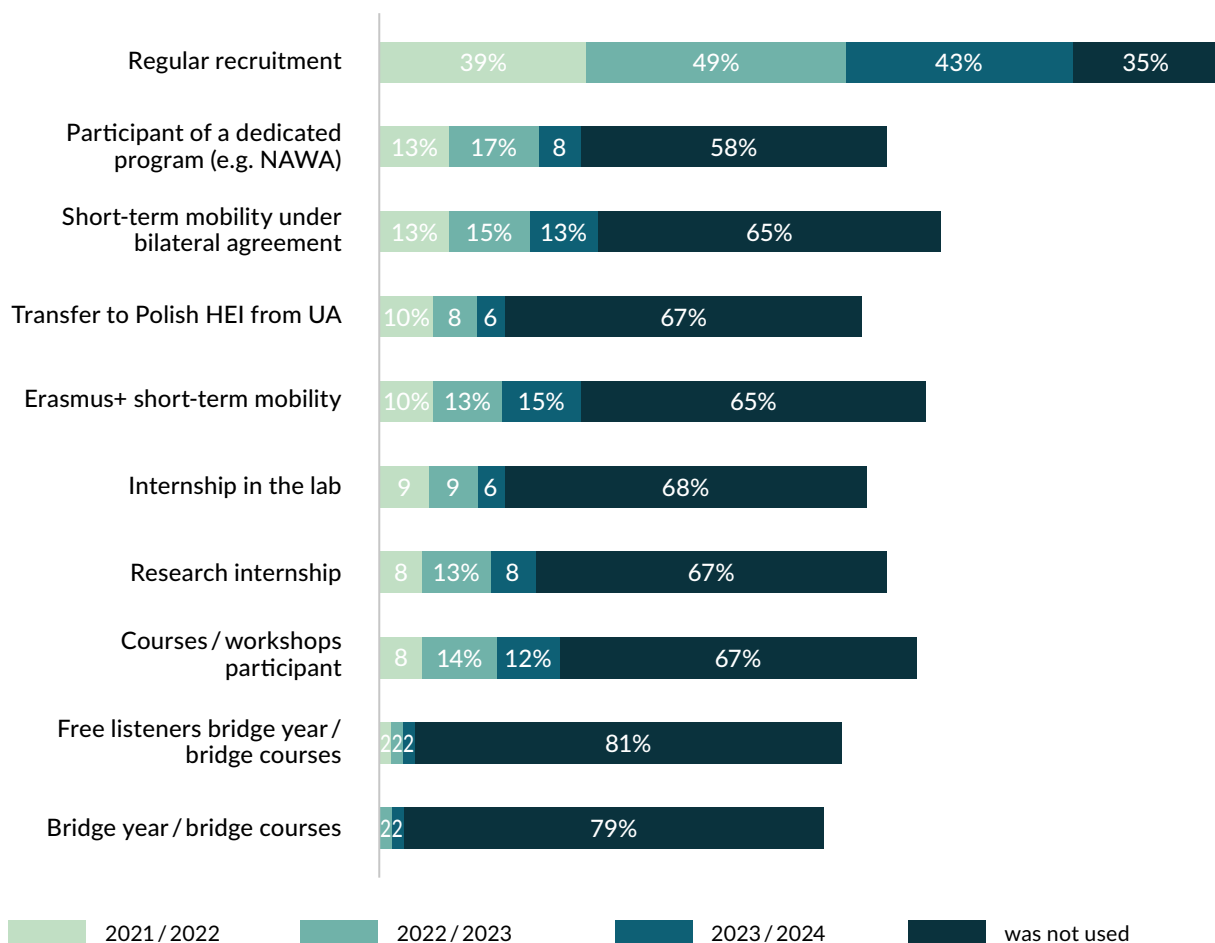


Figure 28. Forms of admission of refugee doctoral candidates from Ukraine after the outbreak of the war on February 24, 2022.

The transfer of doctoral candidates from Ukrainian to Polish universities was marginal and gradually decreased from 10% in 2021/2022 to 8% and 6% in the following years. This is evidence of difficulties related to the transfer of doctoral research, but the low level of this form of support remains a clear limitation.

Participation of PhD refugees in courses and training ranged from 8% in 2021/2022 to 14% in 2022/2023, and then slightly decreased to 12% in 2023/2024. Although these forms can support skills development, their use has been rare, suggesting that the potential of this form of support has not been sufficiently exploited.

Research and laboratory internships, which could be an essential element of the integration of PhDs in the academic environment, were not used so often (8–13%).

The bridge year and the status of free listeners, as in the case of other forms, recorded an extremely low share (0–2%), which indicates the marginalization of these solutions in the strategies for admitting doctoral candidates.

According to the data, the surveyed universities accepted exiled doctoral candidates from Ukraine to a much smaller extent than students, which is reflected in lower percentages for most forms of support. The generally low level of activity in the admission of doctoral PhDs may result from both systemic limitations and the lack of adaptation of existing forms of support to their needs or lack of interest of Ukrainian refugee PhDs in joining Polish universities. Similar conclusions were made in other studies in 2022<sup>77</sup>.

## Researchers

The collected data shows that universities systematically accepted researchers under standard solutions, such as employment contracts, other forms were not used so often (Fig. 29).

