



in partnership with



Country Report **SLOVAKIA**

MHPSS Services for Refugees from Ukraine

August 2024

Country Report: SLOVAKIA

1	Background	3
	1.1. Introduction	3
	1.2. Methodology	5
	1.3. Context analysis	7
2	Analysis of primary data	12
	2.1. Experiences of young people from Ukraine residing in Slovakia and their awareness of child helplines: Results from an online survey	12
	2.2 Analysis of interviews with stakeholders	13
	2.3 Data from La Strada Ukraine	19
3	Summary and recommendations	20
	3.1. Identified needs	20
	3.2. Recommendations for improved services for Ukrainian refugees	22
4	Conclusions	24
	Bibliography	26
	Appendix A: Tools Used	27
	Appendix B: Local Service Map	33

Written and edited by:

Child Helpline International:

Ana Rodrigues, Anastasia Shuster, Nelia Troichuk

Terre des Hommes Netherlands:

Eva Notté, Simona Ružnić Margot Sanders

Reviewed by:

Lorleen Farrugia, Ronja Ulvot

(Child Helpline International)

Editor, design and layout:

Steve Erwood

(Child Helpline International)

1: Background

1.1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, more than **14.33 million Ukrainian refugees have crossed borders** in search of a safer environment.¹ Europe is currently hosting nearly 6 million refugees, with women and children comprising 88% of this population², and 5 million individuals have sought refuge through national protection schemes³.

The **family separation rate stands at 70%**, subjecting children to heightened risks such as sexual violence, trafficking, exploitation, abuse and gender-based violence.⁴

As the data shows⁵, **children's physical and mental health, as well as their education⁶, are at risk both within Ukraine and in refugee-hosting countries.** The increased risks for children put pressure on the already scarce mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS) in both Ukraine and neighbouring countries. Child helplines and their partners are playing a crucial role in national child protection systems and the response on a regional level. They are providing psychosocial support services, guidance and accurate information to Ukrainian families and children and local children concerned about the war in Ukraine.

Child Helpline International is the global network of child helplines, with more than 150 child helpline members in more than 130 countries and territories around the world, including 49 members from 41 countries in the European Region, with 29 of these currently using the European harmonized toll-free number for child helplines: 116 111. Throughout the war in Ukraine, with the support of Child Helpline International and others, child helplines have been expanding their services to better support children and young people, and their families and caregivers, who have been affected by the war.

1. World Vision (2023). Child Protection Multisectoral Needs Assessment - Ukraine 2023, p.1, accessed on 22 April 2024 at [Child Protection Multisectoral Needs Assessment - Ukraine 2023 - Ukraine I ReliefWeb](#)
2. For overall refugee numbers: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Operational data portal, Ukraine refugee situation, available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>. The 88% women and children figure is broken down as follows: 52% women, 18% girls, 18% boys. Source: UNHCR, Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine: Regional protection analysis #2 – Hungary, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania and Slovakia, April 2023, available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/100191> as cited in UNICEF (2024). Ukraine and Refugee Response, p.1
3. There is a continued lack of reliable data on subsets of the child refugee population from Ukraine. Monthly statistics can be accessed at: Temporary protection for persons fleeing Ukraine - monthly statistics, Eurostat, as cited in UNICEF (2024). Ukraine and Refugee Response, p.1.
4. Specific needs include disabilities or serious medical conditions. Source: UNHCR, Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine: Regional protection analysis #2 as cited in UNICEF (2024). Ukraine and Refugee Response, p.4.
5. Kaufman KR, Bhui K, Katona C. Mental health responses in countries hosting refugees from Ukraine. *BJPsych Open*. 2022;8(3):e87. doi:10.1192/bjo.2022.55, p.1
6. Education Cannot Wait (2024). Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) 2024-2026, pp.3-5

In Slovakia, Child Helpline International's member is **Linka Detskej Istoty** (LDI – Child Safety Line)⁷. The Child Safety Line is Slovakia's first specialized telephone and online (chat and email) helpline for children and young people, operating continuously since 1996. It provides free, anonymous, 24/7 professional counselling and over the past 28 years it has provided support to more than 3 million children, young people and adults nationwide. LDI's mission is to support and protect children's rights, improve their quality of life and offer barrier-free communication, information, prevention, crisis intervention and remote psychological and social counselling, while adhering to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition to counselling, LDI actively engages in preventing undesirable phenomena and improving mental health among children and young people. Through educational activities, LDI raises public awareness about the importance of supporting and protecting children's rights and enhancing their quality of life.

The current project is called **Children's Voices Ukraine**, and is being implemented by Child Helpline International and its members in Ukraine, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Romania, supported by Terre des Hommes Netherlands. The project aims to understand and support Ukrainian children and young people who have fled to European countries as a result of the war in Ukraine.

The objectives of the project are:

1. To increase access to and use of child helpline services by children and young people (and their parents and/or caregivers) affected by the war in Ukraine.
2. To maintain and expand the capacity of child helplines to ensure quality services to children and young people in need of care and protection, with a particular focus on children and young people affected by the war in Ukraine.
3. To ensure the inclusion and amplification of children's voices and generate evidence to influence policymaking through reliable collection, analysis and sharing of national and regional data.
4. To increase coordination between regional and national actors and emphasize the role of child helplines in Ukraine and surrounding countries.

Child Helpline International conducted a mapping exercise in each country with a participating child helpline member, to generate a report to help achieve the first of the project's objective and better understand the realities of Ukrainian refugees and the needs of children and young people.

7. The website of Linka Detskej Istoty can be accessed here: [Linka Detskej Istoty \(ldi.sk\)](https://ldi.sk)

Despite the availability of services in Ukrainian at child helplines in refugee-hosting countries, the data gathered by Child Helpline International indicates that Ukrainian children and young people currently residing in these countries tend not to be contacting the national child helplines. The purpose of this report is to understand the reasons for this. Specifically, the focus is to learn what **barriers exist that are preventing Ukrainian refugees from accessing local support services, especially child helpline services**. The report seeks to **identify the factors influencing engagement** with child helplines abroad by directly asking national stakeholders and young Ukrainian refugees about their needs, knowledge and experience. These factors include accessibility, awareness, stigma, the need for support and psychological readiness to accept help from the user's perspective, and the services available to offer this help from the stakeholders' perspective.

This exercise will also result in the creation of a **sub-regional service map to identify the range of services available to young refugees from Ukraine**. This map will reference the services provided by governmental and non-governmental organizations and their partners, while also examining the gap between service availability and the actual needs of refugee children. This process was achieved through the use of various methodologies, including surveys with children, in-depth interviews with relevant organizations across the project countries and secondary data analysis.

Ultimately, the report offers **recommendations for enhancing the accessibility and effectiveness of child helplines** in the four countries bordering Ukraine. Additionally, the results of this exercise will be shared with participating countries, serving as a basis for future updates and improvements to the support infrastructure for children and young people affected by the war in Ukraine.

1.2. Methodology

The methodology applied was **qualitative with some quantitative aspects**. The information for the report was gathered through different means, including desk research, interviews with various institutions and organizations, and information collected through surveys with young people.

The information collected from each of these groups of actors focused on the following:

- Primary data:
 - **Interviews with stakeholders** from the different sectors of refugee response in the country (multilateral agencies, civil society, etc.) to obtain information about existing services and experiences with Ukrainian refugees.
 - **Surveys for children and young people** to obtain information about their knowledge of the services offered by child helplines and their choices regarding looking for support.
- Secondary data:
 - Information on the supply and demand of child protection services, including existing helplines and hotlines in the country, analysis of demographics, and the context for refugee families/children.

