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SOCIAL SECURITY OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE IN POLAND

The aim of the article is to analyze the system of support and integration of refugees from Ukraine in Poland, identify key challenges and indicate opportunities for international cooperation that can contribute to improving the situation of refugees and host communities. The article analyzes the social security of refugees from Ukraine in Poland, taking into account their migration situation, integration challenges and opportunities for international cooperation. Key aspects of the Polish support system are described, such as financial benefits, access to health care, education and the labour market, and the role of state institutions and non-governmental organisations is indicated. The problems of integration, including language, social and cultural barriers, are also discussed, and long-term perspectives for Polish-Ukrainian relations are presented. In the end, recommendations were formulated regarding cooperation between Poland and Ukraine and the need for further development of migration and integration policies. The research problem was formulated: What challenges and opportunities are created by the current system of support for refugees from Ukraine in Poland in the context of ensuring their social security and integration? Poland has played a key role in ensuring social security for refugees from Ukraine by offering a comprehensive support system. However, effective integration requires further development of migration policies, the elimination of language and social barriers, and the strengthening of international cooperation. A significant challenge is to balance current aid activities with long-term integration strategies that will contribute to building a cohesive society. The article uses methods of analysis and synthesis of the literature on the subject and international and national reports on migration and integration of refugees. The comparative method allowed for the assessment of Polish activities in a broader international context. In addition, systemic analysis was used to identify key elements of the refugee support system and their interdependencies.

Key words: social security, refugees, social integration, migration policy, international cooperation.

Introduction. In recent years, Poland has become one of the main countries of refuge for refugees from Ukraine, especially as a result of the escalation of the armed conflict, which began in 2014 and intensified significantly in 2022. The scale of migration and the need to provide refugees with adequate living conditions posed a challenge both for the Polish social system and for international mechanisms to support people forced to leave their homes.

Refugee social security covers a wide range of issues, from access to basic services such as housing, financial assistance and health care, to integration into the local community and ensuring a sense of stability in a foreign country. In the context of Polish, an important role is played by both state institutions and non-governmental organizations, which jointly try to meet this exceptional situation.

The aim of the article is to analyze the functioning of the social support system for refugees from Ukraine in Poland, with particular emphasis on legal, institutional and social mechanisms. In addition, the study addresses issues related to the challenges of refugee integration, as well as assesses the effectiveness of Polish migration policies and their impact on the level of social security of people arriving from Ukraine.

The topics taken up not only reflect the importance of humanitarian support in crisis situations, but also show the potential of international cooperation in the face of growing global migration challenges. This analysis is particularly important from the perspective of Ukraine, as the experiences of refugees may affect the further development of relations between the two countries and support the processes of social reintegration in the future.

The situation of refugees from Ukraine in Poland. The initiation of a full-scale conflict in Ukraine by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin has brought back regular warfare to Europe after 70 years of peace [2]. Since the escalation of the armed conflict in Ukraine in February 2022, Poland has become a key place of refuge for Ukrainian citizens fleeing hostilities.

According to data from February 2023, almost 1 million Ukrainian citizens, mainly women and children, benefited from temporary protection in Poland. In total, about 1.4 million people had valid residence permits, which accounted for over 80% of all foreigners settling in the country. Currently, about 952 106 refugees from Ukraine are registered in Poland [8].

The main causes of this mass migration are the intense hostilities on the territory of Ukraine and the related humanitarian crisis. Armed conflict leads to a direct threat to life, destruction of infrastructure and deterioration of living conditions, which forces many citizens to seek refuge in neighboring countries, such as Poland.

The influx of such a large number of refugees poses a significant challenge for Polish in various aspects:

- logistical – providing adequate accommodation, food and basic services for such a large group of people required a quick mobilization of resources and infrastructure;
- legal – the need to adapt the national legal system to the needs of refugees, including granting temporary protection and regulations on access to the labour market and social benefits;
- social – the integration of such a large number of people with a different cultural and linguistic background is a challenge for local communities and education and health care systems.

