

ISSUES CAUSED BY THE RUSSIAN–UKRAINIAN WAR AND THE REGIONAL REFUGEE CRISIS IN PARTICULAR COUNTRIES: FOCUSING ON HUNGARY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the main steps the Hungarian Government has taken in terms of ensuring protection status for those fleeing from Ukraine, as well as the main services indispensable for their everyday life in Hungary. Hungary immediately opened the border and allowed people in without restrictions; an extensive infrastructure was created and is still maintained, adapting to changing trends. The temporary protection status was introduced on the first evening of the war; subsequently, its personal scope was adjusted to the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive. The range of benefits has been provided to applicants and beneficiaries of temporary protection in Hungary; yet, the goal from the beginning was their independent success and integration as soon as possible, mainly by employment. Several legislative changes have been made to rationalise the access to services. In addition, Hungarian–Ukrainian dual citizens must be provided with the same benefits as Ukrainian citizens arriving to Hungary. Although more than 40,000 Ukrainians have so far gained temporary protection in Hungary, the majority of those fleeing continued their journeys to other EU countries. Thus, Hungary's role continues to stand out primarily in providing entry into the EU and first instance aid.

KEYWORDS

*temporary protection of Ukrainians in Hungary
Temporary Protection Directive
services for Ukrainian refugees
integration
dual citizens*

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1. Introduction

| 1.1. *Fleeing From the Russian War of Aggression in Ukraine: The Hungarian Context*

Following the full-scale invasion of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, millions of people, mainly women and children, arrived in the European Union (hereinafter: EU) in the first few months. The focus of the four Member States bordering Ukraine (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania) together with Moldova was rightly on meeting the immediate reception and protection needs of those fleeing the war. Therefore, they opened their Eastern borders and ensured an unconditional but simultaneously controlled inflow to their territory. The European Commission also acknowledged their efforts after seeing first-hand the highly substantial support programs these countries provided.² To lay the foundation for long-term prospects, the EU activated the Temporary Protection Directive (hereinafter: TPD),³ thereby guaranteeing that those fleeing Ukraine will receive a secure status and related services for the duration of the war.

In mid-2024, there were approximately 4.19 million displaced persons from Ukraine benefitting from temporary protection in the EU. Moreover, further arrivals on a large scale cannot be excluded, due to the difficult humanitarian conditions, broader volatility, and the uncertainty of the situation in Ukraine following Russia's war of aggression. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated that over 14.6 million people in Ukraine are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance in 2024. The International Organization for Migration estimates that 3.6 million people are internally displaced within Ukraine as of March 2024, with 80% of all internally displaced persons reporting having been displaced for one year or longer. Thus, the risk of escalation persists.⁴

In Hungary, the number of border crossings from Ukraine has reached 4.2 million.⁵ According to data until 24 November 2024,⁶ 42,418 people have been recognised as beneficiaries of temporary protection since the outbreak of the war. The total number of applications is 48,594, meaning the recognition rate is very high, with 3,158 people receiving recognition as beneficiaries of temporary protection. Nevertheless, two facts must be considered when comparing this relatively low data to those in other countries in the EU or the region. First, EU law allows those fleeing from Ukraine to freely choose their place of residence in the EU regardless of where they entered the EU from. Therefore, several circumstances influence such decisions, such as the types and amount of aid provided, job opportunities, and family ties, but also language barriers or further obstacles. Second, there is a unique feature in terms of those fleeing from Transcarpathia, the region closest to Hungary, as many have Hungarian descendants and thus can easily gain Hungarian

2 | Communication from the Commission, 2022, p. 4.

3 | Council Directive 2001/55/EC.

4 | Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/1836 of June 25 2024.

5 | OM, 2024, p. 3.

6 | Igazságügyi Minisztérium (2024) 'Emlékeztető', Menekültügyért felelős tematikus munkacsoport, 2 December. [Online]. Available at: <https://emberijogok.kormany.hu/download/d/63000/Menek%C3%BClt%C3%BCgy%C3%A9rt%20Felel%C5%91s%20TMCS%20eml%C3%A9keztet%C5%91%20241202.pdf> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

citizenship.⁷ These Ukrainian–Hungarian dual nationals are treated as Hungarian citizens and not foreigners by the legal framework. However, given their lack of legal relations in Hungary, although they are not considered beneficiaries of temporary protection, the Hungarian Government still has to ensure that they can benefit from special services and rights on an equal basis with non-dual citizen Ukrainian nationals.

This study intends to describe the main steps the Hungarian Government has taken so far in terms of ensuring protection status for those fleeing from Ukraine, as well as the main services indispensable for their everyday life in Hungary. The study relies much on the information shared at the Safe in Hungary website run by the Hungarian Government,⁸ but also builds upon practical information as regards the usefulness and characteristics of the provided services and the demands of and obstacles for those fleeing from Ukraine.

1.2. Legal Framework of International Protection in Hungary

1.2.1. International and National Protection Statuses in Hungary

International protection statuses are harmonised at the EU level in line with which Hungarian law contains three different international protection statuses: refugees, beneficiary of subsidiary protection, and beneficiary of temporary protection.⁹ It is also important to note that there is a special status (tolerated stay) designed in national competence for persons not having a legal right to stay but can provide humanitarian grounds for their temporary stay in Hungary.

A refugee ('menekült') is a foreigner who verifies or substantiates that the criteria determined in Article XIV of the Fundamental Law,¹⁰ in compliance with Article 1 of the Geneva Convention,¹¹ exist in respect of his/her person; therefore, a refugee status is granted based on persecution in the country of origin or residence. The status does not have a specific validity date; however, it is subject to mandatory review every three years if it was granted after 1 June 2016. Refugees in Hungary generally share most of the rights and responsibilities as Hungarian citizens, although there are a few exceptions. Refugees in Hungary possess the right to vote in local municipal elections, as well as participate in local referendums; however, this right does not extend to national elections. They also cannot hold positions requiring Hungarian citizenship as a prerequisite. They can obtain

7 | On the patterns of (im)mobility in the Hungarian ethnic minority living in Transcarpathia, see, for example, Erőss, 2024.

8 | Safe in Hungary [Online]. Available at: <https://safeinhungary.gov.hu/en> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

9 | Act LXXX of 2007 on the right to asylum stipulates the content of the asylum granted by Hungary, the criteria of recognition as a refugee, a beneficiary of subsidiary and temporary protection and a person with tolerated stay and the procedure aimed at expulsion ordered by the refugee authority, as well as the recognition and the revocation thereof.

10 | Hungary shall, upon request, grant asylum to non-Hungarian nationals who are persecuted in their country or in the country of their habitual residence for reasons of race, nationality, the membership of a particular social group, religious or political beliefs, or have a well-founded reason to fear direct persecution if they do not receive protection from their country of origin, nor from any other country. A non-Hungarian national shall not be entitled to asylum if he or she arrived in the territory of Hungary through any country where he or she was not persecuted or directly threatened with persecution.