There were some **limitations experienced during the development of the report:**

- **Time limitation:** The interviews and data analysis were conducted within just a short time frame. As the report informs subsequent activities of a project lasting for just one year, these had to be completed during the initial phase of the project. This put pressure on completing interviews, surveys and consultations on time and limited the number of answers that the team could collect.
- **Reduced number of inputs:** Despite several invitations for the online interviews with stakeholders, securing timeslots due to the busy schedules of different actors was difficult. Additionally, some organizations no longer support refugees, so their participation was no longer relevant.
- **Involvement of children:** When the mapping exercise was designed, the aim was to involve children in an in-person consultation. This was optional depending on the capacity of member child helplines. The Ukrainian child helpline was the only member who could take this activity forward, so the statements of children collected during in-person activities are from Ukrainian children in Ukraine. The views of refugee children were collected through an online survey.
- **Number of survey respondents:** The online surveys were released over a number of online channels. Participation in the survey was on a voluntary basis, and the number of surveys collected was small and not representative of the whole young Ukrainian refugee population.
- **Incomplete surveys:** Not all the questions in the survey were answered by every child or young person, but we decided to analyse all answers that were given, even though some respondents completed the full survey. The number of respondents who answered will differ for each question, and this will therefore be mentioned.

The following approaches were applied to collect **primary data:**

- Online surveys were conducted with 42 children and young people between the ages of 14 and 30, of whom 32 filled out content questions.
- Seven stakeholders from different sectors relating to refugee response participated in either an online interview or written questionnaire.

Including children and adults, a total of 39 stakeholders provided their feedback through this approach.

Approach used	Age range	Total respondents
Online survey	14 – 30 years	32
Stakeholder interview	Adults	7

As part of the **secondary data** collection, several child protection-related documents and publications, child helpline initiatives and general information from Slovakia were used. The secondary data was gathered from government, demographics and NGO websites, research documents from national and international organizations and publications, as well as reports from Child Helpline International.

1.3. Context analysis

The context in which children live

In the two and a half years since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, close to 6 million refugees from Ukraine have been recorded across Europe. The total number of refugees from Ukraine individually registered in Slovakia was 121,598 people on 9 June 2024. According to the UNHCR⁸, women and children make up nearly 83% (50% women and 33% children) of the total displaced population from Ukraine in Slovakia since the beginning of the war in February 2022. This population also includes elderly individuals, people with disabilities, and those requiring immediate medical care.

In addition to this, there are other relevant facts about the refugee population in Slovakia⁹:

- Most refugee households are led by women with young children and elderly members.
- 10% of these households have at least one member with a disability.
- 47% of refugees live in private accommodation (rented apartments, houses, guesthouses); 53% live in collective centres, shared accommodation and hotels.
- 47% have healthcare needs, with 24% struggling to access care due to appointment difficulties (36%), lack of insurance (31%) and language barriers (24%).
- 30% of households report at least one member with mental health or psychosocial issues¹⁰.

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, priority needs have shifted from food assistance, accommodation and employment in 2022 to healthcare, employment and livelihood support, and language courses in 2023, reflecting the evolving refugee situation.¹¹ Almost universal knowledge (96%) of how to report child protection risks is encouraging, with respondents aware of national authorities for reporting; however, only neglect and certain forms of violence qualify for such reporting, while mental health and psychosocial support needs are primarily addressed by CSO service providers in Slovakia.¹²

Almost universal knowledge (96%) of how to report child protection risks ... however, only neglect and certain forms of violence qualify for such reporting.

8. UNHCR (2024). Ukraine Situation: Regional Refugee Response Plan - January-December 2024: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/105903>, p.185

9. Ibid, p.187

10. Ibid, p.187

11. UNHCR (2023). Ukraine Situation: Slovakia Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (December 2023): [https://reliefweb.int/report/slovakia/ukraine-situation-slovakia-multi-sector-needs-assessment-december-2023-ensk#:~:text=Among%20these%2C%20over%201%2C8,time%20of%20writing%20this%20report](https://reliefweb.int/report/slovakia/ukraine-situation-slovakia-multi-sector-needs-assessment-december-2023-ensk#:~:text=Among%20these%2C%20over%201%2C8,time%20of%20writing%20this%20report;); p.15

12. Ibid, p. 16

Additional facts about the **situation of refugee children in Slovakia** since the beginning of the war in Ukraine:

- Refugee children are at **risk of mental health decline due to past trauma and difficult living conditions**¹³. Also, as a result of difficult living conditions, vaccination rates among Ukrainian refugees are below target levels, particularly concerning measles vaccinations, with only 84% of children receiving at least one dose against a target of 95% coverage.¹⁴
- The Parenting Academy, set up by UNICEF, focused on sessions about vaccination¹⁵ and the importance of learning through play. Over 50 Ukrainian and Slovak parents and caregivers benefitted from this.
- Children are facing discrimination and violence due to nationality, legal status or the socio-economic situation. One in ten girls and boys are at risk of abuse. Boys and girls share physical and psychological abuse risks, with boys needing more mental health support and girls facing higher neglect risks¹⁶
- Mental health and psychosocial support services are crucial in the region, with 19% of individuals reporting mental health issues, which vary by age and gender; females, especially those aged 35 and older, consistently report higher levels of mental health problems, while among children under 11, more boys than girls were reported to be experiencing mental health-related issues.¹⁷
- UNICEF¹⁸ supported Blue Dots between March 2022 and December 2023. Blue Dots provided safe spaces for 2,641 children and caregivers from Ukraine. In Bratislava, the civil society partnership for providing Blue Dot services was concluded in late 2023, with the municipal takeover in early 2024.

Regarding the **education situation**, the Slovak government has provided Ukrainian refugees with Temporary Protection status (TP status), granting access to rights such as education, employment, healthcare and social protection per the EU TP Directive, but this type of “tolerated stay” status is linked to practical barriers.¹⁹ For example, while education is accessible, it is not compulsory for children, and there are also restrictions on self-employment and limited social benefits.²⁰ In addition, if there is a lack of physical ID it complicates access to certain rights, and the temporary nature of the status raises concerns among refugees about their future international protection in Slovakia,²¹ which can hinder their long-term employment commitments. Therefore, there is a growing emphasis on including refugees in local services and the host community, enhancing social cohesion and facilitating access to dignified employment.²²

As a result of these challenges, guardians may experience financial struggles, increasing risks of neglect, limited access to childcare or schools, negative trauma coping mechanisms or separation from parents/guardians. Despite these challenges, guardians are knowledgeable about reporting severe mistreatment of Ukrainian children to national authorities, including the police and government services.²³

A recent seminar organized by UNHCR took place on 24 April 2024 at SME SPOLU’s community centre, and the central theme was educational access.²⁴ The seminar was organized in partnership with the Platform of Families of Children with Disabilities and the National Institute of Education and Youth. The key topics covered were practical insights into Slovakia’s national education system, enrolment processes from pre-school through secondary school levels, improving educational opportunities for children with specific needs, and emphasis on inclusivity within educational environments. An important fact to highlight regarding the access to education is that by the end of October 2023, the Slovak Ministry of Education reported that nearly 12,000 Ukrainian children were attending school in Slovakia.

An important fact to take into consideration regarding education is that, according to Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) data from the refugee-receiving countries²⁵, approximately 23% of school-age refugee children (6 to 17 years) did not plan to enrol and were not yet enrolled in formal education programmes for the 2023-2024 academic year.²⁶

13. Ibid, p. 16

14. Navigating health and well-being challenges for refugees from Ukraine; <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/108629>, p.3

15. Ukraine Refugee Response in Neighboring Countries: <https://www.unicef.org/media/154866/file/ECARO-Humanitarian-SitRep-Ukraine-Refugee-Response-26-February-2024.pdf>, p.6

16. UNHCR (2023). Ukraine Situation: Slovakia Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (December 2023): <https://reliefweb.int/report/slovakia/ukraine-situation-slovakia-multi-sector-needs-assessment-december-2023-ensk#:~:text=Among%20these%2C%20over%201%2C,time%20of%20writing%20this%20report>; p. 16

17. Navigating health and well-being challenges for refugees from Ukraine: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/108629>, p.14-15

18. Ukraine Refugee Response in Neighboring Countries: <https://www.unicef.org/media/154866/file/ECARO-Humanitarian-SitRep-Ukraine-Refugee-Response-26-February-2024.pdf>, p.3

19. Ukraine Situation: Slovakia Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (December 2023): <https://reliefweb.int/report/slovakia/ukraine-situation-slovakia-multi-sector-needs-assessment-december-2023-ensk#:~:text=Among%20these%2C%20over%201%2C,time%20of%20writing%20this%20report>; p.15