The Polish social security system seems to be a protective system with a wide range of social protection [10, p. 18]. In March 2024, an amendment to the Special Act on Refugee Rights was introduced, which was aimed at adapting the regulations to the changing situation and providing better legal protection for people fleeing the conflict [7, p. 4]. The literature on the subject indicates that migrations caused by armed conflicts have far-reaching social and economic consequences both for the host countries and for the refugees themselves. Migration is often the result of armed conflicts and civil wars, being the main result of decolonization movements and natural disasters. Finally, migration as the main engine of globalization – undeniably determines the shape of contemporary reality [5, p. 222–223].

In the case of Polish, the influx of refugees from Ukraine can lead to changes in the labor market, affect the social welfare system and shape intercultural relations. On the one hand, the presence of refugees can contribute to cultural enrichment and dynamization of the labor market, but on the other hand, it can give rise to social tensions and require additional investment in integration. According to the report on monitoring the situation of refugees from Ukraine in Poland, a significant proportion of respondents (42,1%) were employed before leaving Ukraine, and 25% were retired. Unemployment was only 1,8%, and a small part (0,4%) supported family businesses. Currently, the largest group identifies as pensioners (27,2%), and unemployment has increased significantly to 22,4%. Employment has fallen

significantly – only 20,2% of respondents are currently employed, which is a decrease compared to the number of employees in Ukraine [7, p. 13].

These challenges underline the need for a comprehensive approach to migration policy, taking into account both humanitarian aspects and long-term social inclusion strategies. An analysis of the experience of other European countries can provide valuable clues in this regard. In conclusion, the situation of Ukrainian refugees in Poland is complex and multidimensional, requiring coordinated action at the national and international level to ensure adequate support and integration for those affected by the conflict.

Social security of refugees – the support system in Poland. Poland, as a country hosting a large number of refugees from Ukraine, has created a comprehensive system of social and financial support. One of the most important elements of this system is the possibility of using programs such as 500+, which provides a monthly benefit for each child up to the age of 18. Refugees under temporary protection in Poland can also apply for other forms of assistance, such as family allowances, nursing benefits or one-off financial allowances in the event of special needs [6]. A similar extension until 30 September 2025 will apply to periods when:

- periods of stay and validity of national visas of Ukrainian citizens are extended by operation of law;
- the validity periods of temporary residence permits for Ukrainian citizens are extended by operation of law;
- the deadlines for Ukrainian citizens to leave the territory of Poland are extended by operation of law (pursuant to Article 299 (6) of the Act of 12 December 2013 on foreigners);
- the deadlines for voluntary return (currently the deadlines for voluntary departure) specified in the decisions issued to Ukrainian citizens on obliging the foreigner to return (pursuant to Article 315 (1) of the Act on Foreigners) are extended by operation of law
- the validity periods of residence cards, Polish identity documents of a foreigner and “permit for tolerated stay” issued to citizens of Ukraine are extended by operation of law;
- the stay of Ukrainian citizens on the territory of Poland is considered legal in connection with the end of the period of permissible short-term stay (on the basis of a Schengen visa issued by a Polish authority, on the basis of a visa issued by another Schengen area country, on the basis of a residence permit issued by a competent authority of another Schengen area country or under visa-free travel);
- citizens of Ukraine shall not apply in proceedings for the award of a financial temporary residence permit for the purpose of conducting business activity specified in Article 142 (1) (3) of the Act on Foreigners, the requirement related to the size and quality of the business activity, if they conduct business activity on the basis of an entry in the Central Registration and Information on Business [11].

According to data from the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, by the end of 2023, the 500+ benefit was paid to over 700 thousand children from Ukraine. In addition, simplified procedures allow for quick obtaining of financial assistance, which is crucial in a crisis situation.

The health care system in Poland has been opened to refugees from Ukraine, who can use medical services financed by the National Health Fund (NFZ). This right covers basic medical care, hospital treatment, as well as access to vaccinations. In practice, however, many refugees face barriers in the form of limited availability of doctors, especially in larger cities, where the demand for medical services is the highest.