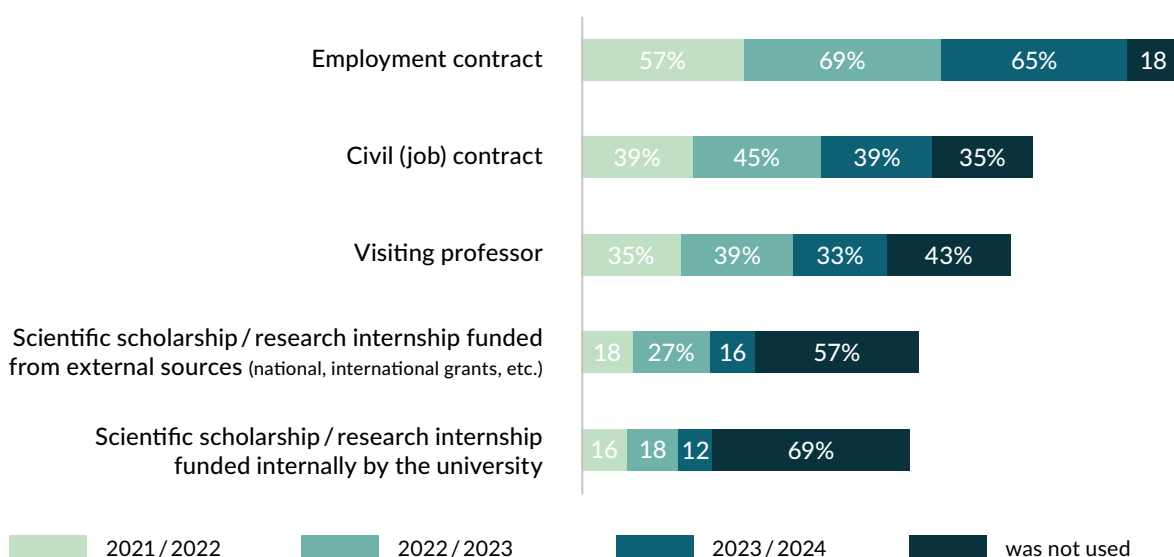


Figure 29. Forms of admission of refugee researchers from Ukraine after the outbreak of war on February 24, 2022.

<sup>77</sup> Degtyarova I. (2022), Sytuacja doktorantów uczelni ukraińskich podczas agresji Federacji Rosyjskiej na Ukrainę a wsparcie w uczelniach polskich, Warszawa [https://www.ans.pw.edu.pl/content/download/2354/13389/file/RAPORT\\_NR\\_3\\_PL\\_UA.pdf](https://www.ans.pw.edu.pl/content/download/2354/13389/file/RAPORT_NR_3_PL_UA.pdf)

The most used form of employment (57% of responses) was a job contract in the 2021/2022 academic year and 98% in 2022/2023, slightly decreasing in the 2023/2024 academic year. It can be concluded that the surveyed universities primarily tried to engage new employees within the permanent structures of the institution.

Civil law contracts as a more flexible form of employment were used by 45% HEIs in 2022/2023 and decreased to 39% in 2023/2024 as it was initially in the 2021/2022 academic year. However, despite its flexibility, universities have not been using civil contracts so often.

Support for Ukrainian researchers in exile in the form of visiting professorship was provided by 35% in the first year after the outbreak of the war, then increased to 39% the following year, and then decreased to 33% in 2023/2024. It seems that although visiting professorship is quite often used form of support at Polish universities, it has not developed as a leading strategy for refugee researchers from Ukraine.

Externally funded scholarships and fellowships were limited in scope, peaking in 2022/2023 (27%) before declining to 16% in 2023/2024. These forms of support, although significant in the short term, were not a permanent solution in most universities.

Scholarships and research internships financed from the university's internal funds remained at a stable, low level (16% in 2021/2022 and 18% in 2022/2023), only to drop to 12% in 2023/2024. This shows the limited resources of universities to finance such initiatives on their own, which proves the number of Polish universities that did not use this form of support for refugee researchers (69%).

Summing it up, the surveyed universities most often accepted refugee researchers from Ukraine under an employment contract, which proves the desire for long-term cooperation within the academic community. Other forms of admission, such as visiting professor or civil contracts, were used less often and their use decreased over time. Admissions to fellowships and research placements, both external and internal, were limited and were less used in Polish universities.

### Efforts for integration

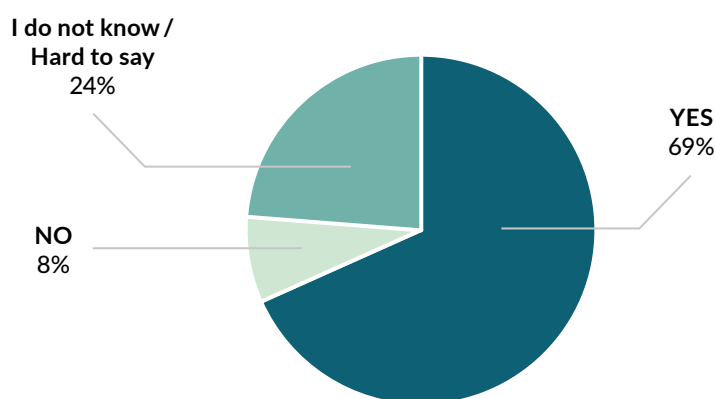


Figure 30. Activities for integration of Ukrainian refugee students, doctoral candidates, and researchers into the host university community in Poland



The vast majority of universities (69%) declared that they took action on the integration of Ukrainian students, doctoral candidates and researchers in exile with the academic community in Poland. This proves a significant commitment to building an inclusive academic environment. However, a significant percentage of indecisive responses (24%) show a lack of full awareness or transparency in this area. Only 8% of universities admitted not to take such actions, which may be the result of organisational constraints or lack of adequate resources. The results show the need to develop integration programmes in universities and the need for better communication about initiatives within academic communities.