20. Ibid; p.15

21. Ibid; p.15

22. Ukraine Situation: Slovakia Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (December 2023): <https://reliefweb.int/report/slovakia/ukraine-situation-slovakia-multi-sector-needs-assessment-december-2023-ensk#:~:text=Among%20these%2C%20over%201%2C,time%20of%20writing%20this%20report>; p.16

23. Ibid. p.16

24. Ukraine Situation: Regional Refugee Response Plan - January-December 2024: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/105903>, p.185

25. Ibid. p.185

26. Ibid. p.36

Additional efforts are being made to support refugees from Ukraine who are living in Slovakia:

- Ahead of the upcoming closure of the biggest refugee accommodation in Gabčíkovo,²⁷ UNICEF is assisting residents with alternative housing and access to local education and social services.
- Ongoing advocacy and interventions are supporting Ukrainian children with disabilities, including peer support for 223 parents and the launch of the Neviditeľný odznak digital platform to normalize adolescent interactions with peers who have disabilities²⁸.
- Regional teams from the National Institute of Education and Youth (NIVAM)²⁹, supported by UNICEF, facilitated the enrollment of 30 children in schools, with ongoing assistance for an additional 103.
- NIVAM processed 1,292 applications from Ukrainian refugee families, supporting 145 schools and 162 teachers, and providing interpretation services (94 children), mental health support (62 children and caregivers), and integration guidance to 3,340 children.³⁰
- UNICEF maintained six Play and Learning Hubs across six municipalities.³¹ These provided access to early learning opportunities for Ukrainian children, facilitating enrolment in kindergartens, schools and other community-based learning activities. Among the activities provided, children can access playful learning, after-school tutoring and social cohesion activities. 612 children under 10 years old, including 312 Ukrainian children, visited these Play and Learning Hubs.

Child Protection and **Gender-Based Violence** (GBV) risk³²:

- GBV risk mitigation and response efforts reached 7,399 beneficiaries through in-person services.
- The digital GBV platform “Laska nema bolieť/Love shouldn’t hurt” engaged 3,210 Slovak and 1,163 Ukrainian women and children.
- In Slovakia, most of the child protection risks identified – such as neglect and specific forms of violence – should be reported to police and social/legal protection services.
- There is a crucial need to strengthen the procedures for assigning legal guardians to unaccompanied and separated refugee children in Slovakia to ensure their protection.

Information about the support system³³

According to secondary data gathered primarily online, we identified 26 services catering to Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia. Among these, 18 focus on MHPSS, 4 provide legal aid, 13 support families with housing or settlement needs and 18 are dedicated to Child Rights Protection. A closer examination of these services reveals that many organizations offer comprehensive support. Additionally, a specific service for women regarding breastfeeding has been identified. This offers psychological support, feeding consultations, formula milk, support groups for women and legal consultations. The analysis of these services reveals a notable emphasis on children, with 19 services tailored specifically to their needs compared to 7 aimed at adults. This reflects how children’s unique vulnerabilities and the importance of specialized support for them is being acknowledged, in order to facilitate their integration into a new environment.

There are certainly other services on the ground that may not be mentioned online and are not included in this report.

27. Ukraine Refugee Response in Neighboring Countries: <https://www.unicef.org/media/154866/file/ECARO-Humanitarian-SitRep-Ukraine-Refugee-Response-26-February-2024.pdf>, p.3

28. Ibid, p.3-4

29. Ibid, p.6

30. Ibid, p.6

31. Ukraine Refugee Response in Neighboring Countries: <https://www.unicef.org/media/154866/file/ECARO-Humanitarian-SitRep-Ukraine-Refugee-Response-26-February-2024.pdf>, p.6

32. Ibid, p.3

33. In this report we consider support services, all services related to the protection of the rights of the child, more specifically Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, and other that support refugees, such as housing.

2: Analysis of primary data

2.1. Experiences of young people from Ukraine residing in Slovakia and their awareness of child helplines: Results from an online survey

Demographics of respondents

We received 32 responses to the survey from Ukrainian children and young people residing in Slovakia. 19 (59%) of them were girls, 12 (38%) were boys and one respondent (3%) preferred not to say. The average age of respondents was 19.4 years (range: 14-30).

Awareness of child helplines and their services

Awareness of child helplines among Ukrainian refugees residing in Slovakia appeared to be low. **Only four of the 29 respondents (14%) had heard of the local child helpline that provides counselling in Ukrainian.** Of these four respondents, three learnt about it through social media (75%) and one through school (25%).

Focussing on the four respondents who are familiar with the child helpline, three (75%) knew that it offered help when children were being treated unfairly, used or abused, and two knew it was a space where children could discuss their problems with a professional (50%), or that it could offer support for children from Ukraine (50%). Only one of the four children reported knowing that the child helpline was a place where they could report abuse (1 respondent, or 33%) or that it helped to keep children safe (1, or 33%). The level of awareness on the availability of child helplines, as well as the services that it could offer, was therefore quite low.

Help-seeking behaviour

Of the four respondents who were aware of the local child helpline, **one had contacted it (25%)**, seeking help with issues they had with their friends. The other three indicated that they hadn’t made contact because they simply did not feel that they needed it.

All the respondents were asked about who they were likely to seek help from when in need. 23 respondents answered this question, with most indicating that they would seek help from a family member (19 responses, or 83%), a friend (12, or 52%) or using the internet to research their issue (8, or 35%). Other options were, in descending order: child helpline (5, or 22%), a teacher (3, or 13%), a private counsellor (2, or 9%), the police (2, or 9%) and social services (1, or 4%). Important to highlight is that five respondents indicated they would potentially seek help from a child helpline. While only a small number, it is positive to see that this number is bigger than the ones who indicated that they had already heard about the local child helpline before taking the survey. This could mean that this survey has already contributed positively to the awareness of children.

Future outlook: Reaching Ukrainian refugees and supporting them

Participants were asked a series of questions aimed at understanding how to best reach and support children and young people from Ukraine. Children and young people were asked whether, knowing now that the child helpline existed, they thought they would contact it in the future, should they feel they needed to. Of 27 respondents who answered, 12 said yes (44%), one said no (4%) and 14 said they didn't know (52%). With only one respondent negatively reflecting on the usage of child helplines, it is encouraging to see that almost half of the respondents were open to using the child helpline in the future. In any follow-up survey it might be interesting to focus on respondents who were still unsure, to clarify the added value of local child helplines and the low threshold for using it.

The present survey also asked children and young people what kind of help they thought they might need one day. Most indicated concerns around mental health (16, or 64%), physical health (9, or 36%) and personal safety (8, or 32%). These were followed by troubles at school (4, or 16%), help with homework (3, or 12%), bullying (3, or 12%), troubles with parents (2, or 8%) and troubles with friends (2, or 8%). Eleven participants shared suggestions about what could be done to ensure that children knew how to contact the child helpline in future. The most common suggestion, brought up by eight of the respondents, was to spread information about the child helpline's existence and the services it offered. One of the respondents suggested to "hold some online conferences or consultations for young people abroad". Three respondents recommended advertising through schools and other educational institutions, and one participant suggested to "distribute leaflets to the state service of the host country".

The recommendations of children and young people coincide with how they operate socially. In terms of how they communicated with other Ukrainians, the 25 respondents answering this question indicated they did so online (22 responses, or 88%) in school (8, or 32%) or during events hosted by local organizations (6, or 24%). Only a few said they communicated with other Ukrainians in youth centres (2, or 8%) or used other channels (2, or 8%). For the latter, one of these respondents further elaborated that they simply didn't communicate with other Ukrainians.

The online world, not surprisingly, appears to be important for children and youth. For the spread of information, three respondents specifically mentioned advertising through posting on social media, including Telegram groups, with specific mention of the group "Ukrainians in Košice". Participants were also asked what social media platforms they most frequently used. For the 27 respondents answering this question, the most frequently used social media platforms was Telegram (24, or 89%), followed by Instagram (23, or 85%), YouTube (21, or 78%), Facebook (17, or 63%), and TikTok (16, or 59%). Viber and WhatsApp were used by 14 of the respondents (52%). To a lesser extent, participants were using Facebook Messenger (11, or 40%), Pinterest (6, or 22%), Twitter/X (4, or 15%) and WeChat (1, or 4%).