11 | Act LXXX of 2007, Section 6(1).

a personal identity card and a bilingual travel document, and also apply for Hungarian citizenship after three years of residence, instead of the general rule of eight years.

Subsidiary protection ('oltalmazott') is granted to a foreigner who does not satisfy the criteria of recognition as a refugee but there is a risk that in the event of his/her return to his/her country of origin, s/he would be exposed to serious harm and s/he is unable or, owing to fear of such risk, unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of his/her country of origin.¹² The status does not have a specific validity date; however, it is subject to mandatory review every three years if it was granted after 1 June 2016. Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection generally have the same rights and obligations as refugees. However, there are some distinct differences – for example, they do not have the right to vote for municipal elections in Hungary nor do they have the same accelerated path to citizenship as refugees.

Temporary protection ('menedékes') is granted in Hungary to a foreigner who belongs to a group of displaced persons arriving in the territory of Hungary *en masse*, which has been recognised (I) by the Council of the EU as eligible for temporary protection under the procedure determined in the TPD, or (II) by the Government as eligible for temporary protection, as the persons belonging to the group had been forced to leave their country due to an armed conflict; civil war or ethnic clashes; or the general, systematic, or gross violation of human rights, in particular, torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.¹³

A tolerated status ('befogadott') is a complementary form of protection in Hungary, the rules of which are set out in national competence. Hungary shall grant protection in the form of tolerated stay to a foreigner not complying with the criteria for recognition as a refugee or beneficiary of subsidiary protection but, in the event of his/her return to the country of origin, s/he would be exposed to a risk of persecution for reasons of race, religion, ethnicity, membership of a particular social group, or a political opinion or behaviour as specified in Article XIV (3) of the Fundamental Law, and there is no safe third country to admit him/her.¹⁴ The tolerated status is granted for a duration of one year and is subject to annual review by the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing (NDGAP). Tolerated status holders are not entitled to all the rights that refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection enjoy.

1.2.2. *Applying for International Protection in Hungary*

There are three layers of rules regulating the asylum procedure in Hungary based on which refugee status or subsidiarity protection could be gained, while a completely different set of rules applies to those wishing to be recognised as a person under temporary protection (see Chapter 2.3). Although the main rules of procedure have been set out by transposing the applicable EU asylum acquis, there are two other special sets of rules applicable in particular circumstances.

A 'state of crisis due to mass migration' was introduced into Hungarian law in September 2015,¹⁵ and consequently, from 28 March 2017 until 26 May 2020 (but in practice, until March 2020),¹⁶ asylum applications could only be submitted in transit zones, with

12 | Act LXXX of 2007, Section 12(1).

13 | Act LXXX of 2007, Section 19.

14 | Act LXXX of 2007, Section 25/A.

15 | On the securitisation of the Hungarian asylum system, see, for example, Nagy, 2016.

16 | See Juhász, 2017.

the exception of those staying lawfully in the country.¹⁷ All asylum seekers, excluding unaccompanied minors below the age of 14 years, had to stay at the transit zones for the whole duration of their asylum procedure. Nevertheless, in the infringement procedure C-808/18, the Court of Justice of the EU (hereinafter: CJEU) declared¹⁸ that Hungary had failed to fulfil its obligations deriving from certain elements of EU migration and asylum acquis.¹⁹

As of 26 May 2020, another set of special conditions are applicable for submitting an asylum application deviating from general rules.²⁰ This second set of special procedural provisions was first implemented in view of the emergency situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the armed conflict and humanitarian disaster in Ukraine and the prevention and management of their consequences in Hungary provide legal basis²¹ for their implementation. Consequently, in the present state of emergency, the regular procedure can be used only by those who carry out a special procedure before entering the country.²² It is also important to note that, according to Hungarian legislation, if one enters Hungary without a legal basis authorising the entry and stay, authorities may stop them and remove them from Hungarian territory through the border fence with Serbia. Nevertheless, it also needs to be stated that on 22 June 2023, the CJEU found that not allowing people to seek asylum on the territory of Hungary violates EU law.²³

2. Provision of Entry of Those Fleeing the War in Ukraine and Acquisition of the Temporary Protection Status in Hungary

| 2.1. Provision of Entry

Hungary enables entry for all persons directly fleeing Ukraine and offers the opportunity to apply for temporary protection regardless of whether he/she meets the conditions of entry. Based on applicable Schengen rules, holders of a biometric passport can enter visa-free and stay in the country for a total of 90 days within the last 180 days. Without

17 | On Hungary's position during asylum reform negotiations, see, for example, Stepper, 2016.

18 | Judgment of the Court, 17 December 2020.

19 | See Töttös, 2021.

20 | Based on Act LVIII of 2020 and Government Decree 292/2020 (VI. 17).

21 | Government Decree 424/2022. (X. 28.).

22 | If one is outside Hungary, they shall first submit a so-called declaration of intent to the Hungarian embassy in Belgrade (Serbia) or Kyiv (Ukraine). To do this, one needs to make an appointment at the relevant embassy. They may be summoned to the embassy for an interview. If the Hungarian authorities approve the declaration of intent, one will receive a one-time travel document with which they can travel to Hungary and apply for asylum. If the person is already in Hungary, they do not need to submit a declaration of intent to the embassy if they belong to any of the following groups: (1) Recognised beneficiaries of subsidiary protection staying in Hungary (or seeking recognition as a refugee); (2) family members of recognised refugees or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection staying in Hungary; (3) any person who is in detention, in custody, or imprisoned, except for those who have crossed the state border of Hungary in an irregular manner. In these cases, one can apply for asylum by visiting any of the NDGAP client offices in person and expressing their wish to do so.

23 | Judgment of the Court, 22 June 2023.

a biometric travel document or valid travel document, the person wishing to enter may request a temporary residence certificate (different from temporary protection) at the border, with which he/she must report to the NDGAP branch office located at his/her place of residence within 30 days.

In case Ukrainians wish to receive protection in Hungary, they indicate this intention to the authority to be recognised as a beneficiary of temporary protection at the customer service of the NDGAP or the Government Customer Services. Ukrainian–Hungarian dual citizens may not request temporary protection status, as they may return home to Hungary at all times and stay in the country as long as they wish without any kind of special permission.

The Hungarian Government has also been prepared in practice to provide immediate assistance following entry. During the state of danger announced under Article 53 of the Fundamental Law, the Charity Council – complemented with representatives of the State Secretariat for Local Authorities and State Secretariat for Welfare Policy of the Ministry of the Interior, and the National Directorate-General for Disaster Management – operates as the National Humanitarian Coordination Council (hereinafter: NHKT). From the beginning and in addition to local authorities and inhabitants from settlements along the border, charity organisations have been actively participating in performing tasks related to the assistance of persons fleeing the Russian–Ukrainian war at several assistance points at the border.²⁴ The Government of Hungary presently operates assistance points at two locations along the Hungarian–Ukrainian border for persons fleeing the Russian–Ukrainian war with the close cooperation and involvement of the Government Office of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County. People fleeing the war are provided at the assistance points, among other things, basic services (food, hygiene packages etc.); temporary overnight accommodation; sanitation opportunities; assistance in continued travel; provision of information; psychological support, where necessary; playrooms or mother–baby rooms at certain locations; charging of communication devices; internet and phone use; management of donations; and administrative and epidemiological coordination.