In the field of education, Poland has introduced legislation allowing refugee children to access free education in public schools and kindergartens. In 2023, more than 300 thousand children from Ukraine were registered in the Polish education system, which required an increase in the number of places in educational institutions and the employment of additional teachers, including bilingual teachers.

Access to the labour market has been facilitated by a special act that allows refugees to take up employment without the need to obtain a permit. By the end of 2023, about 500 thousand Ukrainian citizens found legal work in Poland, mainly in sectors such as construction, services, care and agriculture.

The role of state institutions, non-governmental organizations and local communities

The Polish government plays a key role in coordinating aid to refugees, but NGOs and local communities also make an important contribution. Institutions such as Caritas, the Polish Red Cross and the Ocalenie Foundation provide humanitarian aid, legal advice, psychological support and organize Polish language courses [9, p. 86]. Local communities, including local governments, organise donation collections, provide accommodation and run local integration initiatives such as sports activities, cultural events and mentoring programmes. Support for local communities often plays a decisive role in the adaptation process of refugees.

Among the good practices, it is worth mentioning the introduction of the so-called "support points", which operate in the largest cities in Poland. These are places where refugees can get comprehensive help – from legal information, through interpreter services, to material assistance. However, the support system is not without its loopholes. The main problems are:

- shortage of places in public educational institutions, especially in large agglomerations;
- difficulties in accessing health services resulting from the overload of the health care system;
- language barriers that hinder integration into the labour market and local communities;
- lack of a sufficient number of training programs that would help refugees adapt their professional qualifications to the Polish labor market.

In conclusion, Poland has created a solid foundation of social support for refugees from Ukraine, but there is a need to further develop integration programs and investments in public infrastructure to meet the long-term challenges of hosting such a large number of people.

Challenges and opportunities for international cooperation. As many as 48% of refugees expressed their intention to stay in Poland for the duration of the war [1]. Therefore, the integration of refugees from Ukraine in Poland is associated with a number of challenges that result from linguistic, cultural and social differences. The knowledge of the Polish language among refugees from Ukraine is limited, which makes it difficult for them to function in everyday life, access public services, and find a job. Polish language programs are available, but their number and range are not sufficient in relation to the needs. Research by the Ocalenie Foundation shows that only 30% of refugees declare knowledge of the basics of the Polish language at a level that allows communication in offices and on the labour market.

Although Poles and Ukrainians share some common historical and cultural elements, differences in traditions and customs can lead to misunderstandings. An example is the different approaches to the role of women in the family and society, which in some cases leads to difficulties in accepting new social models. In some local communities, tensions have been reported due to Poles' concerns about their jobs and access to public services such as health care and education. Although surveys indicate that the majority of Poles declare support for refugees, about 20% are concerned about their long-term impact on local public resources [4].

The migration crisis may become the foundation for closer relations between Poland and Ukraine, both at the social and political level. Poland's support to refugees, including the opening of the labour market and education system, has strengthened mutual trust and solidarity. In the long run, this may result in better economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries. The massive influx of refugees has highlighted the need to develop integration policies in Poland. Capabilities include:

1. Expanding educational and vocational programmes for migrants.
2. Promoting activities aimed at combating discrimination and promoting cultural diversity.
3. Creating local integration centres that will support refugees in language learning, cultural adaptation and job search.

Poland and Ukraine can jointly create educational programs that will allow refugees to gain qualifications recognized in both countries. Language courses conducted both in Poland and online could be financed under joint funds. Both countries should seek greater financial and technical support from the European Union and international organizations. These funds could be used for the development of public infrastructure and the creation of long-term integration strategies.

NGOs and cultural institutions in both countries can support the exchange of experiences and the promotion of mutual understanding. Examples of such activities are artistic projects, educational workshops or events promoting Ukrainian traditions in Poland. Poland and Ukraine should cooperate on creating mechanisms to respond to future migration crises. This could include better monitoring of migration flows, faster asylum procedures and contingency plans at regional level.