...it is encouraging to see that almost half of the respondents were open to using the child helpline in the future.

2.2 Analysis of interviews with stakeholders

Overview of the organizations that were interviewed

To gather information about the stakeholders in Slovakia, seven organizations were available to participate in the interviews. These were **UNICEF**, **UNHCR**, **Linka Nezabuka**, **NGO Sme Spolu** ("We Are Together"), **Nadacia DEDO**, **Mareena** and **Human Rights League (HRL)**. In addition, we have included information about Child Helpline International's member, **Linka detskej istoty (LDI)**.

Among the work of these seven organizations, and according to the information they provided about other services from other organizations in the country, were the following **services for refugees in Slovakia**:

- **Mental Health and Psychosocial support services:**
 - Social and psychosocial counselling and support (provision of leisure activities; MHPSS digital solutions, with a platform for Ukrainian adolescents about coping mechanisms).
 - Clinical psychologists and psychiatrists focusing on children (also in small groups).
 - Hotlines, Child Safety Line, and League for Mental Health line.
- **GBV related services:**
 - Awareness raising
 - Psychological support related to GBV
 - Support with reporting GBV events to the police
- **Work with the community:**
 - Establishment of community services by training community on Psychological First Aid, GBV and Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.
 - Active community of practice
 - Implementation of inclusive community events
- **Educational support³⁴:**
 - Language classes
 - Support to teachers and caregivers
 - Education in Ukrainian for grades 7-11
 - Kindergarten.

Note: Education services are provided together with the government, and sometimes specifically with municipalities, as they are closer to the communities. Many efforts are made to ensure children are not excluded from education.
- **Referral** to national police authorities and work with government offices for child protection
- **Other services** to support refugees, including information provision about services available, subsidies, etc. and accompanying refugees in these processes, legal assistance and representation, housing provisions, physical training for seniors, employment counselling (e.g. engaging with the private sector, how to access employment, professional courses), support for pregnant women, support with food and access to health services, financial support for the most vulnerable refugees, and services for children with special needs and training people to work with children with special needs.

34. The government is working on introducing compulsory education for Ukrainian students to be enrolled in local schools, including new legislation for the adaptation of schools so that children are not segregated.

Linka Detskej Istoty (LDI)

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, and in addition to the regular 24/7 non-stop, free and anonymous psychosocial services provided by phone (using the EU harmonized 116 111 number) and online, LDI created a **special “UA Helpline” for Ukrainian children, young people and their caregivers** – in Ukrainian and also in Russian if required – on the phone number 0800-500-500 and via email: 0800500500@ldi.sk. LDI has provided these additional services, free of charge, anonymous and across the whole country, since November 2022, even though the funding for them completely ended in February 2024. They continue to provide and promote these services to this day. In addition, LDI has a Counselling Inclusion Centre, which is available to educators and workers with children and young people: teachers, school psychologists, special educators, educational advisors, educators and others. This Inclusion Centre provides advice in the field of inclusion and integration of children in schools and also deals with issues of language and cultural differences, issues of sensitization of the societal majority towards war refugees, symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), inclusion of pupils and students in peer groups, etc. The Counselling Inclusion Center is available every Monday between 17:00-21:00 on the same contact details noted above. It also provides a support group which meets online every third Monday evening during school term, which is attended by teaching staff from schools with Ukrainian students.

LDI, as part of the Missing Children Europe (MCE) network, also operates a 24/7 non-stop, free and anonymous 116000 Hotline for missing children and their families. Since the first week following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, LDI has been in intensive contact with other members of the MCE network (116000 child helplines, and specifically those in countries neighbouring Ukraine), to exchange information, good practice, spread awareness and useful resources and assisting in the search for missing children from Ukraine.

Information and services for Ukrainian and Russian-speaking clients of the Child Safety Line (LDI) in Slovakia are available through various channels:

- **LDI Website:** Offers comprehensive information on services in multiple languages, including Ukrainian, at <http://www.ldi.sk>.
- **LDI child helpline:** Provides specific services for Ukrainian and Russian-speaking clients. [More details can be found here.](#)
- **Social Media:**
 - LDI's [Facebook](#) page shares information about available services.
 - [YouTube](#) video on the 116111 Child Helpline in Ukrainian.
 - Updates on services for Ukrainian and Russian-speaking clients on [Instagram](#).
 - [TikTok](#)
- **Printed materials:** Posters and leaflets in Ukrainian are distributed across schools, libraries and other public spaces in Slovakia. Recently, in March 2024, in the national awareness event “Let’s Read...2024” (also for Ukrainian-speaking children) more than 93,000 children and young people read with LDI in more than 600 schools, libraries, community centres and clubs throughout Slovakia. All schools received the materials (posters, leaflets and bookmarks) in both Slovak and Ukrainian. In the previous year, the same event involved 100,991 children and young people from 673 schools and school centres.
- **Additional resources:** Information is also available on websites such as [Ukraine Slovakia](#), [UNICEF Slovakia](#) and [Platforma Rodin](#).

These services are also promoted through conferences, workshops, and UNICEF-supported initiatives.

UNHCR

The UNHCR office in the Slovak Republic³⁵, established in October 1993 and operational from January 1994, aims to protect the rights and wellbeing of refugees. It ensures access to asylum, safe haven or voluntary return. Guided by its Statute, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, the UNHCR provides protection and assistance regardless of race, religion, political opinion or gender, with special focus on vulnerable groups, including women and children. The UNHCR collaborates with state authorities and NGOs to improve living conditions, ensure fair asylum procedures, promote integration and resettlement, and combat xenophobia.

According to the office of UNCHR in the Slovak Republic, the majority of refugees are women (52%), girls (15%) and boys (15%), and they receive temporary protection status, primarily residing in Slovakia’s largest cities.

In response to the influx of refugees from Ukraine, the UNHCR collaborates with the Slovak government and civil society³⁶. UNHCR operates offices in Bratislava and Košice and partners with field organizations. Its community-based protection strategy involves volunteer networks of Ukrainians and locals who provide information about available services from UNHCR, government agencies, and local NGOs. It is important to have a localization strategy, including the work with refugee-run organizations.

Linka Nezabuka

Linka Nezábudka provides 24/7 crisis support and psychological assistance through phone and email counselling.³⁷ The helpline is staffed by 11 psychologists from 09:00 to 21:00 daily – previously, it was a 24-hour service, but due to budget cuts, the hours had to be reduced due to low nighttime call volume. Operated by trained professionals in psychology, psychiatry and social work, the service offers emotional support, crisis intervention and guidance on mental health issues. It ensures anonymity and confidentiality, supporting individuals in acute psychological distress, including those experiencing depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. The organization also focuses on educational and preventive activities, working to raise awareness and reduce the stigma associated with mental health problems.

Mareena

Mareena is a Slovak non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the integration of refugees and migrants.³⁸ They offer various programmes and activities aimed at fostering community connections, enhancing skills and promoting cultural exchange. Mareena provides language courses, job readiness training, social events, and individualized support to help newcomers adapt and thrive in Slovakia. Its initiatives include the establishment of two kindergartens. The initiatives are designed to create an inclusive society where everyone can participate and contribute.

35. Information in this section is adapted from UNHCR’s website for Slovakia. More information can be accessed here: [UNHCR in Slovakia | UNHCR in the Slovak Republic – UNHCR Slovakia](#)

36. Information in this section was gathered from the interviews to stakeholders.

37. Information in this section is adapted from the Linka Nezabuka website. More information can be accessed here: [Helpline Nezábudka - 0800 800 566 \(linkanezabudka.sk\)](#). It also includes information collected during the interviews with stakeholders.

38. Information in this section is adapted from the Mareena’s website. More information can be accessed here: [About us | Mareena](#)

NGO SME SPOLU (“We Are Together”)

SME SPOLU is a civic organization of Ukrainians in Slovakia, established in Bratislava in 2015. Initially, from 2014 to 2015, the members operated as volunteers.³⁹ Then, in 2015, Ukraine-Slovakia SOS was founded in Ukraine, which is a charity fund created to distribute humanitarian aid collected by SME SPOLU in Slovakia. Over the past decade, the organization initially focused on providing humanitarian and other support exclusively for Ukrainians. In the past two years, it has significantly expanded its scope and size.