A major assistance transit point in Budapest was set up in the BOK hall.²⁵ From 1 August 2023, the transit point operating in the BOK hall temporarily suspended its activity due to the decreased number of arrivals; however, if necessary, operation of the Humanitarian Transit Point in the BOK hall can be restored in less than a half day. The services assisting persons fleeing the Russian–Ukrainian war are still available: information on means to obtain housing (in some cases, accommodation requests) and other information – for continued travel or application for beneficiary of temporary protection status – is offered at the Government Customer Service located in the Western railway station (‘Nyugati’) in Budapest.

Hungarian Rails (MÁV) has been offering free travel from the border station to people and families fleeing the Russian–Ukrainian war to Hungary since the outbreak of the war. Originally, the so-called Solidarity Ticket could be obtained for any lines; however, since 15 September 2022, it can be obtained only under certain conditions. Hungary grants discounts for other domestic travel in accordance with Government Decree No. 85/2007 and

24 | Safe in Hungary [Online]. Available at: <https://safeinhungary.gov.hu/en/arrive/helppoint-border> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

25 | Safe in Hungary [Online]. Available at: <https://safeinhungary.gov.hu/en/arrive/helppoint-capital> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

tariffs of the railway company. Therefore, a person recognised as a refugee, beneficiary of subsidiary protection, or beneficiary of temporary protection, or those applying for such statuses, may travel free of charge with the certificate issued by the NDGAP for using the travel discount along routes specified therein. Children under the age of 6 years may also travel free of charge, while children aged 6–14 years are entitled to a 50% discount.

2.2. Acquisition of the Temporary Protection Status

2.2.1. Activation of the TPD²⁶

The Russian war of aggression in Ukraine gave the European Commission the momentum to propose the activation of the TPD mechanism for the first time on 2 March 2022.²⁷ Shortly after, during their Council meeting on 3 March, Home Affairs Ministers officially agreed on the activation of the TPD by adopting a Council Decision.²⁸ The main purpose was to enable EU Member States to provide people fleeing the conflict in Ukraine with an appropriate response for their situation by offering a status harmonised at the EU level while also supporting Member States under pressure. Furthermore, this move had a symbolic nature, demonstrating that Europeans are responding in unity and solidarity, faced with this ongoing crisis in the heart of our continent.

The Council decided to establish three different categories of eligibility for temporary protection. (I) There are categories to which the TPD shall be applied; (II) in case of the second category, the adequate level of protection may be ensured by either providing temporary protection set out in the TPD or under national law; and (III) third, Member States may extend the application of the TPD to other categories. In accordance with Article 4(1) of Directive 2001/55/EC, temporary protection was first applicable for an initial period of one year, until 4 March 2023, and was then automatically extended for one additional year until 4 March 2024. On 19 October 2023, in accordance with Article 4(2) of Directive 2001/55/EC, the Council adopted two Implementing Decisions,²⁹ extending the temporary protection introduced by Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 with one year each. Most lately, the June 2025 Justice and Home Affairs Council reached a political agreement on extending temporary protection for people displaced from Ukraine by a further year until 4 March 2027. Ministers also discussed a draft Council recommendation to prepare for a coordinated transition out of temporary protection.³⁰ The recommendation will address matters such as switching to other residence statuses, paving the way for a gradual return to Ukraine, and stepping up the provision of information about available options.

In the context of the activation of Directive 2001/55/EC, on 4 March 2022, Member States unanimously agreed in a statement not to apply Article 11 of Directive 2001/55/EC in relation to persons who enjoy temporary protection in a given Member State in accordance with Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382, and who move to another Member State without authorisation, unless Member States agree otherwise on a bilateral basis.³¹

26 | See Töttös, 2022.

27 | Proposal for a Council Implementing Decision, (2022) 91 final.

28 | Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382.

29 | Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/2409 and Council Implementing Decisions (EU) 2024/1836.

30 | Proposal for a Council Recommendation, COM/2025/651 final.

31 | Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382, Recital (15).

This means that with a view to supporting Member States who are the main entry points of the mass arrival of displaced persons fleeing war from Ukraine, a Member State shall not take back a person enjoying temporary protection on its territory, if the said person remains on, or seeks to enter without authorisation onto, the territory of another Member State.³² This also provides ample opportunities for those fleeing from Ukraine to find the place in the EU where they see their future guaranteed the most. Nevertheless, given that a person can benefit from the rights attached to temporary protection in only one Member State at a time, beneficiaries of temporary protection who move to another Member State to enjoy temporary protection should not benefit from social assistance in two Member States simultaneously.

2.2.2. Acquisition of the Temporary Protection Status in Hungary

According to Section 19 of Hungary's Act LXXX of 2007 on asylum, Hungary grants temporary protection on the basis of not only the TPD but also the Government's decision. It should be noted that before 2014, it was the Hungarian Parliament that had such a right; yet, in 2014 – presumably as a result of the Crimean conflict – this competence was moved to the Government to establish a quicker activation procedure.³³ Nevertheless, just as in the case of the TPD, the national application process had not been activated before the Ukrainian war either. Yet, already on the eve of 24 February 2022, the Hungarian Government made an instant move, and by issuing a Government Decree,³⁴ it activated the national temporary protection mechanism to those fleeing from Ukraine.

The personal scope of the national activation was surprisingly wide as it extended to all Ukrainian citizens who arrived from the territory of Ukraine and all the third-country nationals legally residing in Ukraine. The laconic Government Decree did not therefore exclude non-Ukrainian nationals, who only temporarily but legally resided in Ukraine before having to leave the country. Nevertheless, following the activation of the TPD at the EU level, a new Government Decree,³⁵ repealing the previous one, significantly narrowed down the categories eligible for temporary protection in Hungary. Section 1 of the new Government Decree repeats the obligatory categories set out in the Council Decision. As a result, presently, upon request, Hungary may grant temporary protection to the following persons (recognition as a beneficiary of temporary protection): (I) Ukrainian citizens residing in Ukraine before 24 February 2022; (II) stateless persons or non-Ukrainian third country nationals, who have been granted international protection or equivalent national protection in Ukraine before 24 February 2022; and (III) family members of the above-mentioned persons. If a citizen of Ukraine arrived in Hungary before 24 February 2022, they do not qualify for temporary protection. However, they can still apply for temporary protection status, and although it will be rejected, they will likely receive the 'tolerated status.' Although it is not the same as temporary protection, it still allows its beneficiary to remain in Hungary and provides them with certain rights.

It is possible to submit the application for beneficiary of temporary protection status at any customer service office of the NDGAP or at Government Customer Services during opening hours. Before arrival at the customer service of the Directorate-General or

32 | Tóttós, 2022, p. 196.