To integrate Ukrainian students, doctoral students and academics into the host university community, the surveyed universities undertook the following activities:

### **1. Cultural and social integration events**

Many universities organised cultural events such as festivals, concerts, exhibitions, film screenings or special holiday celebrations (e.g. Orthodox Christmas, Easter). These ranged from large events, such as the ‘Ukrainian Week’ (SGH) the ‘City of Science for Ukraine’ concert (University of Silesia), the ‘Ukraine for Lublin’ concert (UMCS), to a small-scale meeting in the dormitories. An interesting example was the ‘Guest for Christmas’ initiative (University of Łódź), where Ukrainian students spent Christmas in the homes of Polish students and staff. These activities helped to build cultural bridges and fostered relationships.

### **2. Integration through the activities of student and academic organisations**

Student self-governments, academic organisations and student clubs played a key role in the integration process. Universities supported the participation of Ukrainian students in student association (SA), research projects and other student initiatives. An example of this is the activity of the SA Reconstruction of Ukraine at SGH. Similar activities included the creation of mixed student and faculty groups, which fostered cooperation and relationship building. Moreover, alumni organisations were also widely involved in both internal and external support activities.

### **3. Educational linguistic and cultural support**

Courses in Polish and other foreign languages appeared as an essential element of integration, enabling Ukrainian refugee students to function more easily in the Polish academic environment. This support was often enriched with workshops on Polish culture or the organisation of integration trips to Warsaw (Academy of Fine Arts Warsaw). Educational events such as Ukrainian dictations or scientific conferences were also organised at universities.

### **4. Sport and recreation**

The organisation of sports initiatives, also aimed at integration and spending time together. These were activities that built solidarity and promoted mental and physical health. For example, the Centre for Physical Culture of the Marie Curie-Skłodowska University organised, among other things, a fitness marathon: ‘Women for Women from Ukraine’ or an academic sports tournament in volleyball and football “We play for Ukraine”.



## 5. Organisational and information support

The universities offered support in the form of information points, such as Welcome Point UW, which provided information in Ukrainian and helped with adaptation to the new environment. Assigning mentors in the form of Polish students was intended to facilitate integration and the organisation of daily academic life.

## 6. Workshops, training, and adaptation programmes

The HEIs organised integration workshops, training on how to adapt to academic life and artistic activities, and cooking workshops. An interesting activity aimed at representatives of Ukrainian HEIs was the online and on-site training organised by Kozminski University on how to adapt Ukrainian HEIs to international standards, covering topics such as accreditation and social impact.

Summing this up, Polish HEIs implemented a wide variety of different activities for the integration of Ukrainian refugee students, doctoral candidates and academics. These were characterised by cooperation between academic organisations and openness to the individual needs of participants. We may find mixed student groups, language courses, integration trips or the organisation of joint cultural events as examples of good practices of integration.

## Challenges

The analysis shows (Fig. 31) that the biggest challenge was the lack of financial resources – 57% of the surveyed universities described it as a big challenge, and another 25% as a medium. Lack of full documentation from Ukrainian refugee students, PhDs and researchers was also a significant problem – 43% of universities rated it as a big challenge, and 31% as a medium, suggesting the possibility of procedural difficulties in their admission.



Figure 31. Challenges for Polish universities related to the massive influx of Ukrainian refugees – students, doctoral candidates, academic staff.



Universities found difficulties in the availability of dedicated national programmes (39% assessed them as a major challenge and as a medium one) and international support programmes (33% as a major challenge, 37% as medium). The lack of these programs limited the possibilities of financial and institutional support for the admitted students, PhDs, and researchers in exile.

Legal restrictions were considered a major challenge by 31% of universities, and a medium challenge by 39%, indicating the need to simplify regulations for employment or recruiting academic refugees from Ukraine, especially if it comes to diploma recognition.

The insufficient availability of accommodation for refugees was a challenge that 29% of universities considered big and 33% as medium. This problem emerged in the situation of the sudden massive influx of refugees who needed housing support, both academic and ordinary citizens from Ukraine.

Administrative constraints within the universities were less common – only 16% of HEIs found them as a major challenge, which may indicate a relatively good organization of internal processes.

Language and adaptation problems were of a relatively small scale – only 14% of universities considered them a major challenge, and 37% rated them as medium. Problems with adaptation of students, doctoral candidates and researchers were not perceived as a big challenge (only for 8% it was a big challenge), but rather as a medium (41%) or small (31%).

Conclusions from the analysis highlight a greater need for funding and systemic support at the national and international levels, especially programs for accommodation programs and infrastructure. The smaller scale of language and adaptation problems may prove the universities' successful integration efforts, although challenges related to administration and accommodation remain crucial to address.

The surveyed universities in the situation of the massive influx of refugee Ukrainian students, doctoral candidates and researchers, faced a serious limitation of adequate financial resources. Procedural difficulties related to documentation and regulations need to be simplified to allow more efficient admission of Ukrainian refugees. More developed systemic support at the national and international levels is important, especially in the establishment of dedicated programs. Language and adaptation problems were of relatively minor importance, which proves the effective integration efforts of the universities.

Additional open question allowed to provide more details about the challenges at the Polish universities related to the massive influx of students, doctoral candidates, and researchers. Significant legal barriers appeared in the surveyed universities, such as the inability to extraordinarily recruit doctoral students outside the regular recruitment, and difficulties in paying additional funds that did not qualify as doctoral scholarships.

Organisational challenges were also clearly outlined, such as the rapid and massive recruitment of students, including students of Polish and Belarus nationality studying in Ukraine. The great interest in transfers from Ukrainian to Polish universities, especially of students blocked by the travel restrictions introduced by the Ukrainian authorities, led to mass resignations and inefficient use of university resources.