SME SPOLU has activities specifically geared towards children. It has a school that accommodates 100 teenagers in grades 7-11, providing education in Ukrainian and following the Ukrainian curriculum. This age group faces challenges because they cannot attend Slovak gymnasiums without high proficiency in Slovak, limiting their options to schools that don't lead to university admission. Therefore, students study the Ukrainian curriculum online but with in-person teaching in a classroom setting, allowing them to eventually enrol in Slovak universities upon completion.

Nadacia DEDO

For 25 years, Nadacia DEDO (Foundation) has been implementing social innovations to end family homelessness in Košice.⁴⁰ Focusing on housing as a human right, it provides homes and support through professional accompaniment and employment opportunities via Dorka Bags, n.o. Using the Housing First principle⁴¹, it currently houses 23 families and aims to support 20 more by the end of 2023. A multidisciplinary team, including a lawyer, social worker, psychologist and peer worker, tailors its support to each family's needs.

Nadacia DEDO is part of the one-stop-shop with nine other organizations (10 in collaboration with local government). To enhance support for foreigners, the Košice Self-Governing Region collaborated with organizations such as the DEDO Foundation, the Human Rights League, Mareena, People in Need, ETP Slovakia, Everyone for the Family, Dorka, Oasis – Hope for a New Life, and the Archdiocesan Caritas Košice. Together, they established the Integration Center of the Košice Region, operated by the DEDO Foundation. The centre's grand opening took place on 20 June 2022, with participation by all partners.⁴²

Human Rights League (HRL)

The HRL in Slovakia aims to support refugees and migrants by advocating for fair and humane migration policies.⁴³ It provides free legal assistance and works to enhance the status of refugees and foreigners. Believing in the positive impact of diversity, it engages in strategic litigation, policy advocacy and educational and training activities focusing on asylum law. Its mission is rooted in the values of human dignity and equality, promoting integration and community involvement.

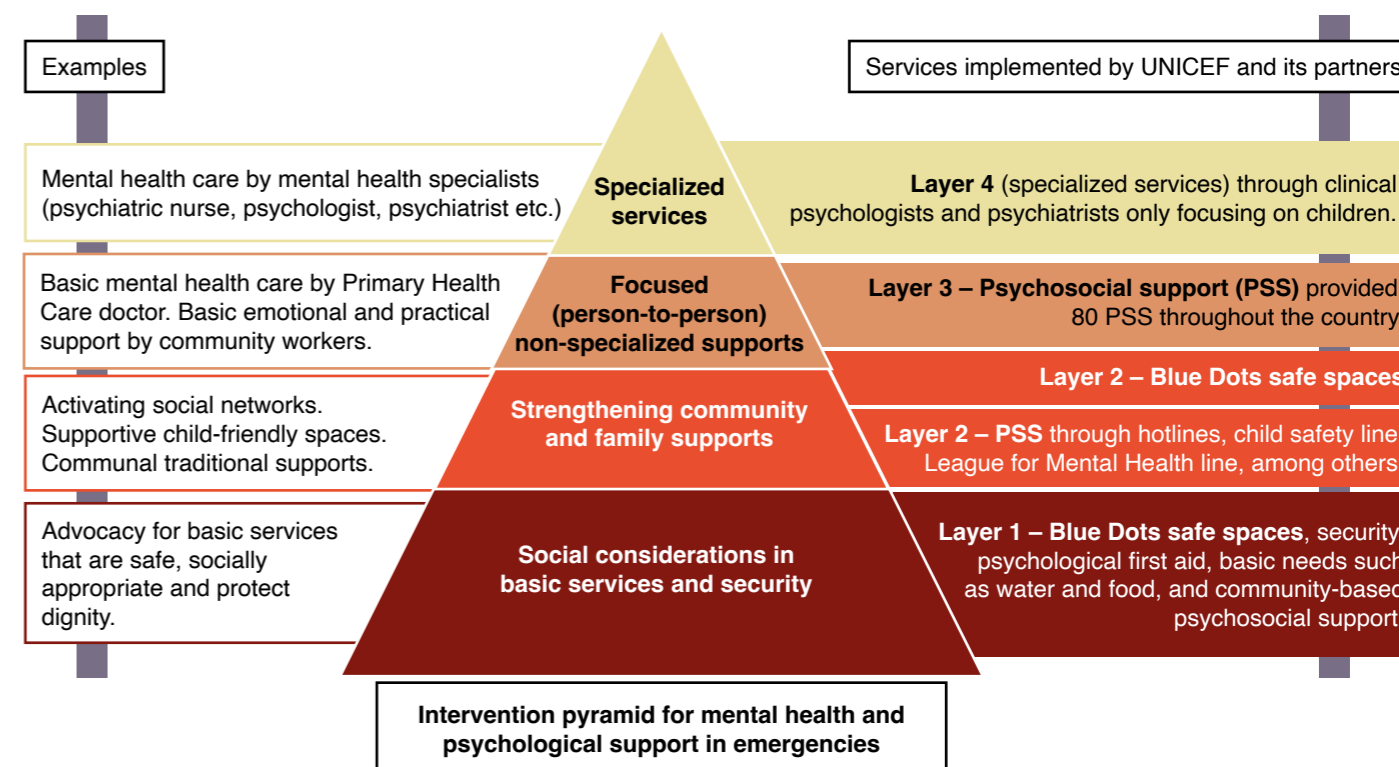
39. Information in this section is adapted from the NGO SME SPOLU website. More information can be accessed here: [Mission and history – SME SPOLU o.z.](#)
 40. Information in this section is adapted from the Nadacia DEDO's website. More information can be accessed here: [About the Foundation – DEDO Foundation \(nadaciadedo.sk\)](#)
 41. The Housing First Principle is a model that was developed to tackle homelessness. This implies that anyone who is homeless should get access to accommodation without any conditionality. More information can be found here: [An introduction to Housing First - Housing First Europe](#)
 42. More information can be accessed at [We combine our experience and know-how, in the Košice Region, foreigners will be helped by the Integration Center – DEDO Foundation \(nadaciadedo.sk\)](#)
 43. Information in this section is adapted from the Human Rights League's website. More information can be accessed here: [Vision and Mission - Hrl.sk](#)

UNICEF Slovakia⁴⁴

One of 36 national committees of UNICEF, it primarily raises funds to support vulnerable children worldwide, ensuring they have access to survival essentials, education and protection. Their flagship programme in Slovakia, UNICEF WORLD PARENT, relies on monthly contributions to provide effective, immediate aid during humanitarian crises. Additionally, the UNICEF JUNIOR AMBASSADORS programme educates and engages students aged 16-20 in humanitarian efforts and the importance of aiding children in need.

Since the early days of the war and the entrance of refugees from Ukraine, UNICEF established a MHPSS programme for child protection through the activities in the diagram below.⁴⁵ The diagram shows the services implemented by UNICEF and its partners, according to the Intervention pyramid for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies.⁴⁶ Some of these services fit both Layer 1 and Layer 2, and some services support Layer 2 and Layer 3.

In addition to this, UNICEF created an interactive map for Ukrainians and others, listing 420 services in Slovak and Ukrainian, indicating whether they are psychosocial or specialized. Furthermore, UNICEF identified loneliness as a specific phenomenon among young people. There are now MHPSS digital solutions, including a platform for young Ukrainians about coping mechanisms. Campaigns have also been launched to fight stigma, encouraging Ukrainians and Slovaks to seek help, including a specific campaign for children with disabilities.