33 | Act XVI of 2014, Section 277(2).

34 | Government Decree 56/2022. (II. 24.).

35 | Government Decree 86/2022. (III. 7.).

Government Customer Service, applicants can upload their data in advance using the 'Menedékes' app or the Enter Hungary platform.³⁶ The procedure related to application for recognition as a beneficiary of temporary protection is launched after verification and registration of the applicant's personal identification and biometric data.

Until the receipt of the document certifying the status of beneficiary of temporary protection (plastic card), the applicant's identity data, right of residence in Hungary, legal status, and address of his/her accommodation in Hungary are certified by the residence document issued at the time of application. The residence document does not in itself entitle the applicant to travel abroad. The beneficiary of temporary protection is issued a residence permit document (plastic card) containing biometric data in a specific form and with specific data content, certifying his/her identity, the lawfulness of his/her stay in Hungary, and his/her entitlement to benefits and allowances. The expiry of the document (plastic card) proving the personal identity and right of residence of foreign nationals fleeing the Russian-Ukrainian war, recognised as a beneficiary of temporary protection in Hungary, has been automatically prolonged to 4 March 2026 (regardless of the expiry date stated on the document).³⁷ This extension applies even if the expiration date on the card is different. One can also request an official certificate from the NDGAP confirming the validity of the temporary protection status.

According to data until 24 November 2024,³⁸ 42,418 people have been recognised as beneficiaries of temporary protection since the full-scale extension of the war. The total number of applications is 48,594, meaning the recognition rate is very high: 3,158 people have received recognition as beneficiaries of temporary protection. The average number of applicants is approximately 32 people per working day. The government customer services are available in more than 300 locations nationwide. Nevertheless, it is estimated that out of the Ukrainian nationals who have registered in Hungary after the outbreak of the war of aggression in Ukraine, around two-third hold temporary protection status, while one-third have residence permits, most for work or study purposes. This attests to the flexibility and adaptation in securing their legal stay in Hungary based on their specific needs, circumstances, and future plans.³⁹

3. Rights and services enjoyed by beneficiaries of temporary protection in Hungary

The aid organisations operating in Hungary perform extraordinary work in relation to persons fleeing the Russian-Ukrainian war not only at the border, but at the national

36 | Enter Hungary [Online]. Available at: <https://enterhungary.gov.hu> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

37 | Government Decree 86/2022. (III. 7.), Section 5(3).

38 | Igazságügyi Minisztérium (2024) 'Emlékeztető', Menekültügyért felelős tematikus munkacsoport, 2 December. [Online]. Available at: <https://emberijogok.kormany.hu/download/d/1d/63000/Menek%C3%BClt%C3%BCgy%C3%A9rt%20Felel%C5%91s%20TMCS%20eml%C3%A9keztet%C5%91%20241202.pdf> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

39 | UNHCR, 2024, p. 13.

level and in Budapest. Several aid organisations⁴⁰ operate integration centres, organise childcare services and language courses, provide housing programmes etc. The Government Office located at the Western railway station can provide those fleeing from Ukraine with information and emergency housing referrals. This includes one-night reception accommodations, assistance in locating long-term housing, information about temporary protection, details about regular subsistence allowances and employment opportunities in Hungary, and further services available for those fleeing the war. It is also important to note that under the current circumstances, Hungarian–Ukrainian dual citizens with a permanent residence in Ukraine and fleeing Ukraine to Hungary on 24 February 2022 or later are also entitled to services provided to Ukrainian nationals, who apply for protection.⁴¹

During the state of danger announced under Article 53 of the Fundamental Law, the Charity Council – complemented with representatives of the State Secretariat for Local Authorities and State Secretariat for Welfare Policy of the Ministry of the Interior, and the National Directorate-General for Disaster Management – operates as the NHKT. The Government coordinates through the NHKT the delivery of aid, collection of donations and humanitarian aid deliveries, and the work of Hungarian aid organisations. The Government established the Bridge for Transcarpathia ('Híd Kárpátaljáért') initiative, within the framework of which the amount of donations received has exceeded 1 billion HUF.⁴²

The Government also appointed Norbert Pál as the Government Commissioner responsible for persons fleeing the Russian–Ukrainian war to Hungary for a period of two years from 16 May 2023.⁴³ The Government Commissioner performs several tasks, such as the following: he participates in the preparation of government decisions related to persons fleeing war; he coordinates the performance of government tasks related to supporting the accommodation of persons arriving; he makes proposals to the Government regarding legislative and other tasks requiring decisions related to the employment, education, social, and housing issues of persons fleeing the war, as necessary; he proposes, in cooperation with the Minister responsible for Government Communication, the development of a communication strategy necessary to adequately inform persons fleeing the war, and shall cooperate in its implementation; he cooperates with the ministries responsible for performing related tasks, the National Directorate General for Aliens, Hungarian and international humanitarian aid organisations, and organisations dealing with labour leasing and placement. The activities of the Commissioner are directed by the Minister Heading the Prime Minister's Office (Gergely Gulyás), and a five-person secretariat assists him in performing his duties.

40 | Hungarian Baptist Aid, Caritas Hungary, Hungarian Maltese Charity Service Association, Hungarian Interchurch Aid, Charity Service of the Hungarian Reformed Church, Hungarian Red Cross.

41 | Government Decree No. 86/2022 (III.7.), Section 8.

42 | The NHKT decides on the distribution and use of donations received through the National Unity Hotline (hereinafter 'Donation Hotline') with the 1357 phone number and on the 11711711-22222222 bank account. By dialling the Donation Hotline and sending a text message to that number, HUF 500 is donated to support the work of the NHKT organisation members.

43 | Government Resolution 1197/2023. (V. 15.).

3.1. Subsistence and Family Allowances

Pursuant to current provisions in force,⁴⁴ only recognised beneficiaries of temporary protection and persons with Ukrainian-Hungarian citizenship who fled Ukraine after 24 February 2022 are entitled to a regular subsistence allowance.⁴⁵ The amount of the regular subsistence allowance is HUF 22,800/capita/month, while the amount of subsidy for minors is HUF 13,700/capita/month. The National Directorate General of Immigration Police is responsible for the disbursement of regular subsistence support. The amount of benefits in kind is decreasing, but the demand for this support is continuous. Since the full scale extension of the war, the National Directorate General of Immigration Police has spent 3 billion 79 million HUF on the disbursement of this support.⁴⁶

Payment is conditional on the beneficiary of temporary protection – those eligible for employment as well as those not eligible above the age of 6 years – in particular, the fulfilment of his/her obligation to appear every month, during the month preceding the payment, before the district office according to the place of accommodation or residence designated to him/her. The legal representative of a beneficiary of temporary protection who is over 6 but under 18 years of age can fulfil the obligation to appear instead of him/her. The asylum authority also pays the regular subsistence allowance to beneficiaries of temporary protection under the age of 6 years, although they are not obliged to appear before the district office. If the beneficiary of temporary protection does not comply with the obligation to appear before the competent district office of his/her place of accommodation or designated place of stay, he/she cannot claim a subsequent payment of the subsistence allowance for the given month. The district office shall inform the asylum authority about the fact of fulfilment of the obligation to appear.