The high administrative burden of staff, requiring overtime work, and the logistics involved in arranging transport and accommodation for students and their families were other major problems. They required the involvement of not only universities but also local partners and sponsors. This highlights the need for better coordination and external support.

As for the studies, universities have had to adapt their curricula and teaching methods quickly to respond to differences in the level of preparation and curricula of incoming refugee students, including those in the arts.

Psychological problems among the refugee students, PhDs and researchers were also a challenge, as they required specialist support to help cope with war trauma and adaptation stress. This shows that universities had to act not only as educational institutions, but also as centres of humanitarian aid and integration support.

## EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UNIVERSITIES' ACTIONS

While delivering support for Ukrainian refugees, Polish universities did an ongoing feedback analysis both from volunteers and refugees and based on that made some changes in the assistance provided. However, for many universities, it seems difficult to choose the most and least effective forms of support:

*In response to the Russian aggression against Ukraine [University] undertook a very broad spectrum of activities – from intensive involvement in humanitarian assistance to refugees, to support for individual students and researchers, to participation in large international projects (e.g. [Alliance] for Ukraine) aimed at strengthening cooperation of the Ukrainian academic community with universities in Poland and other countries or joint implementation of research. Due to the quite different nature of these activities, it is difficult to compare their effectiveness, but we consider each of them valuable and needed at its level (University of Economics/31)*

However, our survey allowed Polish universities to self-reflect on effectiveness in response to the outbreak of war in Ukraine in the areas of crisis management, humanitarian aid, academic activities, and cooperation with the environment.

### Crisis management

The surveyed universities found that the emergency management measures they applied were the most effective. The appointment of crisis teams and the centralisation of aid activities gained the greatest recognition.

*The establishment of crisis team allowed for quick decision-making and effective resource management (Technical University/40)*

Thanks to these activities, it was possible to coordinate aid initiatives quickly and effectively. The universities took care not only of general procedures but also of individual support, conducted through dedicated communication channels. Transparent and regular crisis communication was also crucial in this area.



*Flexibility, individual approach and dedicated targeted communication was crucial: launching of the special email address as the main channel of communication allowed quick reaction on the students' needs, efficient information exchange and all kinds of support (University of Arts/41)*

The rectors' decisions implemented in the form of orders and the appointment of plenipotentiaries for assistance to Ukraine made it possible to cope with the challenges that were appearing on an ongoing basis. For example, one university considered the "fast decision path" to be an effective action, thanks to which applications from academic refugees were processed within 24 hours.

### **Humanitarian aid**

The surveyed universities engaged in humanitarian aid with great intensity, and their activities in this area were highly effective. Humanitarian support in the war crisis included quickly meeting the basic needs of refugees.

*Provision of accommodation and food, as well as assistance with formal matters. This was the most effective and necessary action under the circumstances. (Technical University/37)*

Examples of help were varied: from organising help at train stations to handing over an ambulance to a Ukrainian hospital. A principal element was formal administrative support for refugees in Poland, which allowed them to find themselves in the new reality.

### **Academic support**

Universities have opened their doors to students and academic staff from Ukraine. The most effective activities turned out to be scholarship programmes, including those implemented within the NAWA programme "Solidarity with Ukraine" programme and the social allowances for education and accommodation launched at universities.

*Temporary exemption from fees for student dormitories and financial support allowed for the stabilisation and focus on learning (Technical University/40)*

Individual approach to refugee students was significantly valued by Polish universities.

*Supporting our students (waiving tuition fees, academic leave, conditional credits, possibility of re-enrolment, etc.) to strengthen the sense of belonging to our university community in a wartime crisis. (University/32)*

Some of the surveyed universities decided to launch studies in Ukrainian or Ukrainian-language education programs. Ukrainian students in exile also had the opportunity to participate in intensive Polish language courses.

### **Academic community engagement**

Many activities were started from the bottom up by the university community. Student governments, students' clubs and associations and academic staff were jointly involved in the organisation of collections and in-kind support. Expressing solidarity with Ukraine and integrating the academic community was crucial. The full mobilization of the academic community allowed us to quickly respond to the needs of the refugees.





## Cooperation with external partners

The universities rated cooperation with local authorities, businesses, and other institutions as one of the most effective activities, which enabled the quick implementation of aid activities. Survey results prove that such partnerships enabled more efficient use of resources and quick response to changing needs.

### What could be done better?

The opinions of the surveyed universities were divided. Most respondents (54%) believed that the activities were optimal and that Polish universities had adapted to the dynamically changing conditions:

*All actions were undertaken in the area and scope according to the internal and external circumstances (University/51)*

However, 33% of respondents indicated areas that could be improved. The opinions include better communication, better legal and financial support from government and local authorities, better and wider using modern IT facilities, and less poorly coordinated and more detailed and better-prepared crisis management procedures.

*The horizontal cooperation at the University with other educational institutions (schools and universities) and the local authorities could be improved (Non-public HEI/2).*

*Financing of aid could be provided by entities other than local government and government administration (Pedagogical University/30).*

*Apart from the spontaneous action after the aggression, there was a lack of systemic government solutions, procedures etc., financial support and support programmes from abroad e.g. from National Recovery Plan or others (Non-public HEI/1)*

Respondents noted that early response activities were chaotic and poorly coordinated, also due to the uncertainty regarding regulations and formal procedures. It showed that universities should be better prepared for crisis response:

*Earlier development and implementation of more detailed crisis mitigation plans and procedures could speed up some decisions and actions, reducing the initial chaos (University of Arts/41)*

*Expansion of IT infrastructure - better designed digital tools could improve aid management (Technical University/8)*

Those universities that did not set up a formal emergency response team indicated that they should do that at the beginning of the war.