44. Information accessed and adapted from [UNICEF Slovakia: Our Mission \(unicef.sk\)](#)
 45. The information about the services was gathered during the interview.
 46. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) (2017). Reference Group for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, A Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, IASC, Geneva, p.6

Among all the services provided by the interviewees and their partners, the following were the **most sought for by the Ukrainian refugee population**:

- Accommodation support
- Psychosocial support
- Educational support
- Informational support

In addition to these, the following other services were among the following were also sought for by refugees from Ukraine:

- Legal advice
- Helplines services
- Digital solutions
- Financial support
- Support to enter the job market

Refugees from Ukraine in Slovakia have searched and used a wide range of services, as mentioned by interviewees, showing the importance of all-rounded support to this community. In terms of reach, the following figures were gathered through the stakeholders' consultation:

- In 2023, **UNICEF Slovakia** or its partners reached 80,000 children.
- As of March 2024, **UNHCR Slovakia** has reached 1,097 children and adolescents with child protection services, including assistance at the Blue Dots Hub.⁴⁷ In total, in 2023 UNHCR and its partner organizations reached 90,472 refugees.⁴⁸ In 2023 the cash-based intervention reached 21,000 refugees, a lower number than in 2022, with 29,000 beneficiaries.⁴⁹
- There are currently about 10 children calling the **Linka Nezabuka** helpline every month.
- Every week, 700 people visit the centre of the **NGO SME SPOLU** to request its services.
- With the support of **Nadacia DEDO**, 300 refugee families have already found a house in Slovakia.
- Through various programmes and activities facilitated by **Mareena**, a total of 3,000 refugees have already been supported. The building where it provides services can host up to 1,000 people at a time. Currently, it has 180 children enrolled in several activities. In the two years corresponding to the ongoing war, it has supported more than 500 children.
- Between 1 January 2023 and 22 December 2023, the **HRL** provided legal assistance through the **Assistance Centre Bottova (ACP)** for Refugees from Ukraine. The beneficiaries of this assistance include 17,210 households, which represents 24,898 people. Out of 24,248 people, there were 15,274 women (63%) and 8,974 men (37%). Almost 20% of them were minors.
- In the **Integration Centre Košice**, between 1 January, 2023 and 22 December 2023, the HRL provided 650 clients with legal assistance – 442 women and 208 men. 12% of the aided persons of concern were children.
- According to the data collected, 10,691 temporary protection seekers were pre-registered for temporary protection at HRL's legal desks in Bratislava and Košice. Almost 30% of those newly registered also received additional legal counselling by the team of HRL's Ukrainian and Slovak lawyers.
- There were a total of 1,952 households with family members with special needs, making them almost 12% of all households aided by HRL's legal desk.

47. UNHCR (2024). Slovakia: UNHCR Achievements Report - First Quarter 2024, accessed at Document - Slovakia: [UNHCR Achievements Report - First Quarter 2024](#)

48. Information provided by the respondents.

49. Information provided by the respondents.

- With respect to asylum counselling, until 30 December 2023, HRL had provided legal support related to international protection to 54 persons of concern. HRL has taken on legal representation of 20 clients from 7 different countries (including from Ukraine). HRL has successfully litigated against the Migration Office in 12 instances (legal proceedings are still ongoing in the case of 8 clients). Thanks to the high-quality legal representation provided by HRL, 10 persons from Afghanistan and Cuba were granted asylum, and 2 people from Afghanistan and Ukraine were granted subsidiary protection in Slovakia.

Reaching Ukrainian Refugees

The organizations interviewed provide services directly or through partners, and combined in-person and digital support. The main means of providing these services are:

- Refugees visiting available centres and offices.
- Contact through helplines (telephone or online).
- Contact through phone calls, even if there isn't a helpline in a particular organization.
- Refugees could also benefit from services (such as psychologists, lawyers, and other services) in remote areas through mobile Blue Dots or other mobile services from other organizations.

UNICEF has services in over 80 locations in Slovakia, matching the locations of communities of refugees from Ukraine. Some organizations have services only in the bigger cities but collaborate with other organizations to support other locations. Refugees from Ukraine also benefit from mobile services as stated above. It was stated that some of these services will be discontinued during 2024 or after, which is concerning for both the organizations and the communities.

In terms of the most popular schedules, the following patterns were identified:

- Afternoon hours are usually the peak for activities with children because they leave school and can attend activities afterwards. Also, parents might be working at this time, so the activities for children fill in the gap for support to children during those times.
- As for adults, according to the respondents, refugees stated they prefer services after 17:00 or work time, so they are available instead of during the day.
- Regarding the Linka Nezabudka helpline, they stated that it is usually busy throughout, without specific peak times, between 09:00 and 21:00.
- In terms of legal aid, the most popular days are usually Mondays and the first two days after public holidays or any temporary closures of the Centre due to other reasons. The HRL mentioned that there are certain events that can trigger busy days, such as the official extension of TP by the Government of Slovakia, which caused a sudden influx in the Centre. In this case, TP holders needed an updated TP document for the purpose of work, study and accommodation and HRL provided the printouts for the most vulnerable and navigated the rest to the nearest printing point. As for the Integration Centre in Košice, the most visited hours were either early in the morning or after lunch.

While the respondents get to know information and data about the refugees through government sources, participating organizations were also asked **how refugees get to know about the services provided by the respondent's organizations**. The following are the ways in which refugees obtain this information:

- **Word of mouth:** this was mentioned by many respondents as being an efficient way of receiving information among the refugee community. It was mentioned that there is also a formal network of refugees, and they also share information among each other.
- **Telegram, Instagram and Facebook:** these were mentioned multiple times by most of the respondents. It was mentioned that it was difficult to share information with parents, as they seem not to read all messages shared on Telegram channels. Other social media channels used are LinkedIn, Viber and Tiktok.
- **Physical locations:** Information was shared at the Blue Dots centres, or the One Stop Shop operated by Nadacia DEDO, as well as at information points at the railway station. Information was disseminated through leaflets. Sometimes refugees also received information when they received visits from organizations at the shelters where they were staying.

The most successful (most used) communication channels mentioned were Telegram, followed by Instagram and then word of mouth. It was mentioned that older age groups of refugees used Telegram. In addition to these, Facebook was also mentioned as a powerful means of communication.

Challenges identified

According to the respondents, there are some challenges that arise when working with the refugee population. One of the challenges can be **language barriers**, which can vary by region. In some cases, older people spoke Russian, which assisted communication. Regarding written materials, some respondents mentioned that the translations could often be of poor quality. Additionally, some refugees believed they understood Slovak when that was not always the case, and this complicated communications, particularly in legal contexts. Another challenge is related to children's **education**. Dual-language classes were helping with integration, but many children skipped school due to parental uncertainty about staying in Slovakia, leading to isolation. Respondents also mentioned that because of this families preferred not to enrol their children in Slovakian schools so they could continue their Ukrainian education online and return easily without engaging with the Slovakian education system. In addition, when children were integrated into a school, there was a possibility this child would be in a class with Roma children. Many refugee parents were strongly opposed to having their children in the same class as Roma children, a sentiment shared by some in the host community. Among children there were also **behavioural issues**. Refugee children from the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) exhibited disruptive behaviour, such as swearing frequently.

One additional challenge in the refugee landscape was that there were **many minors (16 years old) who came to study at the university level** by themselves. They arrived in the country without guardians and received incorrect information about the study process. This issue, now under discussion, has led to high dropout rates, with 50% leaving after the first year due to several difficulties. Universities are concerned about the effective use of resources and proper support for these students. The private sector, from which tax money contributes to universities, is also concerned. To address this, one of the respondents is organizing informational sessions (in-person or webinars) to clarify conditions and expectations.

Finally, the refugees are also dealing with **financial uncertainty**. Reduced state payments cause uncertainty and helplessness in this community, increasing the demand for psychological help. Financial uncertainty of parents affects children, as it makes them more vulnerable to a host of risks.

Future work of respondents and additional insights

In terms of future work, some respondents said they were still working on **securing future funding** to continue supporting the refugee population. Some of these organizations were looking into fundraising to support refugees with **housing**. Lack of funding will not only put refugees into challenging housing situations but also might contribute to decreased response through **other services**. According to respondents, the government has decreased housing benefits to refugees by 50%, so this increases the pressure on the sustainability of services for refugees from Ukraine.

Many respondents shared that, for their next strategic periods, they will focus on **advertising their services**. In addition, they want to continue **raising awareness** about refugees and migration among younger audiences. Some organizations had recently started efforts in this respect by using platforms such as TikTok.