The beneficiary of temporary protection of adult age who is eligible for employment and the minor beneficiary of temporary protection who has reached the age of 16 years are obliged to register as an applicant for services with the district office of their place of residence in Hungary and cooperate with the district office before receiving the first regular subsistence allowance. The person who is eligible for employment is obliged to accept the suitable job offered to him/her,⁴⁷ including public employment, within 45 days of receiving the first regular subsistence allowance, in cooperation with the district office.⁴⁸ If a suitable job is offered to a beneficiary of temporary protection who is eligible for employment and the beneficiary of temporary protection does not accept it despite

44 | Government Decree No. 106/2022 (III. 12.).

45 | Safe in Hungary [Online]. Available at: <https://safeinhungary.gov.hu/en/stay/maintenance-grant/> (Accessed: 12 January 2026).

46 | Data shared on 2 December 2024: Igazságügyi Minisztérium (2024) 'Emlékeztető', Menekültügyért felelős tematikus munkacsoport, 2 December. [Online]. Available at: <https://emberjogok.kormany.hu/download/d/1d/63000/Menek%C3%BClt%C3%BCgy%C3%A9rt%20Felel%C5%91s%20TMCS%20eml%C3%A9keztet%C5%91%20241202.pdf> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

47 | A person eligible for employment is not obliged to accept the job offered to him/her if (1) at the time of the offer of employment, he/she is in an employment relationship with an employer in Hungary and the Hungarian employer certifies it, (2) is obliged to provide care for a minor under the age of three years, or (3) is a student in a full-time regular school education system and has not reached the age of 18 years.

48 | The rules of Act IV of 1991 on the promotion of employment and unemployment benefits and Act CVI of 2011 on public employment and the amendment of other acts related to public employment and other acts shall apply with regards to suitable employment.

being obliged to do so, the asylum authority shall terminate payment of the regular subsistence allowance.

In Hungary, family policy plays a key role; therefore, the system of family support is immensely diverse and multifaceted.⁴⁹ It is crucial to inform people fleeing the war in Ukraine about Hungarian family support benefits, as they are eligible for numerous benefits if certain conditions are met.

| 3.2. Health Care⁵⁰

Access to health care for a person arriving from Ukraine to Hungary is fundamentally determined by his/her legal status, that is, the legal title under which he/she is residing in Hungary.⁵¹ If neither the patient, nor persons in his/her environment are able to communicate with the specialist/physician in his/her language at the necessary level, it is possible to use an interpreter in short notice by dialling 1812.

A Ukrainian national residing temporarily in Hungary, in possession of documents, who did not apply for temporary protection status or a residence permit is entitled to emergency care (medical, specialist medical treatment; supply of medicine; treatment in a hospital and medical institution; medical devices, which he/she may use only in case of acute sickness and urgent necessity).

Persons applying for recognition and recognised as beneficiaries of temporary protection, without a legal relationship of social security, and Ukrainian-Hungarian dual nationals with a permanent address in Ukraine and arriving from Ukraine on or after 24 February 2022, who fall ill, are entitled to several health services free of charge.⁵² The

49 | Family support benefits can be divided into two broad areas: one is insurance-linked benefits, the other is non-insurance-linked benefits (based on subjective right) benefits.

50 | Safe in Hungary [Online]. Available at: <https://safeinhungary.gov.hu/en/stay/healthcare> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

51 | Applications for a social security (TAJ) card may be submitted by the employer or the educational institution in accordance with Government Decree No. 217/1997 (XII. 1.) for Hungarian nationals living in Ukraine, who do not have a Hungarian domicile, and foreign nationals holding a residence permit (e.g. residence permit for employment or study).

52 | Basic health care services, examinations, and therapeutic treatment falling within the scope of general practitioner care; mandatory vaccines related to their age; in case of urgent necessity, examination and therapeutic treatment provided as outpatient care, and medicine and bandages used during care; inpatient-medical institution care received in case of urgent necessity, therapeutic treatment, surgery, medical treatment, medicine necessary for therapeutic treatment, bandages, and meals; examinations and therapeutic treatment as part of oncological specialty care, treatment of other chronic diseases, and pharmaceutical products available with a price subsidy for beneficiaries of certain social security benefits, related to the improvement or maintenance of the health condition or pain relief within the framework of oncological specialty care or other care for chronic disease; necessary examinations, therapeutic treatment, and medicine after outpatient specialty care or inpatient-medical institution care until recovery or stabilisation of the condition; other medical devices ordered by the physician and their repair; emergency dental care and preservative dental care; prenatal care and obstetrical care, and procedures aimed at pregnancy termination under conditions set out in the act on the protection of foetal life; medicine and bandages ordered according to specific legislation free of charge for persons 'entitled to public health care' and with 90% or 100% social security financing 'on the basis of health care provision'; transport of patients in relation to specific care, if transportation by other means is not possible due to their health condition.

person applying for recognition as a beneficiary of temporary protection has the right to receive general practitioner care at the general practitioner – providing health services with territorial care obligations – operating at the place of his/her accommodation. Specialty care may be received from the health provider operating with territorial care obligations based on the referral of the physician providing general practitioner care or requests to return to specialty care. A vulnerable person (e.g. unaccompanied minor, old person, person with disabilities, pregnant woman) is entitled to specialist physician and hospital care not only in case of urgent necessity.

Apart from the services listed above, there are special fields where additional support is provided. The Heim Pál National Paediatric Institute admits children arriving from Ukraine, in need of health care 24/7; communication is assisted by interpreters, if necessary. The Trauma Centre of the Cordelia Foundation provides psychological support to persons affected by the Ukrainian war. Psychiatric and addictology specialty care is provided without referral. Psychologists and psychiatrists of the Crisis Intervention Health Service (Péterfy Hospital, Budapest) provide free crisis intervention therapy, and psychiatric assistance, if necessary, for refugees in both Hungarian and English.

The importance of easy access to health services is proven by the fact that over one in five of those fleeing from Ukraine with health needs struggles to access medical care in Hungary, citing, among others, language barriers, long waiting times, and administrative issues as obstacles. Further, the average monthly health-related expenditure for these families is roughly equivalent to the full subsistence allowance granted to vulnerable persons – making their situation more difficult.⁵³

3.3. *Job Opportunities and Recognition of Certificates and Diplomas*

The household income of those fleeing from Ukraine primarily comes from employment, with remittances, social protection benefits, and humanitarian aid supplementing it.⁵⁴ Ukrainian citizens with biometric travel documents have the opportunity to work in certain shortage professions immediately after their entry, without having to apply for recognition.⁵⁵ In non-shortage professions, Ukrainian citizens with biometric travel documents may work for a maximum of 90 days after their entry, provided they have a work permit. The employer applies for the work permit at the competent government office. A person submitting an application for recognition as a beneficiary of temporary protection has the right to work in Hungary, including employment through temporary agency work.⁵⁶ The employer is required to report employment of a beneficiary of temporary protection.

