



International Rescue Committee in Poland

Ukraine crisis response

The continuing war in Ukraine is causing extreme civilian harm, as millions of people have been forced to leave their homes and find shelter in neighbouring or further countries. Poland is one of the countries hosting the largest number of refugees from Ukraine. The IRC has worked in Poland since February 2022 to provide vital support to those affected by the conflict, so they can return home when it is safe, not because they have to. The humanitarian needs of those fleeing Ukraine will outlast the conflict. Despite the initial warm welcome Ukrainian refugees faced in Poland, people are still struggling with insecurity, insufficient income and difficulties in adapting to the Polish reality.

WHO ARE WE?

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is an international, independent humanitarian aid organisation. The mission of the IRC is to help people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and gain control of their future. The IRC is now at work in over 40 crisis-affected countries. The IRC has been responding to humanitarian crises in Europe since 2015, when we launched an emergency response to the peak in migration in Greece and relaunched operations in Serbia.

HOW DO WE RESPOND TO CRISIS IN UKRAINE?

The IRC launched an emergency response to the escalation of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, working directly and with local partners to reach those most in need. In Ukraine, we are focusing our response in the conflict-affected areas in the east and southeast. We are distributing essential non-food items, providing cash assistance to the most vulnerable households, improving access to health care, and providing a variety of targeted protection services for people with increased vulnerability and needs. Responding along the entire arc of the crisis, we are running activities targeting Ukrainian refugees in Poland, Moldova, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Czechia and Bulgaria, as well as in Germany, Italy, Greece and the UK.



Let's meet Marya Borysova, who lives in Katowice. The 'One Step to Employment Centre,' run by the IRC in partnership with the Polish organization FIW, supported her in finding stable employment as a tram driver.

Photo: Tamara Kiptenko for the IRC

What does IRC do in Poland?

The number of refugees remaining in Poland can be estimated at around 960 thousand. More than 40 percent of refugees from Ukraine in Poland are children and 65 percent are female. According to the latest protection profiling findings from Poland, 64 percent of the respondents plan to stay in Poland mainly due to safety reasons. To provide the best support to them, we work in different locations in Poland through diverse approaches: partner-led and joint IRC-partner interventions and activities led by the IRC in the frame of three programs:

▪ **Emergency Cash and Livelihoods Support**

IRC in Poland has supported over 53,000 most vulnerable people with cash assistance to ensure refugees can buy food, medicine, clothing and other essentials.

With the Polish Centre for International Aid (PCMP), we have also supported Ukrainian refugees to find employment in Poland. We continue to do that by opening two livelihood centers in Poznań and Katowice where refugees can find language courses, legal assistance, job-matching activities, and other services to support them in finding stable employment; By November, 2023 almost 600 clients had received support in the centres. Moreover the IRC has organized a number of job fairs and two social impact campaigns to support inclusion of Ukrainians into the Polish labour market.

▪ Protection

The IRC has opened the Community Centre "Vchasno" dedicated to women, girls, and children from Ukraine. The center aims to serve the more than 160 thousand individuals from Ukraine registered in the Slaskie voivodeship. It offers a range of services, including psychosocial support and recreational activities, focusing on emotional regulation, well-being, integrated development, teaching methods, social skills, and crafts. These services are designed to provide support, foster a sense of community, and aid those who have been compelled to flee the war.

Thanks to cooperation with our partner Migam, we are providing sign language translation in Ukrainian and in Polish Sign Language to support access to services for refugees living with disabling hearing loss.

We assist individuals with refugee backgrounds to navigate Polish public services (health, social, educational). With various partners, we provide refugees legal assistance and information (infolines, info points) to integrate into Polish communities, and emergency legal aid to unaccompanied minors and their guardians, as well as support for people with disabilities, the elderly and survivors of violence. With the IRC's support, our partners help women affected by the war in Ukraine to find safe haven and assistance in a center for GBV survivors in Warsaw.

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Solidarity and strong international response to the crisis in Ukraine has set a precedent for how the world should respond to humanitarian crises globally. This response must be sustained. People fleeing Ukraine need our continuous support.

Alan Moseley, Country Director IRC Poland

▪ Education

In cooperation with Teach for Poland, the IRC integrates the existing teaching model with the IRC's healing classroom components to train 40 Polish teachers and 12 Ukrainian teachers on how to work with students with refugee backgrounds and those experiencing trauma.

In collaboration with the Teacher Training Centre in Poznań, the IRC has successfully identified three schools that are poised to undergo a transformation in their learning environment. Together, we are dedicated to creating spaces that are both welcoming and soothing for students. Our joint efforts involve the design and implementation of three tranquil peace corners within these schools, providing students with spaces to unwind, discover serenity, and find peace.

Together with the partner, Polish Migration Forum, IRC developed an open access online training platform <https://szkola-roznorodnosci.org/> for intercultural education assistance, directed particularly to persons working in schools outside of Warsaw.

The IRC in partnership with Center for Citizenship Education (CCE) conducts activities that support inclusion of Ukrainian students in the life of the classroom and school, and enable all students to have a greater impact on what is happening in the school, making it a place where young people want to spend their time.

Together with Association of Ukrainians in Poland IRC offers non-formal education activities for refugee youth 12-18 years in 3 locations: Łęborg, Poznań and Warsaw. Each location offers a set of activities such as language courses, crafts, discussion clubs or board games.

IRC partner Foundation for Freedom conducts 3 types of activities: Multicultural learning for school students and teachers in Primary Schools of Warsaw, community work in 2 centers for foreigners: Podkowa Leśna "Dębak" and Linin, and sport and physical activities for youth and adults from Humanitarian Aid Center.



CONTACT US

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