The respondents also identified the following gaps that need addressing:

- **Need for changes to the legal framework and inclusion:** Changing the legal framework is important and could change the way the temporary status is perceived and interpreted in Slovakia; refugees from Ukraine should be considered permanent residents to have access to all services.
- **Need for acknowledgement of the importance of the refugee community:** it is still necessary to work more with the local community to ensure social cohesion. At the beginning of the war most Slovaks thought only short-term support would be required, but refugees are staying, and it is important to see how they can be beneficial to the country. It is also important for government entities to stress the importance of refugees, such as their contribution to the labour market.
- **Shortage of medical services:** A significant shortage of medical services, including doctors, severely impacts the support available for children. With very limited state investment, one doctor often attends to 400 patients. Psychiatric and psychological services are almost unavailable, leading to a lack of necessary follow-up care for diagnosed children, forcing families to travel to the nearest city in Ukraine for treatment. While NGOs offer psychological support, the quality is not guaranteed, and pre-school integration efforts are inadequate.
- **Lack of coordinated action:** Lack of coordinated cooperation between the non-governmental sector and local governments hinders the effective integration of refugees. Integration happens at the local level, so involving city, municipal and regional governments is crucial. There are already coordination meetings organized by UNHCR, but active involvement of local government remains crucial for the sustainability of services for refugees from Ukraine. There is a need for better referral systems among organizations and more alignment during significant events, such as the two-year anniversary of the start of the war in Ukraine. Improved collaboration and coordination are essential for providing comprehensive support to refugees and ensuring their successful integration.

2.3. Data from La Strada Ukraine

We examined the number of contacts that were received by the Ukrainian child helpline, La Strada, from children and young people residing in Slovakia, whenever this information was logged. 60 such calls had been received since the beginning of the war in Ukraine in February 2022. 21% of calls were between 14:00 and 20:00, and 79% of calls between 20:00 and 7:00. The largest age group making contact was children aged 16-17 (39.5%), and the most common method for them to reach out is through Telegram (93%), with a small minority of contacts coming through Instagram (7%). Most commonly, children and young people in Slovakia were contacting La Strada Ukraine with issues concerning their mental health (25.5%) and problems in school (23.6%). The third most common reason was about relationships with their peers, accounting for 13.5% of contacts.

3: Summary and recommendations

3.1. Identified needs

Our findings revealed several critical needs for Ukrainian refugee children in Slovakia:

child helpline

- **Increase the visibility of the child helpline:** Although limited, the data collected through the survey of children and young people from Ukraine residing in Slovakia can be used to identify their needs. The services of the child helpline in Slovakia (LDI) are mentioned in several important media channels, such as the UNICEF website, and the section for Ukrainian refugees. However, **limited awareness among our survey respondents** indicates that one of the most pressing needs is to **increase awareness of the child helpline**, and the fact it is offering services to children and young people from Ukraine in Ukrainian.

refugee services

- **Increase the visibility of services to refugees:** More advertising is needed to make sure refugees know about the services that are available to support them.

overnight support services

- **Overnight support services need to be aligned:** The data from the Ukrainian child helpline, La Strada, suggests that 79% of contacts from children and young people from Ukraine in Slovakia occur overnight, between 20:00 to 7:00. It is important to continue to offer services in Ukrainian for those children that need support during the night.

medical services

- **Increase medical services:** More doctors and medical professionals are needed to address the shortage of medical services, which is particularly severe for psychiatric and psychological care. Enhancing these services, especially for children, and ensuring quality follow-up care are essential. Additionally, state investment in healthcare needs a significant boost to meet these demands.

- **Increase mental health services:** Mental health was the most frequent answer given by Ukrainian respondents to the survey question asking them what they might need help with in the future. This could indicate that mental health is also a concern for children and young people. Sufficient accessible, child and youth-friendly mental health services should be available to address these needs.
- **Update the legal framework:** Ukrainian refugees need to be granted permanent status to have access to social services and benefits, which will, in turn, foster inclusion.
- **Promote social cohesion:** It is necessary to engage with local communities, and highlight the value and contributions of refugees from Ukraine.
- **Improvement in coordination and referral systems:** Currently, organizations meet regularly and cooperate. It would be important to revisit any referral protocols for child protection in the country, to make sure that coordination is happening smoothly between organizations.
- **Financial resources and support for the continuity of services:** Refugees are in a vulnerable situation. They have a refugee status, and are not entitled to receive support for several services they need. There is a need to guarantee enough resources to support the refugees from Ukraine.

mental health services

legal framework

social cohesion

coordination and referral

financial resources and support

3.2. Recommendations for improved services for Ukrainian refugees

To address the identified needs, several recommendations can be made for the organizations working to support Ukrainian Refugees in Slovakia:

- **Continue to address language barriers:** A good way to overcome language barriers is through engaging psychologists and other professionals from Ukraine, or those who can speak the language. Most organizations are already doing this and confirmed that it is helpful to engage and support refugees in their own language, as this unlocks their honest feedback and allows organizations to better support them.
- **Encourage active involvement of refugees from Ukraine in Slovakian society:** One of the respondents mentioned that by organizing a fundraising activity in the Ukrainian community to contribute to a rehabilitation centre, Slovak people had seen the value of the Ukrainian community. It is also important to be part of Slovak society and influence it positively. This can also be done by encouraging government entities to publicly recognize the importance of these communities, as this can help integrate refugees more effectively.
- **Implement effective strategies for community engagement and continuity:** To enhance community engagement, organizations can identify relevant topics, conduct webinars and run informational campaigns that interest the community of refugees from Ukraine. It is important that organizations provide quality and up-to-date content to foster trust and continuity. Organizations can diversify content beyond their specialized topics to include other activities and expand partnerships with organizations directly in contact with the Ukrainian community to reach a broader number of refugees.
- **Continue coordination efforts:** Continue the coordination between organizations and the government working on the refugee response, facilitated by UNHCR. Also, ensure that initiatives such as the MHPSS committee have continuity. Maintaining active involvement of local governments is essential, as they have the closest connection to refugee communities. This proximity allows local authorities to play a critical role in the effective support and integration of refugees. Strengthening partnerships between civil society organizations and the government will ensure that refugees receive comprehensive and efficient assistance tailored to their needs. This can be done by formalizing processes and collaboration, including the revisiting, or adaptation of current referral systems used in the country to support children in need of child protection services.
- **Ensure sustainability of the services for Ukrainian refugees:** Securing future funding for refugee support services is critical. This includes addressing the reduction in housing benefits, ensuring stable housing solutions and enhancing fundraising efforts to maintain essential services for refugees.

In addition to this, **specific recommendations were identified for the child helpline:**

- **Strengthen the awareness campaigns about the child helpline and other services:** According to the survey's findings, one way to increase awareness of the child helpline seems to be through social media. Respondents said they communicate with other Ukrainians online, so this appears as the best venue for action. Mental health is the most likely concern that participants envisioned themselves needing help with. As such, in its awareness-raising campaigns, the child helpline could emphasize this aspect of the service. In addition, and keeping in mind that Ukrainian families are indecisive about remaining in the country and might not want to be tracked, child helplines can reassure children and young people that their contact is anonymous and untraceable. Schools and families also seem to be avenues that are important to address. Schools were recommended as a platform where information could be spread. Communications could also target families, as a large number of young people stated in their surveys that they sought support from their family members. This also goes for advertisements on websites that contain information for Ukrainian refugees, as a handful of respondents suggested looking on the internet for information as well.
- **Involve children in needs assessment:** When asking children to participate in online surveys it is important to allow enough time and include clear instructions, such as answering all the questions to ensure full and meaningful participation.



4: Conclusions

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services, as well as other refugee response services, available to Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia. Since the onset of the war in Ukraine, a significant number of refugees have sought safety in Slovakia, with women and children forming the majority. The report highlights the adaptation and expansion of MHPSS services, and other services to meet the evolving needs of these refugees, noting the critical role of child helplines and various civil society organizations in providing essential support.

As mentioned in the first part of the report, there were challenges in securing interviews and gathering data from surveys with children. A recommendation for future reports is to allow more time to secure interviews and disseminate the surveys to the Ukrainian community. Another recommendation is to request children to pass it on to other peers, so as to increase the reach of the survey.