The influx of refugees from Ukraine to Poland poses both challenges and opportunities for both countries. A key element in tackling this crisis effectively is international cooperation, which will not only address current humanitarian needs, but also lay a solid foundation for future social inclusion. Developing integration policies and promoting mutual understanding can bring long-term benefits for both Poland and Ukraine, while strengthening solidarity and partnership in the region.

Conclusion. An analysis of the support and integration system for refugees from Ukraine in Poland indicates that the country has taken significant measures to ensure social security and create conditions for adaptation for people forced to leave their homes. Poland stands out from other European countries as a leader in humanitarian aid, offering a comprehensive support system including social benefits, access to education, health care and the labour market. These actions, despite the difficulties of overloading public infrastructure and limited resources, are an example of social solidarity and readiness to respond to a large-scale humanitarian crisis.

One of the key elements of an effective response to the migration crisis is international cooperation, which has allowed Poland to obtain financial and technical support from the European Union and international organizations. This assistance has made it possible, among other things, to expand integration programmes, introduce simplified administrative procedures for refugees and increase access to public services. Equally important was the role of non-governmental organizations, which complemented the activities of state institutions by providing humanitarian aid, organizing language courses and supporting refugees in the adaptation process.

Despite significant progress, Poland still faces many challenges that require urgent solutions. Limited availability of places in public educational institutions, overloading of the health care system and language barriers are just some of the problems faced by both refugees and local communities. The difficulties present indicate the need to further develop integration policies that will take into account the needs of both refugees and host communities.

In the long term, the migration of refugees from Ukraine may contribute to strengthening Polish-Ukrainian relations, both at the social and political level. The solidarity shown during the crisis can become the basis for lasting cooperation in the future, strengthening the ties between the two nations. However, achieving this goal requires the implementation of long-term strategies that will foster integration and prevent potential social conflicts.

The need for further analysis in this area is obvious, especially in the context of assessing the effectiveness of the implemented solutions and identifying gaps in the support system. Research should include both the perspective of refugees and local communities to better understand their needs, expectations and concerns. It is also crucial to deepen knowledge about the long-term effects of migration on the labour market, education system and social development in Poland. Only on this basis will it be possible to develop policies that sustainably support integration and the building of a cohesive society.

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Юлія Новіцька, Даріуш Бронжкевич, Марцін Оскерко, Славомір Журавські. Соціальне забезпечення біженців з України в Польщі

Метою статті є аналіз системи підтримки й інтеграції біженців з України в Польщі, визначення основних викликів і можливостей міжнародної співпраці, які можуть сприяти покращенню ситуації як для біженців, так і для спільнот, які їх приймають. У статті розглянуто соціальну безпеку біженців з України в Польщі з урахуванням їхньої міграційної ситуації, викликів інтеграції та перспектив міжнародної співпраці. Описано ключові аспекти польської системи підтримки, зокрема фінансові виплати, доступ до охорони здоров'я, освіти та ринку праці, а також роль державних інституцій і неурядових організацій. Розглянуто проблеми інтеграції, зокрема й мовні, соціальні та культурні бар'єри, а також довгострокові перспективи польсько-українських відносин. У підсумку сформульовано рекомендації щодо співпраці між Польщею та Україною та необхідності подальшого розвитку міграційної та інтеграційної політики.

У статті сформульовано дослідницьку проблему: які виклики та можливості створює чинна система підтримки біженців з України в Польщі в контексті гарантування їхньої соціальної безпеки й інтеграції? Польща, безперечно, відіграла ключову роль у гарантуванні соціальної безпеки біженців з України, запропонувала комплексну систему підтримки. Однак для ефективної інтеграції необхідний подальший розвиток міграційної політики, усунення мовних і соціальних бар'єрів, а також зміцнення міжнародної співпраці. Важливим викликом є балансування між поточними заходами допомоги та довгостроковими стратегіями інтеграції, що сприятимуть формуванню згуртованого суспільства.

Ключові слова: соціальна безпека, біженці, соціальна інтеграція, міграційна політика, міжнародна співпраця.

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