Right after the first arrivals, the Hungarian Government provided support to the employers to facilitate the employment in Hungary of a person with Ukrainian citizenship or Ukrainian-Hungarian dual citizenship fleeing the armed conflict in Ukraine for their employment in the territory of Hungary, if the employee's employment relationship was established for a fixed or indefinite period of time, for employment of at least 20 hours

53 | UNHCR, 2024, p. 8.

54 | Ibid.

55 | Safe in Hungary [Online]. Available at: <https://safeinhungary.gov.hu/en/job/joblink> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

56 | Government Decree 86/2022 (III. 7.), Section 6(4).

per week.⁵⁷ Currently, this support provided for the employer is introduced as the housing allowance of employed beneficiaries of temporary protection since late 2023.⁵⁸ Pursuant to this initiative,⁵⁹ the State reimburses HUF 80,000 or HUF 120,000 in housing allowance each month to the employer of beneficiaries of temporary protection.⁶⁰

A beneficiary of temporary protection, or one who applied for such a status, may request recognition of his/her foreign diploma and certificate.⁶¹ Recognition of certificates and diplomas received abroad, including Ukraine, may be requested from the Hungarian Equivalence and Information Centre of the Educational Authority (OH-MEIK),⁶² with some exceptions.⁶³ Substantial relief may be received by applicants of the OH-MEIK, who are or have applied for their recognition as a beneficiary of temporary protection and by Ukrainian–Hungarian nationals, who have a permanent address in Ukraine and arrived from Ukraine on or after 24 February 2022. A person may also request recognition of his/her certificate or diploma, if he/she does not possess all documents listed for submission in the procedural notice, and proves or it is assumed that he/she is not responsible for the unavailability of such documents.

Pursuant to Government Decree No. 121/2022 (III. 28.) on rules of the state of danger relating to the Hungarian employment of health workers fleeing Ukraine, for starting work, it is sufficient for such workers to present to the employer the document proving educational attainment and scientific degrees issued in Ukraine, recognised by the State, and to simultaneously launch the homologation procedure of his/her qualifications. Several companies offer their labour placement services to Ukrainian nationals.⁶⁴

57 | Government Decree 96/2022 (III. 10.).

58 | Government Decree 104/2022. (III. 12.), Subtitle 1/A.

59 | More detailed information (including templates of documents and informational materials required to apply for the support. Menedékes munkavállalók lakhatási támogatása (2024) NFSZ. [Online]. Available at: https://nfsz.munka.hu/cikk/3076/Menedekes_munkavallalok_lakhatasi_tamogatasa (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

60 | It depends on whether their accommodation is located in cities or rural areas, defined in Annex 2 of Government Decree 17/2016 (II. 10.) on family housing subsidies for the purchase or expansion of used housing or in a different settlement.

61 | The application for recognition of a foreign certificate or diploma may be submitted to the Educational Authority, or the county and capital government offices. The recognition procedure is bound to a fee, but the beneficiary of temporary protection, a person applying for recognition as a beneficiary of temporary protection, and a Ukrainian–Hungarian national with a permanent address in Ukraine and arriving from Ukraine on or after 24 February 2022 may request exemption from payment of procedural costs (including possible expertise fees).

62 | Oktatási Hivatal [Online]. Available at: https://www.oktatas.hu/kepessitesek_elismertetese/meik_oldalok (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

63 | Exceptions to the general rule: secondary health qualifications (e.g. nurse) acquired abroad should not be submitted not to the Educational Authority, because the National Healthcare Service Center recognises these. Recognition of most secondary level qualifications (e.g. sales clerk, waiter, hairdresser, mason, electrical fitter) may be requested from the Government Office of Pest County. The procedure aimed at recognising foreign certificates and diplomas for higher education falls within the competence of educational institutions at which the applicant wishes to pursue studies. Persons intending to enrol their children in Hungarian public education institutions should contact the director of the chosen school. In the above cases, recognition of the foreign certificate or diploma by the OH-MEIK is not necessary.

64 | Useful links: Adapt [Online]. Available at: <https://adapt.hu/> (Accessed: 2 January 2026). Delego [Online]. Available at: <https://delego.hu/> (Accessed: 2 January 2026). Workforce [Online]. Available at: <https://allasajanlatok.workforce.hu/jobs/> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

Accordingly, if the person holds professional qualifications in the health care domain, he/she also has the right to carry out activity until conclusion of the recognition or homologation procedure; or if he/she holds qualifications of a physician, dentist, or pharmacist, he/she may participate in the tertiary-level health vocational training system without homologation or recognition of his/her professional qualifications, also until conclusion of the recognition or homologation procedure.

The program entitled ‘Support for corporate childcare and language courses to encourage employment of people arriving from Ukraine’,⁶⁵ of the OFA National Employment Public Nonprofit Limited Liability Company, merits mention here. The aims of the program are to respond to the labour market processes related to those arriving from Ukraine following the outbreak of the Russian–Ukrainian war, to facilitate the employment environment of Ukrainian parents staying in Hungary with young children, and to alleviate the labour shortage in Hungary. Another goal is to facilitate the integration of Ukrainian citizen employees, on the one hand, by providing daytime supervision for their young children through corporate childcare, and on the other hand, by developing the language competencies of Ukrainian employees who do not speak Hungarian and by supporting Hungarian as a foreign language course. Non-refundable support is provided within the framework of the program.

| 3.4. Housing⁶⁶

Temporary accommodation was provided by several civil organisations as well as individuals⁶⁷ for those fleeing from the war; however, subsidised longer-term accommodation also needed to be organised. Starting from 21 August 2024, only those persons fleeing the Russian–Ukrainian war are entitled to state-financed additional accommodation, who arrive from administrative-territorial units of Ukraine directly affected by military operations and have their permanent residence in these administrative units – if they do not wish to receive housing allowance of employed beneficiaries of temporary protection – upon entering Hungary, in accordance with the following conditions: (I) Persons not applying for temporary protection status may benefit from this type of accommodation for 30 days from their arrival date. (II) In case of persons being able to work, until the last day of the month following the recognition of their temporary protection status (approximately 2–3 months). (III) In case of so-called vulnerable persons, defined in Government Decree No. 104/2022, they may stay at state-financed accommodation until the end of the temporary protected status. The exceptions (vulnerable group) include pregnant women from the determination of their pregnancy; a person under the age of 18 years and one of his/her legal representatives living in a common household; a person with disabilities and his/her caregivers; and persons over 65 years.

65 | Ukrajnából érkezők foglalkoztatásának ösztönzése érdekében vállalati gyermekmegőrzés és nyelvtanfolyam támogatása (2025) OFA Nonprofit. [Online]. Available at: <https://ofa.hu/program/ukrajnabol-erkezo-k-foglalkoztatasanak-osztonzese-erdekeben-vallalati-gyermekmegorzes-es-nyelvtanfolyam-tamogatasa> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

66 | Safe in Hungary [Online]. Available at: <https://safeinhungary.gov.hu/en/stay/permanent-residence> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

67 | On the Hungarian public opinion on Ukrainian refugees, see Thomas et al., 2024.