According to the respondents, in general, Polish universities were able to act quickly, effectively and in solidarity with Ukraine and refugees. They underlined, that universities did the best they could and implemented activities optimally, adapting to the existing conditions, and acting flexibly according to changing factors.



## CONCLUSIONS

The experience of Polish universities gained in response to the crisis and lessons learnt are extremely valuable for other European educational institutions in managing similar challenges in the future. Surveyed universities emphasise the need for a comprehensive approach to crisis management, including both ad hoc and long-term activities. Through effective planning, centralization, collaboration, and social responsibility, universities can not only help effectively but also strengthen their role as social and educational leaders in the face of crises.

*'Think globally, act locally' - is the best possible recommendation. Plan ahead, anticipate what's happening, find partners, do not turn down help, prepare as much as you can, and review plans daily. (Technical University/46)*

A well-structured, flexible, and coordinated response is key to handling crises effectively. The conclusions emphasise humanitarian aid, crisis governance, community engagement, and regulatory adaptation, all while ensuring sustainable, long-term impact:

### 1. Crisis governance, coordination, and community engagement

Polish universities place strong emphasis on mobilising the entire academic community, including students, faculty, and administrative staff, in aid efforts, as well as on collaboration with local authorities and NGOs for effective response and resource allocation.

Surveyed universities consider that the preparation of a crisis management strategy is crucial, and its scope should be broad, considering the possibility of emerging of unpredictable situations. Of particular importance is the involvement of people from regions affected by the crisis, and close cooperation with partner universities, which allows for a better understanding of the needs of aid beneficiaries. In developing a strategy, it is essential to be quick to make decisions, open to different perspectives and avoid ad hoc actions that can be inefficient and lead to the dispersion of resources. Universities also emphasise the need to formalise procedures regarding the methods of responding to crises, which ensures consistency and transparency of activities.

Polish universities consider that initiative-taking crisis response planning is better than reactive measures. Crisis response protocols should be formalised to improve preparedness for future emergencies. Universities should go beyond immediate aid by implementing long-term educational and professional support programs (e.g., offering courses in Ukrainian to aid post-war reconstruction).

According to the surveyed universities, the centralization of aid activities allowed them for better coordination and effective use of resources. The establishment of a permanent crisis team/contact point consisting of various people from the university community, coordinated by the University authorities, allowed for a quick response to changing needs. At the same time, in addition to solving key problems and setting priority actions, the team must be sensitive to the situation of the people being helped and support their adaptation to the new unfamiliar environment. Flexibility in action should be balanced with social responsibility, which strengthens the effectiveness and ethical dimension of activities.

Quick decision-making processes and avoiding bureaucratic delays are seen as critical in unexpected situations. Flexible internal regulations allowed universities to adapt swiftly to changing circumstances, particularly in areas of material aid and emergency support.



The surveyed universities recommended the establishment of a permanent crisis team. Such a team, consisting of various people from the university community, coordinated by its authorities, allows for a quick response to changing needs. At the same time, in addition to solving key problems and setting priority actions, the team must be sensitive to the situation of the people being helped and support their adaptation to the new environment.

Responding universities recommend intensifying activities aimed at obtaining funds from national and international institutions. Accordingly, the use of modern technologies, such as mobile applications or remote forms of education, can support both the organization of assistance and the development of an educational offer adapted to new challenges.

Support activities require close cooperation between various units of the university and with external institutions, including aid institutions. Cooperation with international organizations and the exchange of good practices and knowledge with other universities is an important element of the strategy.

## **2. Primary areas of refugee support**

Polish experience showed that in crises adaptation of legal regulations at both institutional and national levels is necessary to facilitate timely aid distribution and prevent administrative roadblocks. It was important to quickly adapt legal regulations for students, PhDs, and researchers.

In an emergency, it is particularly important to quickly analyse and possibly modify the university's internal regulations to ensure the legality and effectiveness of the actions taken. The lack of central legislative solutions may make it difficult or even impossible to provide both humanitarian aid and academic support.

Financial support remains a core concern, emphasising the need for both internal funding adjustments and external financial assistance (from the government and international institutions).

According to the respondents, language and psychological and pedagogical support are some of the most needed forms of support for refugees. Language courses, translations and individual psychological assistance facilitate the adaptation and integration of people affected by the crisis, as well as increase their chances of active participation in the life of the university. Mental health support for both aid recipients and providers is crucial to sustain long-term engagement. Language support (including translation services and language courses) is necessary for effective integration and communication with displaced individuals.

The Polish experience showed that in addition to humanitarian support, which Polish universities have undertaken on an unprecedented scale, they carried out activities related to their education and research mission, focused both on the Ukrainian students and staff from pre-war times and on the academic refugees coming to Poland after the outbreak of the war.



### 3. Communication and digital support

The surveyed universities emphasised that effective crisis communication is the foundation of any aid activity. The exchange of information should be intensive, multifaceted, and conducted in languages adapted to the needs of refugees (Ukrainian, Russian, English). It is also crucial to provide psychological support for those providing help, which prevents burnout and supports their effectiveness.

Crisis communication strategies are essential, ensuring clarity and transparency in both internal and external messaging. Establishing dedicated communication channels (hotlines, email support, etc.) helps the efficient dissemination of critical information.

Avoiding ad-hoc actions that consume resources without delivering tangible outcomes. While volunteer-driven efforts are essential, burnout prevention is a concern, requiring structured support for volunteers. Encouraging grassroots initiatives while keeping institutional oversight ensures sustainable impact.

