

# The World Health Organization (WHO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the European Union (EU) worked together to improve access to health-care services for refugees and people displaced from Ukraine

Together they supported countries in improving the access to health care services for refugees and displaced people from Ukraine under the Temporary Protection Directive activated by the EU on 4 March 2022 following the onset of the war in Ukraine.<sup>1</sup>

The project “Improving access to health care for refugees and people displaced from Ukraine benefiting of temporary protection in Member States” was funded by the EU under the 2023 EU4Health Work Programme.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



**Project period:**  
October 2023 –  
December 2025



**More than 450 health professionals** supported in their integration into local health workforce



**More than 23 000 individuals** integrated through health mediation and referral mechanisms

**Over 250 000 individuals** reached through public health information campaigns



**The project was implemented in 10 European countries:**  
Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania and Slovakia

<sup>1</sup> European Union. 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. Off J Eur Union. 2001;179:1–10 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2001/55/oj/eng>; accessed 3 March 2026).

# About the project

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## Building strong partnerships and creating spaces for dialogue and information sharing

The EU, IOM and WHO partnered to strengthen health systems in refugee-receiving countries and achieve the best health outcome for host populations, refugees and displaced people from Ukraine. At the national level, focus was placed on effective service delivery and efficient use of resources. Examples of this work include:

- two Knowledge Forums on Refugee and Migrant Health<sup>2</sup> (April 2024 and September 2025), and an intercountry workshop<sup>3</sup> convened Member State representatives and partners to exchange technical input, knowledge and good practice from field interventions, and discuss challenges and lessons learned, in order to meet the health needs of refugees and displaced people from Ukraine; and
- IOM, WHO and the European Commission, in collaboration with key stakeholders, presented project results, challenges, achievements and adaptive management in two international conferences: At the Global Society on Migration, Ethnicity, Race and Health (GSMERH) in Lisbon, Portugal, in September 2025 and the European Public Health (EPH) conference in Helsinki, Finland, in November 2025.

## Identifying and tackling the barriers that hinder access to health services for refugees and displaced people

- Two reviews were conducted in Estonia<sup>4</sup> and in Lithuania<sup>5</sup> of their respective national health system's capacity to provide services to refugees, identify challenges in accessing services and highlight opportunities for service integration and system resilience.
- Two rapid assessments were conducted in Lithuania and Romania to understand the enablers and barriers for refugees in accessing vaccination services and suggest recommendations for action.
- Throughout the project, WHO and IOM developed and disseminated health promotion materials that reached over 250 000 individuals with paper-based and online resources. These materials provide information on available services, administrative procedures, entitlements and rights.
- In Latvia, Lithuania, the Republic of Moldova, Poland and Romania, IOM and WHO, together with national health authorities, have provided training and capacity-building opportunities to health workers in order to improve overall access to services and service delivery to Ukrainian refugees.
- In Latvia, WHO and IOM collaborated to facilitate two rounds of training to over 60 health professionals to assist children with developmental delays or disabilities. The training sessions tackled an identified capacity-building need within the health system, and they provided health workers with tools and knowledge to guide parents in supporting their children's development in everyday home environments.

“I often interact with medical services. This session offered useful information. My children go to school, and I learned they need medical exams, a health certificate, a visit to the family doctor, and all these services are free.”

Irina, a refugee from Ukraine living in the Republic of Moldova

<sup>2</sup> Knowledge Forum on Refugee and Migrant Health [website]. World Health Organization; 2025 (<https://www.who.int/europe/news-room/events/item/2025/09/30/default-calendar/knowledge-forum-on-refugee-and-migrant-health>, accessed 9 March 2026).

<sup>3</sup> Intercountry workshop on strengthening capacity to support the health needs of refugees and displaced people from Ukraine [event report]. World Health Organization; 19 February 2025 (<https://www.who.int/europe/news-room/events/item/2025/02/18/default-calendar/intercountry-workshop-on-strengthening-capacity-to-support-the-health-needs-of-refugees-and-displaced-people-from-ukraine>, accessed 9 March 2026).

<sup>4</sup> Refugee and migrant health system review: challenges and opportunities for long-term health system strengthening in Estonia. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024 (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/379328>, accessed 9 March 2026). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

<sup>5</sup> Refugee and migrant health system review: challenges and opportunities for long-term health system strengthening in Lithuania. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2025 (Report on refugee and migrant health). (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/384161>, accessed 9 March 2026). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO



Selected examples of health education brochures in Ukrainian, covering topics such as access to primary care, patient rights and oral hygiene.

## Increasing the capacity of health systems to meet the needs of displaced communities

- ### Building and strengthening the capacity of cultural and health mediators

Mediators were deployed to resolve linguistic and cultural barriers, providing a wide range of support to beneficiaries, including health system navigation, health and medical support, document assistance, information provision and counselling. Thus far, 27 IOM and WHO mediators have been trained on the WHO Global Competency Standards<sup>6</sup> and deployed across many countries. So far, over 23 000 people have accessed health mediation and referral services.

- IOM and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, a WHO-hosted partnership, worked with national health authorities to deliver five health system resilience test reports. The reports aim to highlight cross-cutting lessons, good practices and evidence to inform efforts and action on migration and the resilience of health systems at national and European level.

## Empowering displaced health workers from Ukraine to continue professional development

Hundreds of health workers from Ukraine were supported with their qualification validation examinations, and 289 obtained their medical licences and have been contributing to the health systems in Bulgaria, Czechia, Poland and the Republic of Moldova.

- The report *Empowerment of displaced health-care personnel from Ukraine in the host country*<sup>7</sup> produced during the first year of implementation, provides a consolidated snapshot of key practices that four Member States implemented in the first response to assist health personnel from Ukraine to continue practising while displaced.
- In Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania, vocational educational training was implemented on specialized language and medical terminology. In Bulgaria, WHO and IOM continue working together to support health workers in meeting national requirements to obtain their medical licences. This raises awareness of development capacities and supports Ukrainian health workers in continuing their professional development.

“We keep hoping and believing that sooner or later we’ll return home to our wonderful city, Odesa. We don’t know when, unfortunately. But we hope for the best and look to the future with optimism. Psychologists and social workers support us, and we’re already feeling calmer.”

Inna, a health mediator from Ukraine living in the Republic of Moldova

“Through the Global Competency Standards training, I have discovered a tailored and competency-based approach to support refugees and migrants in Romania.”

Lucretia, a health worker from Romania

<sup>6</sup> Refugee and migrant health: WHO trains health mediators on Global Competency Standards [news release]. World Health Organization; 16 December 2024 (<https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/16-12-2024-refugee-and-migrant-health-who-trains-health-mediators-on-global-competency-standards>, accessed 9 March 2026).

<sup>7</sup> Empowerment of displaced health-care personnel from Ukraine in the host country. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2024 (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/378446>, accessed 9 March 2026). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

