



Humanitarian and Refugee Crisis in Ukraine

Updated November 23, 2022

Russia's war against Ukraine has triggered a humanitarian crisis and resulted in massive refugee flows to neighboring countries. It has also exacerbated global food insecurity. Congress passed two emergency supplemental appropriations bills in FY2022 (P.L. 117-103, Division N, and P.L. 117-128) that included a combined nearly \$8.9 billion for the humanitarian response in Ukraine and other countries directly affected by the conflict. The Biden Administration's November 15, 2022, emergency supplemental funding request included \$500 million in humanitarian assistance for "vulnerable and displaced populations in Ukraine, the broader region, and around the globe." In addition, the Biden Administration is providing Temporary Protected Status to Ukrainian citizens already in the United States. The European Union (EU) and individual European countries also have played a main role in addressing the crisis.

Conditions Inside Ukraine

The winter season is likely to worsen already deteriorating humanitarian conditions for millions of people inside Ukraine (which has a total population of about 44 million, including Crimea). From late February 2022 through August 23, 2022, nearly 7 million people became internally displaced persons (IDPs). (Previously, the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine since 2014 had resulted in an estimated 1.4 million IDPs, with roughly 3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection.) In the current crisis, from February to September, nearly 580 national and international humanitarian groups provided life-saving assistance and protection services to 13.4 million of those in need (including IDPs, evacuees, returnees and other conflict-affected people residing in areas directly affected by hostilities) across Ukraine, except where access was limited or denied in areas under attack. Evacuations from cities under siege by Russian forces have been precarious, with widespread reports of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL). Death and injury to civilian populations is extensive, with at least 16,631 civilian casualties from the start of the invasion to November 14, 2022. The needs of IDPs and the communities hosting them are changing with the situation on the ground and conduct of hostilities. Recent attacks on civilian power and water infrastructure have resulted in widespread power outages and some flooding. Food insecurity is a problem in many areas. Winterization assistance, such as shelter weather-proofing and repairs, is being implemented, while humanitarian organizations are also mobilizing to provide emergency assistance to vulnerable populations in recently liberated areas. The United Nations has estimated that nearly 18 million people inside Ukraine will need relief and protection, including winter-specific interventions.

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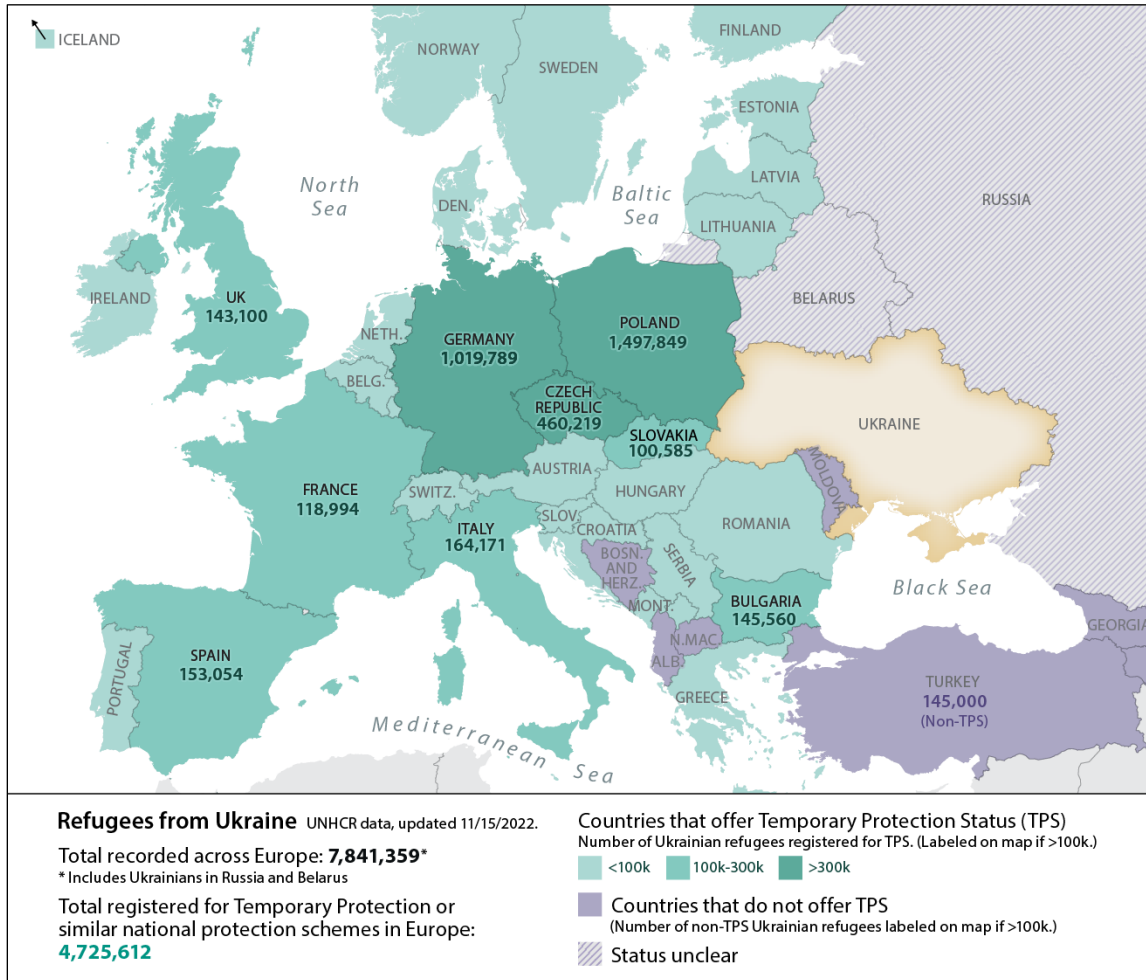
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Refugee Flows to Europe