Technology adoption (e.g., digital coordination tools, and online educational platforms) can enhance response effectiveness. Transparency and trust-building through clear, consistent communication are vital for supporting engagement.

The surveyed universities drew attention to the need to minimise the risk of conflicts in the academic community. Activities should include clear communication of the goals and scope of assistance, as well as taking into account the specific needs of different groups, including being aware of the possibility of ethnic disputes between people from conflicting countries.



# Recommendations in managing the influx of refugees at HEIs

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In response to the outbreak of the full-scale Russian invasion that caused the massive influx of refugees from Ukraine, Polish universities and the whole academic community provided a well-organised yet flexible response. Some institutions created structured volunteer programmes, while others relied on decentralised, grassroots efforts. Universities played a key role in providing linguistic, psychological, legal, and social support, demonstrating solidarity with refugees through a mix of spontaneous and coordinated volunteer activities. They undertook a series of effective actions in the areas of crisis management, humanitarian aid, academic support, and cooperation with the environment, including NGOs, humanitarian organisations, diplomatic institutions, state authorities and local governments, businesses and associations, exceeding in their activities traditional academic support, but acting as a responsible and engaged societal actors.

Solidarity with Ukraine included not only help for refugees but also support and cooperation with Ukrainian universities, and one of the key priorities was not to harm Ukrainian human resources potential and avoid brain drain. This was explicitly stressed in the public statements and programs which were established for Ukrainian academic refugees. Polish universities became hubs on Ukraine's expertise and support for Ukraine (also for organising external testing points for Ukrainian school leavers NMT) and welcomed a Ukrainian science diaspora allowing in many ways their integration and adaptation in a new academic environment.

Polish academic community faced the crisis of being united and spoke with a single voice, main representative institutions adopted key statements at the beginning of the war altogether and then formed the directions of support in the constant dialogue with the Ukrainian Union of Rectors, Ukrainian universities and research institutions, and Polish Ministry. The collective leadership of the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland played a crucial role here, and the model of emergency management on the highest level led by the CRASP, data collection, exchange of information and good practices, allowed universities to implement best possible solutions and adjust them while the situation had been changing.

The experience of Polish research-intensive universities (IDUB) proved the importance of having additional financial resources and bigger financial autonomy to use it, as well as ownership of the property allowed the university to better respond to and accept refugees. That leads to the conclusion that universities should be supported and their financial and material condition strengthened.

Experience of Polish universities allows them to select good practices that can be useful for managing the situation of emergency and massive influx of unexpected refugees in the country and universities:



## **1. Strong leadership**

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Strong leadership and involvement of senior university administration are essential for effective crisis management and the successful implementation of aid activities. Personal engagement of Rectors and Chancellors ensured that the academic community became involved in volunteering and support for refugees. Collective leadership and guidance by the national rectors' conferences will ensure consistency and synergy in better reaction and integration of refugees.

## **2. Support for the students and staff of Ukrainian origin from pre-war times**

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Polish universities proved the importance of taking care of students and staff of Ukrainian origin from pre-war times, in particular financial support (waiving fees for tuition and dormitories), psychological counselling, providing accommodation and humanitarian aid for family members, and legal advice. All affected by war should be able to receive help.

## **3. Need for strategy and procedures**

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Preparing a crisis management strategy is crucial for the university, it should cover a wide range of possible crises, considering the perspectives of people from crisis-affected regions. Formalising procedures ensure consistency and transparency of actions.

## **4. Permanent crisis management team**

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Establishing a permanent crisis team, consisting of various members of the academic community, and coordinated by university authorities, enables quick responses to changing needs. The team should be sensitive to the situation of those in need and support their adaptation to the new environment.

## **5. Legal solutions**

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Quick adaptation of legal regulations through cooperation with state authorities is essential for the effective operation of universities following the law. Analysing and modifying internal university regulations ensures the legality and effectiveness of actions taken.

## **6. Centralisation of activities and quick decision-making processes**

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Centralising aid activities allows for better coordination and efficient use of resources. Establishing consultation points and communication coordinators at universities and appointing individuals to coordinate communication and support is key. Balancing flexibility with social responsibility enhances the effectiveness and ethical dimension of actions.



## **7. Communication and support the supporters**

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Effective emergency communication should be intensive, multifaceted, and conducted in languages adapted to the needs of refugees (Ukrainian, Russian, English). Psychological support for those providing help prevents burnout and supports their effectiveness. Minimising the risk of conflicts through clear communication of the goals and scope of assistance, and considering the specific needs of different groups, is essential.

## **8. Language and psychological support**

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Language courses and translations facilitate the adaptation and integration of people affected by the crisis. Individual psychological assistance increases their chances of active participation in university life.

## **9. Flexibility in funding, fundraising and technological solutions**

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Universities should have a crisis budget and the possibility to use it flexibly with a minimised bureaucracy and with public trust. Intensifying efforts to obtain funds from national and international institutions and using modern technologies (mobile applications, remote education) support the organization of aid and the development of an educational offer.

## **10. Internal and external cooperation**

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Close cooperation between university units and external institutions is crucial. Collaboration with international organisations, businesses, and NGOs, and the exchange of good practices with other universities strengthen the effectiveness of actions. Engagement of the national rectors' conferences and broader cooperation at the European level is essential for the development of global strategies for mitigating the crisis and elaborating better and more efficient models for refugees' integration into higher education in Europe.



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# Questionnaire

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## PART I

### THE FIRST REACTION OF POLISH UNIVERSITIES TO THE OUTBREAK OF A FULL-SCALE INVASION OF UKRAINE AND THE INFLUX OF REFUGEES

1. What actions and key decisions did your university take in the first weeks after the outbreak of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine?