Pursuant to Section 2/A of Government Decree 104/2022. (III.12.), the list of war-affected areas⁶⁸ is compiled by the Government Commissioner responsible for persons fleeing the Russian-Ukrainian war to Hungary, with the involvement of the Minister responsible for National Defence and the Minister responsible for Foreign Policy. The accommodation for those persons who arrive from administrative-territorial units of Ukraine directly affected by military operations is provided by the Hungarian Maltese Charity Service Association, which has extensive experience in the field of social integration programs. The housing also includes meals free of charge. If the place of origin or residence is not included within these war-affected areas, they will no longer be eligible for subsidised accommodation starting from 21 August 2024. Yet, if one believes that due to special individual circumstances (such as being older than 65 years, having medical needs, or living with a disability), they need continued support despite not coming from a war-affected region, they need to apply for an exemption with the local defence committee by 10 July 2024.⁶⁹

The change of conditions for receiving help in terms of housing generated criticism;⁷⁰ therefore, it is worth examining the motives of this move of the Hungarian Government. One of the biggest challenges for Hungary (as well as other countries in Europe) regarding persons with temporary protected status is how to create incentives for taking up employment and becoming self-sufficient in the long run. This is also in line with the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027,⁷¹ according to which 'if integration and inclusion are to be successful, it must also be a two-way process whereby migrants and EU citizens with migrant background are offered help to integrate and they in turn make an active effort to become integrated'. This led the Hungarian Government to introduce the housing allowance scheme entitled 'Housing allowance of employed beneficiaries of temporary protection' (Menedékes Munkavállalók Lakhatási Támogatása) already in 2023.⁷² Pursuant to this initiative,⁷³ the State reimburses HUF 80,000 or HUF 120,000 in housing allowance each month to the employer of beneficiaries of temporary protection.⁷⁴

The most recent Hungarian amendments were motivated by the same aspiration, to create incentives for taking up employment for persons with temporary protection to be able to work, while maintaining the fully state-financed accommodation system for

68 | The list of Ukrainian territories considered to be 'war-affected' are published by the Government on their website and updated every month: Dnipropetrovsk Region, Donetsk Region, Zaporizhzhia Region, Kyiv Region and Kyiv City, Mykolaiv Region, Odesa Region, Sumy Region, Kharkiv Region, Kherson Region, Chernihiv Region, Luhansk Region, Zhytomyr Region, Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

69 | The procedure and form in which these circumstances were evaluated were challenged before the Budapest Court, which concluded that the Government Commissioner must make formally correct decisions, containing specific facts, legal references, and justifications.

70 | Hungary: Ukrainian Refugees Losing Housing (2024) Human Rights Watch, 11 September [Online]. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/09/11/hungary-ukrainian-refugees-losing-housing> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

71 | Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, COM(2020) 758 final.

72 | Government Decree 104/2022. (III. 12.), Subtitle 1/A.

73 | More detailed information (including templates of documents and informational materials required to apply for the support). [Online]. Available at: https://nfsz.munka.hu/cikk/3076/Menedekes_munkavallalok_lakhatasi_tamogatasa (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

74 | It depends on whether their accommodation is located in cities or rural areas, defined in Annex 2 of Government Decree 17/2016 (II. 10.).

the most vulnerable persons who have fled from war-torn areas and for persons who are unable to work (e.g. due to age or disability). The regime changes are therefore meant to create incentives for people to take up work in Hungary and become self-sufficient, but concurrently continue to offer fully compensated state-financed accommodation for the most vulnerable persons who have fled from war-torn areas and for persons unable to work. It is also important to mention that most of the Member States only offer accommodation support for a limited period of time, while Hungary compensates the entire rent of people who are eligible for state-financed accommodation.

| **3.5. Education**⁷⁵

To ensure placement of a minor, the beneficiary of temporary protection caring for a minor has the right to use the following under conditions identical to those of Hungarian nationals: nursery care; kindergarten care and education; and services of the Sure Start Children’s House (Biztos Kezdet Gyerekház).⁷⁶ From submission of the application for recognition as a beneficiary of temporary protection, the minor has the right to participate in public education under conditions identical to those applicable to Hungarian nationals, and is subject to compulsory education. Children of kindergarten age, subject to compulsory public education (from the age of 3 years) and children of compulsory school age may participate in free public kindergarten and school education in public education institutions competent at the place of their accommodation.⁷⁷ Ukrainian children fleeing to Hungary become subject to compulsory education when they submit an application for recognition as a beneficiary of temporary protection. The principle of the free choice of schools also applies to applicant students, but district schools are required to grant admission to children applying to them.

Public education provides textbooks via school libraries and through Könyvtárellátó Nonprofit Kft. (KELLO). To assist native Ukrainian speaking children in learning Hungarian, the institutions concerned have available a ‘Hungarian as a foreign language’ textbook, which can be used in grades 3–8. The Hungarian public education system provides five lessons a week in individual preparation (Hungarian language learning, remedial catch-up education in different subjects) for child beneficiaries of temporary protection to facilitate remedial catch-up education and socialisation (inclusion), the costs of which are financed by the Government. Children with dual Ukrainian–Hungarian citizenship may use the educational system under conditions identical to those applicable to Hungarian nationals.

The first bilingual Hungarian–Ukrainian primary and secondary school fully funded by Hungary opened in Budapest on 31 August 2024. Its creation was agreed upon by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán during the Hungarian leader’s visit to Kyiv in July 2024. President Zelenskyy even visited the school in November 2024. Classes are taught in Ukrainian, and the curriculum also includes Hungarian and

75 | Safe in Hungary [Online]. Available at: <https://safeinhungary.gov.hu/en/stay/education> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

76 | Government Decree 106/2022 (III. 12.), Section 3.

77 | Act CXCV of 2011, Subsection (1) a) and Subsections (3)–(4) of Section 92.

English. Currently, over 300 children are enrolled, with a staff of 33 teachers. The school has a capacity for 700 students in total.⁷⁸

Owing to, among other things, government efforts, 79% of children fleeing from Ukraine aged 3–16 years were reported by their parents as enrolled in Hungarian kindergartens and schools in the 2023/24 school year. For the rest, language barriers and a preference for Ukrainian online education contributed to the decision not to enrol in Hungarian public schools. Nevertheless, some initiatives also helped Ukrainian children to continue their education in Ukrainian.⁷⁹ For example, since March 2022, the American International School of Budapest (AISB) supported over 300 refugee children in a volunteer-led program aimed at continuing their education in Ukrainian and building a supportive community on campus, and they currently run an after-school program to help children maintain learning in their home language.⁸⁰

The beneficiary of temporary protection living in the territory of Hungary has the right to pursue studies in higher education institutions⁸¹ under conditions set out in the act on national higher education, with a Hungarian State scholarship, Hungarian State partial scholarship, or by paying tuition.⁸² The ‘Students at Risk’ sub-programme⁸³ was launched in 2022 within the framework of the Stipendium Hungaricum programme managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and coordinated by the Tempus Public Foundation, which offers an opportunity to Ukrainian students fleeing the war to pursue their studies at Hungarian higher education institutions. For fellows, the sub-programme provides exemption from tuition, a monthly grant, health insurance, and a housing contribution or dormitory accommodation. The Hunyadi János Scholarship⁸⁴ offers an opportunity to students living in the Hungarian diaspora to participate in higher education programmes in Hungary, which are ‘shortage courses’ not taught in Hungarian outside the country.