As of November 15, 2022, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) [reported](#) that more than 7.8 million refugees, half of which are [estimated to be children](#), had fled hostilities in Ukraine, with Poland receiving the highest number of any European country. Other neighboring countries—Hungary, Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia—also have received large numbers of refugees, although many have continued moving west to Germany, the Czech Republic, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and France, and a significant number have arrived in Turkey.

Figure 1. Ukraine Refugee Crisis



Sources: Created by CRS. Refugee data from UNHCR; boundaries from U.S. Department of State.

U.S. officials estimate Russian authorities have forcibly sent between 900,000 and 1.6 million Ukrainians to Russia; an unknown number of other people reportedly have moved from Russian-occupied areas in Ukraine’s Donetsk and Luhansk regions to the Russian Federation and Belarus, but their number and status are unclear. As of November 15, UNHCR [reported](#) nearly 2.9 million Ukrainian refugees in Russia and Belarus combined.

European Responses

In March 2022, the European Union (EU) adopted a [temporary protection mechanism](#) for displaced persons fleeing Ukraine. The mechanism provides Ukrainian nationals and other legal residents of Ukraine who cannot safely return to their countries of origin with immediate rights of residency, medical assistance, and access to housing, education, and the labor market in EU countries. To take pressure off national systems for processing asylum claims, the mechanism applies collectively, waiving the need to examine individual applications. The decision initially applies for one year, with a provision that the EU may extend the mechanism to up to three years. In addition to providing funding and material for humanitarian assistance in Ukraine, the EU has taken steps that unlock [€20 billion in EU resources](#) for member states hosting refugees to use in meeting their housing, education, and health care needs. Non-EU members such as the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Norway have adopted national protection mechanisms for Ukrainian refugees. As of November 15, 2022, more than 4.7 million Ukrainian refugees had registered for temporary protection in European countries. Government authorities, humanitarian organizations, local communities, and volunteers in European countries have been providing refugee [reception and assistance](#). Although many of the refugees have been welcomed, the [willingness and capacity](#) of European countries to host Ukrainian refugees over the long term is unclear.

U.N. Humanitarian Appeals

The U.N. humanitarian funding [appeal](#) (2022) for Ukraine seeks nearly \$4.3 billion to address the acute humanitarian needs of the most crisis-affected people within the country. The [U.N. Regional Refugee Response Plan](#) projects that 8.3 million Ukrainian refugees may need protection and assistance in neighboring countries and seeks \$1.85 billion to help support the most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers.

U.S. Response and Issues for Congress

According to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States [provided](#) more than \$351 million in humanitarian assistance to Ukraine between FY2014 and FY2021. In FY2022 Congress appropriated nearly \$8.9 billion specifically for global humanitarian accounts within two broader [emergency supplemental](#) appropriations bills for Ukraine. (Congress also authorized funds from two other aid accounts for the response to long-term food insecurity related to the conflict.)

As of September 30, 2022, of the nearly \$8.9 billion appropriated, USAID and the State Department had obligated or disbursed more than \$1.5 billion in [humanitarian assistance](#), of which over \$1 billion was for the [response in Ukraine](#) and \$499 million was to support refugees hosted by countries in the region. To date, the agencies have not officially reported on humanitarian assistance obligations in countries outside the region but affected by the situation in Ukraine.

While U.S. humanitarian assistance in response to the situation in Ukraine had bipartisan support in FY2022, Members of Congress may continue to debate how such funds should be allocated, whether U.S. assistance is being used efficiently and effectively, and whether enacted funding is sufficient to support U.S. objectives. Members may also

- monitor the pace and levels of disbursed versus appropriated funds;
 - conduct oversight of delivery challenges, including those associated with access and security conditions, as well as civilian protection and violations of IHL; and
 - assess the needs of countries hosting refugees from Ukraine, and the appropriate division of responsibility between the EU, the United States, and other donor countries.
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