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2. Who at your University played key roles in crisis mitigation in the first weeks after the outbreak of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine?

*Select multiple answers.*

- Rector
- Vice-Rectors
- Senate
- University Council
- Chancellor
- Bursar
- Deans
- Director of the Centre for International Cooperation (or an appropriate unit)
- Head of the Volunteer Centre (or relevant unit)
- Other, which ones? -----

3. Has your university established a special team or committee for crisis matters in response to the war in Ukraine?

*Select only one answer.*

- Yes
- No

4. What was the composition of the crisis team/ committee (please name the functions not names)

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5. What were the main tasks and goals of the crisis team/committee?

Select multiple answers.

- coordination of humanitarian help for refugees
- coordination of admission of students, doctoral candidates, academic staff from Ukraine in your university
- coordination of aid activities on the Polish-Ukrainian border
- management of financial and material resources of the university
- support activities for members of the University community of Ukrainian origin
- drafting internal legal acts in connection with the extraordinary situation
- cooperation with other institutions (government, NGOs, private sector, entrepreneurs)
- cooperation within CRASP crisis teams
- Other, which ones? .....

6. How often did the crisis team/ committee meet from the outbreak of the war to the end of the 2021/2022 academic year?

Select only one answer.

- every day
- several times a week
- once a week
- once a month
- ad hoc, as needed
- other, how often? .....

7. How long has the crisis team/ committee been operating at your university?

.....

8. Did the crisis team evaluate its activities?

Select only one answer.

- Yes
- No
- I do not know / It is hard to say

9. If your university did not appoint a special crisis team in response to the outbreak of war in Ukraine, how did your university deal with this emergency, how were activities managed and coordinated, and key decisions taken?

.....



10. What challenges did your university have to face in the first weeks after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine and what was their scale?

	It was a big challenge	It was a medium challenge	It was a small challenge	It was not a challenge
rapidly changing situation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
logistical problems with the accommodation of refugees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
lack of adequate financial resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
lack of sufficient human resources to provide assistance to refugees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
lack of adequate preparation of people to help refugees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
limited knowledge of Ukrainian and Russian languages among helpers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
lack of adequate regulation / clarity on the rules	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
the need to launch and manage communication channels for refugee (email, websites, applications, social media)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Were there any other challenges that your university had to face in the first weeks after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, which were not mentioned in Q 10. If so, what are they?

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12. How (based on what model) did your university operate in a crisis situation?

*Select multiple answers.*

- according to a more centralised model (at the level of the entire university and its authorities)
- according to the decentralised model (at the level of organisational units/faculties)
- according to a mixed model: part of activities centralised and part of decentralised
- bottom-up activities and initiatives of individual employees and students
- in consultation with the academic community (e.g. CRASP, other universities)
- another model, which one? -----



13. What procedures were used to make rapid decisions in response to the outbreak of war in Ukraine?

Select only one answer.

- existing crisis management procedures, which ones? .....
- adaptation of existing procedures to the new situation, which ones? .....
- new, temporary procedures, what are they? .....
- other (please specify) .....
- we did not use any special procedures

14. What were the main channels of internal communication at your university during the emergency management?

Select multiple answers.

- regular face-to-face meetings
- online regular meetings
- ad hoc face-to-face meetings
- ad hoc online meetings
- email communication
- University intranet
- other, which ones? .....

15. Did your university invite external crisis management specialists or consultants to cope with the crisis?

Select only one answer.

- Yes
- No
- I do not know /It is hard to say

16. If yes, please briefly describe the scope of responsibilities of these specialists / consultants and the main results of their activities

.....





## PART II CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN RELATION TO ACADEMIC REFUGEES

17. What forms of support were provided to Ukrainian students who were already studying at your university at the moment of the outbreak of the war?

*Select multiple answers.*

- reduction/exemption of tuition fees for a limited period of time
- reduction/ exemption of tuition fees for an unlimited period of time
- granting a social scholarship/allowance
- psychological help
- legal aid
- reduction/ exemption of fees for a student residence for a limited period of time
- reduction/ exemption of dormitory fees for an unlimited period of time
- accommodation for family members from Ukraine
- individualized learning
- adapting curricula
- providing computer equipment for the continuation of remote learning
- granting academic leave
- other, which ones? .....

18. What forms of support have been provided to Ukrainian doctoral candidates and researchers who were already studying/working at your university at the outbreak of the war?

*Select multiple answers.*

- financial aid
- psychological help
- legal aid
- accommodation for family members from Ukraine
- granting an academic leave
- other, which ones? .....



19. What forms of admission of new (refugee) students from Ukraine have been used at your university since the outbreak of the war in relation to the academic year?

Select as many answers as you want.

	academic year 2021/2022	academic year 2022/2023	academic year 2023/2024	I do not know / it is hard to say	not used at the university
short-term mobility on the basis of a bilateral agreement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
short-term mobility under Erasmus+	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
free listener	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
participant of a dedicated programme (NAWA Solidarity with Ukraine)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
participant of courses/trainings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
transfer from home university in Ukraine to your university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
bridge year/bridge courses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
regular recruitment other, which ones?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. What forms of admission of new doctoral candidates from Ukraine have been used at your university since the outbreak of the war in relation to the academic year?