4. Conclusions

Hungary immediately opened the border and allowed people in without restrictions and continues to do so to this day. An extensive infrastructure was created for this, and it is still maintained to this day, adapting to changing trends. The temporary protection

78 | President Visits State Ukrainian-Hungarian School in Budapest (2024) President of Ukraine, 7 November. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-vidvidav-derzhavnu-ukrayinsko-ugorsku-shkolu-v-bud-94297> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

79 | UNHCR, 2024, p. 7.

80 | AISB [Online]. Available at: <https://www.aisb.hu/en/our-community/aisb-cares> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

81 | Safe in Hungary [Online]. Available at: <https://safeinhungary.gov.hu/en/scholarship/students-at-risk> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

82 | Act CCIV of 2011, Section 39(1)b).

83 | Stipendium Hungaricum [Online]. Available at: <https://stipendiumhungaricum.hu/studentsatrisk> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

84 | The call for proposal contains the tender conditions and other details, which is uploaded in each tender period to the website of the Tempus Public Foundation coordinating the tender. [Online]. Available at: <https://tka.hu/> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

status was introduced on the first evening; subsequently, the EU also responded, but the personal scope of the protection shows a slight difference. Owing to the large number and continuity of arrivals as a result of the protracted war, only a few remained in Hungary; the majority continued their journeys to other EU countries, which EU law also permits. Those wishing to reside in Hungary permanently can apply for temporary protection status, which more than 40,000 individuals have done so far. However, Hungary's role continues to stand out primarily in providing entry into the EU and first instance aid.

The range of benefits provided to seekers and beneficiaries of temporary protection in Hungary is wide; however, the goal from the beginning was their independent success and integration as soon as possible, mainly by employment. Several legislative changes have been made, which have rationalised and also narrowed the access to various benefits. In addition, there is a special aspect of Hungary's support for those fleeing Ukraine, as they include Hungary's own citizens, and after leaving their homeland in Transcarpathia, they must be provided with the same benefits as Ukrainian citizens arriving in the country.

The result of these efforts is that those who want to succeed in Hungary find their way. Liliána Grexa, representative of the Ukrainian minority in the Hungarian Parliament, believes that the Hungarian protection system was not built to ensure that beneficiaries remain in the country on state benefits in the long term, but to inspire people to find their way if they want to stay in the country.⁸⁵ However, it is a fact that they have to overcome many obstacles in everyday life, so their long-term integration requires additional support. In this regard, the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) highlights the deepening ownership of the response by host governments and their increased investments in the socio-economic inclusion of refugees. Host countries and humanitarian actors have shifted from immediate emergency aid to long-term strategies that focus on including beneficiaries of temporary protection into national systems.⁸⁶

Liliána Grexa stated⁸⁷ that she currently does not see any general problems with the system, but at the same time she would place greater emphasis on bringing the Hungarian majority and Ukrainians closer together, because 'it is not good for anyone if a segregated community develops'. She sees that there are cultural differences between Hungarians and Ukrainians, but because they are two European and Christian nations, they can be overcome. Thus, she sees the greatest problem to be the lack of knowledge of the Hungarian language and believes that it is necessary to help Ukrainians acquire language skills through free language courses, especially those who plan to stay here in the long term. She considers the undeveloped system of Ukrainian-language education as the other major problem; thus, the issue of education is also very important because as long as children do not go to school, parents cannot work.

As the refugee response moves into 2025 and 2026, it faces the challenge of addressing a complex and evolving situation. According to a recent survey by Germany's largest economic think tank, the Ifo Institute,⁸⁸ the longer the war lasts, the fewer refugees are considering returning home. The report showed that 25% of Ukrainian refugees have

85 | Pataki, 2024.

86 | UNHCR, 2025, p. 11.

87 | Pataki, 2024.

88 | Ein Viertel der ukrainischen Geflüchteten will sich dauerhaft im Ausland niederlassen (2024) Ifo Institut, 18 October. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.ifo.de/pressemitteilung/2024-10-18/ein-viertel-ukrainische-gefluechtete-ausland> (Accessed: 2 January 2026).

decided not to return to their homeland, and 35% believe that they can only do so when it is safe. Therefore, Member States must also monitor the trends and respond appropriately to the needs that are arising. A Commission Communication titled 'A Predictable and Common European Way Forward for Ukrainians in the EU'⁸⁹ set out the strategic framework underpinning, on the one hand, the proposal for the extension of the application of TPD till March 2027, and on the other hand, a proposal for a Council Recommendation outlining a coordinated strategy to phase out temporary protection, with a focus on long-term solutions such as transitions to residence status and voluntary returns.

The newest proposals carry some lessons. First and foremost, those who believed that the TPD sets an apparently clear temporal limit of three years may sight serious concerns about the legal soundness and credibility of the TPD as an emergency instrument.⁹⁰ The Commission intends to resolve the legal inconsistency by justifying the extension on four grounds: ongoing volatility in Ukraine; the need to safeguard those still requiring protection; the risk of overwhelming asylum systems if temporary protection ends abruptly; and the persistence of the original conditions that triggered the Directive's activation in 2022. Personally, I agree with those that highlight the Directive's ability to respond quickly and without intra-EU conflict, especially if neither the asylum quota system nor the Dublin system is used for those fleeing from Ukraine.⁹¹

Nevertheless, the application of the TPD also means the provision of a wide range of rights and services to those enjoying temporary protection, which may overburden Member States, especially if the extension continues to an unexpected period of time. Furthermore, host states may duly expect Ukrainians to integrate and begin gradual self-care, becoming useful members of society. Therefore, it is time to map and prepare for the available options for the future.⁹²

From a Hungarian perspective, apart from the challenges existing in parallel in several Member States, Hungary faces unique consequences as regards the dramatic changes and future of Transcarpathian Hungarians; this is due to the fact that since the outbreak of the full-scale war in Ukraine in 2022, thousands of ethnic Hungarians have left Transcarpathia and typically resettled in Hungary as Hungarian citizens, which resulted in the distortion of the demographic and social composition of the Transcarpathian Hungarian population. Consequently, combined with the arrival of the internally displaced persons, the ongoing processes severely impact the social and demographic position of the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia.⁹³

89 | Commission Communication, COM/2025/649 final.

90 | Ciğer, 2025.

91 | Thym, 2022.

92 | Ciğer, 2023.

93 | Eröss et al., 2024.

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