Select as many answers as you want.

	academic year 2021/2022	academic year 2022/2023	academic year 2023/2024	I do not know / it is hard to say	not used at the university
short-term mobility on the basis of a bilateral agreement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
short-term mobility under Erasmus+	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
free listener	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
participant of a dedicated programme (NAWA Solidarity with Ukraine)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
participant of courses/trainings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
transfer to a doctoral school in your university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
bridge year/bridge courses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
regular recruitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
research internship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
laboratory Internship other, which ones?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



21. Has your university launched its own special scholarship programs for Ukrainian students/doctoral candidates? If so, were they dedicated to new students or to those already studying at your university? How long after the outbreak of the war were these programs launched?

*Please briefly describe the details of these programs.*

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22. What forms of admission of new researchers from Ukraine have been used at your university since the outbreak of the war in relation to the academic year?

*Select as many answers as you want.*

	academic year 2021/2022	academic year 2022/2023	academic year 2023/2024	I do not know / it is hard to say	not used at the university
scholarship/research internship from internal sources of the university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
scientific scholarship/research internship from external sources (national and international grants, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
employment contract	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
civil law contract	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
visiting professor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, which ones? -----					
the university did not employ researchers from Ukraine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

23. Has your university taken measures to integrate Ukrainian students, doctoral students, and researchers with the local academic community?

*Select only one answer.*

- Yes (what were these activities?) -----
- No
- I do not know / It is hard to say



24. What challenges did your university have to face in connection with the influx of Ukrainian refugees – students, doctoral candidates, researchers and what was their scale?

	It was a big challenge	It was a medium challenge	It was a small challenge	It was not a challenge
lack of financial resources of the university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
lack of dedicated national programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
no dedicated international programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
lack of accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
language problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
adaptation problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
legal restrictions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
administrative restrictions at the university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
lack of necessary documentation from people from Ukraine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25. Were there any other challenges that your university had to face in connection with the influx of Ukrainian refugees - students, doctoral candidates, academics, who were not mentioned in the Q 24. If so, what are they?

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### PART III

## CRISIS MANAGEMENT FOR REFUGEES OF UKRAINIAN CITIZENS FROM OUTSIDE ACADEMIA

26. What forms of support have been offered by your university to refugees from Ukraine from outside the academic community of your university (i.e. ordinary Ukrainian citizens fleeing the war)?

Select multiple answers.

- humanitarian aid
- Accommodation
- Meals
- medical assistance
- language courses
- psychological help
- legal aid
- assistance in official matters
- adaptation measures for refugee children
- we did not have the opportunity to offer such help
- other, which ones? -----



27. Has your university prepared any innovative, original solution or tool to support refugees from Ukraine? (technological, linguistic, etc.) If so, please briefly specify.

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28. How did you organize the work of volunteers for refugees from Ukraine at your university? if so, what solutions worked in your case?

-----

29. Has your university cooperated with local authorities, NGOs or business to support refugees from Ukraine from outside academia?

Select only one answer.

- Yes
- No
- I do not know / It is hard to say

30. Could you briefly describe the forms of this cooperation and your impressions from this experience, what solutions worked and what could have been done better?

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## PART IV GOOD PRACTICES IN MANAGING MASSIVE INFLUX OF REFUGEES

31. What actions taken by your universities in response to the outbreak of war in Ukraine and the emergency situation do you consider to be the most effective? And why?

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32. You may see that something could have been done better. If so, what could it be?

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33. What are the most important conclusions and recommendations resulting from your experience in dealing with an emergency situation (crisis) that could be useful for universities from other countries?

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## METRICS

34. Name of your university

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35. Function(s) of the person(s) completing the questionnaire

*Select multiple answers.*

- Rector
- Vice-Rector, which one? -----
- Chancellor
- Other, which ones? -----

36. How has the number of students from Ukraine changed at your university since the academic year 2021/2022?

*Select only one answer.*

- Increased
- Decreased
- Remains at the same level
- Other, what? -----
- I do not know / It is hard to say



## List of Polish Universities – respondents to the survey

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1. Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków
2. Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw
3. Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań
4. AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków
5. Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University
6. Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw
7. Collegium CIVITAS
8. Cracow University of Economics
9. Cracow University of Technology
10. Częstochowa University of Technology
11. Fire University
12. Jagiellonian University in Cracow
13. Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa
14. Jan Kochanowski University of Kielce
15. Kielce University of Technology
16. Kazimierz Wielki University
17. Koźmiński University
18. Lublin University of Technology
19. Łódź University of Technology
20. Medical University in Białystok
21. Medical University of Silesia
22. Poznań University of Economics and Business
23. Poznań University of Life Sciences
24. Poznań University of Medical Sciences
25. Poznań University of Technology
26. Rzeszów University of Technology
27. SGH Warsaw School of Economics
28. Silesian University of Technology
29. SWPS University
30. The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin
31. The Karol Lipiński Academy of Music in Wrocław
32. The Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music in Kraków
33. The Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin



34. The Medical University of Wrocław
35. University of Agriculture in Kraków
36. University of Economics in Katowice
37. University of Gdańsk
38. University of Łódź
39. University of Rzeszów
40. University of Siedlce
41. University of Silesia in Katowice
42. University of Warsaw
43. University of Wrocław
44. University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn
45. Vistula University
46. Warsaw Medical University
47. Warsaw University of Technology
48. Warsaw University of Life Sciences
49. Wrocław University of Technology
50. Wrocław University of Life Sciences
51. WSB Academy





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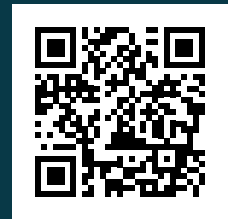
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**WP4A5 REPORT**

**POLISH ACADEMIA EMERGENCY RESPONSE:  
Managing large-scale inflow of Ukrainian  
refugees in higher education institutions in Poland  
2022-2024**

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