The primary data collected from the surveys with children and interviews with organizations in Slovakia highlights the increasing need for the availability of mental health services, as this received the highest score on the potential reasons for contacting the child helpline. This might reflect high levels of psychosocial stress among refugees, especially children. The efforts of organizations such as Linka Detskej Istoty (Child Safety Line) are emphasized for their contributions to maintaining mental health support through professional counselling to refugees from Ukraine, alongside other services in the country.



Language barriers remain a reality

Lack of demand could be due to lack of awareness and information

Legal and administrative hurdles

Ukrainian children often face discrimination and violence ... this can discourage them from seeking help from local services such as the child helpline

In response to the main question of this mapping exercise, on what the barriers might be that prevent Ukrainian refugees from accessing local support services, especially child helplines, we came to the following conclusions:

- Language barriers remain a reality. This can be one reason for children to call the child helpline in Ukraine, when the local child helpline is not available. The engagement of Ukrainian counsellors in the Slovakian child helpline is an effort of LDI of the utmost importance and it is recommended to remain a priority.
- A lack of demand for child helpline services could be due to a lack of awareness and information about the services the child helpline can actually offer. It was seen that another helpline also had a low number of contacts. This is similar to the experience of child helplines in other countries neighbouring Ukraine. Efforts to increase awareness through social media platforms such as Telegram, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok have been suggested as effective methods to reach younger audiences.
- Legal and administrative hurdles were identified. The temporary nature of the protection status and the lack of physical identification documents complicate the experience of refugees in the country, including their permanence. This uncertainty might also affect their willingness to engage with local services.
- The Ukraine refugee community is experiencing both discrimination and social exclusion. Ukrainian refugee children often face discrimination and violence due to their nationality, legal status or socioeconomic situation. This can discourage them from seeking help from local services such as the child helpline.

Addressing these barriers requires targeted strategies to enhance language support, increase awareness and information dissemination, streamline legal processes, provide financial assistance and ensure mental health support, as well as efforts to reduce discrimination and promote social inclusion.

The integration of refugees into Slovak society remains a priority, with initiatives aimed at overcoming language barriers and enhancing community engagement. The report recommends continuous collaboration between (local) government entities and civil society organizations to ensure comprehensive support, highlighting the importance of sustaining funding and expanding capacity for MHPSS services. Overall, the report emphasizes the importance of targeted interventions and coordinated efforts to support the mental health and wellbeing of Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia, ensuring they receive the necessary care and protection amidst ongoing challenges.



Bibliography

Education Cannot Wait (2024). Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) 2024-2026, pp.3-5; accessed at [ecw_myrp_for_ukraine_2024-2026.pdf](https://ecw.myrp_for_ukraine_2024-2026.pdf) (educationcannotwait.org)

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) (2017). Reference Group for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, A Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, IASC, Geneva; accessible at: [IASC Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings- With means of verification \(Version 2.0\).pdf](https://www.interagencystandingcommittee.org/publications/iasc-common-monitoring-and-evaluation-framework-for-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-in-emergency-settings-with-means-of-verification-version-2.0.pdf) ([interagencystandingcommittee.org](https://www.interagencystandingcommittee.org))

Kaufman KR, Bhui K, Katona C (2022). Mental health responses in countries hosting refugees from Ukraine. *BJPsych Open.* 2022;8(3):e87. doi:10.1192/bjo.2022.55

UNHCR (2024). Navigating health and well-being challenges for refugees from Ukraine; accessed at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/108629>

UNHCR (2024). Slovakia: UNHCR Achievements Report - First Quarter 2024, accessed at [Document - Slovakia: UNHCR Achievements Report - First Quarter 2024](https://www.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/108629)

UNHCR (2024). Ukraine Situation: Regional Refugee Response Plan - January-December 2024; accessed at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/105903>

UNHCR (2023). Ukraine Situation: Slovakia Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (December 2023); accessed at <https://reliefweb.int/report/slovakia/ukraine-situation-slovakia-multi-sector-needs-assessment-december-2023-ensk#:~:text=Among%20these%2C%20over%201%2C8,time%20of%20writing%20this%20report>

UNICEF (2024). Ukraine Refugee Response in Neighboring Countries; accessed at <https://www.unicef.org/media/154866/file/ECARO-Humanitarian-SitRep-Ukraine-Refugee-Response-26-February-2024.pdf>

UNICEF (2024). Ukraine and Refugee Response; accessed at <https://www.unicef.org/media/154866/file/ECARO-Humanitarian-SitRep-Ukraine-Refugee-Response-26-February-2024.pdf>

World Vision (2023). Child Protection Multisectoral Needs Assessment - Ukraine 2023, p.1, accessed on 22 April 2024 at [Child Protection Multisectoral Needs Assessment - Ukraine 2023 - Ukraine I ReliefWeb](https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/child-protection-multisectoral-needs-assessment-ukraine-2023)

Appendix A: Tools Used

1. Interview guide for Interviews with (international) non-governmental organizations, multilateral organizations, and governmental institutions

The interview can be conducted online or in person. Ensure confidentiality at the location and during the interview to create a comfortable and secure environment.

Highlight that the responses provided by your organization should be as comprehensive as possible, and thank the participants for their willingness to collaborate and contribute to this research. Consent will be obtained from the participants prior to the interview.

Background about the organization's services

1. What kind of assistance does your organization provide to refugees from Ukraine? (prompt options: Informational, Legal, Psychological, Humanitarian, Other)
 - 1.1. If you provide more than one type of service, which are the most often used among Ukrainian refugees?
2. Do you work with other refugee populations, other than Ukrainians, or did you do so in the past?
3. To whom is your assistance primarily targeted? (e.g., at a specific user group by age, gender, needs)
4. What is the estimated number of Ukrainian people you support on an average month (or total in the past year)
 - 4.1. Do you have this information disaggregated by age and gender?

Operational information (time and place)

5. In which ways do you provide your services? (e.g. services online, in-person, other)
 - 5.1. If in person, how far are the services from the communities of Ukrainian refugees?
 - 5.2. What feedback do you get about the location and accessibility of your service?
6. What are the hours of the day that are dedicated to supporting the refugees?
7. Which are the most popular times of week and day?
 - 7.1. Why do you think that is?

Reaching Ukrainian refugees

8. Do you have information about people seeking help when they arrive in your country? (e.g., demographics, ages, etc.)
 - 8.1. If yes, from which source / how do you obtain that data?
9. How do refugees from Ukraine learn about your organization? Prompt options:
 - social networks and messaging apps (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tik-Tok, Telegram, Viber, WhatsApp, Signal, OTHER)
 - Government structures (WHICH?)
 - Schools?
 - Partners (WHICH)
 - Word-of-mouth within the refugee community
 - Other
10. Which of these channels are the most successful for reaching refugees from Ukraine?
 - 10.1. What feedback do you get from refugees about that?
11. In what ways has your strategy of reaching refugees changed in the past two years?
 - 11.1. Why?

12. How might your strategy change in the future to enhance the visibility and accessibility of your work among refugee children and youth? (Prompt for answer: ask specifically if there are any plans to reach those in sparsely populated or remote villages and towns.)

13. Do you have regional partnerships to spread information about your services?

13.1. If yes, could you share a list of such institutions? Options:

- Other humanitarian organizations
- Local schools
- Churches
- Authorities
- Public institutions
- Other

Cultural differences

14. How does your organization overcome cultural and language barriers that may complicate interaction with refugee children and their families?

15. Which cultural obstacles did you experience when providing support to Ukrainian refugees?

Future

16. What do you think is still missing to provide better support to refugees in your country?

17. Do you think different organizations are working in a coordinated way in the country?

17.1. If not, how do you suggest to improve this?

2. Survey for Ukrainian young refugees

Introduction to the survey

Hello and welcome!

We represent Child Helpline International, an organization to support children around the world. Today, we invite you to answer a few questions to learn more about the support provided to children from Ukraine in the communities they currently live in. Your opinion matters, and we want to hear your thoughts, views and experiences.

Before we begin, we would like to provide you with some additional information about the survey. Only young people aged 13 or older are eligible to participate in this survey. If you decide to participate, please note that the survey is anonymous and confidential. We want you to feel comfortable and safe in providing your answers. Here's what you need to know:

- Your answers will be totally **anonymous**. It means that no one will know the identity of a person providing certain answers. We will not ask for your name or any other information that could be identifiable with you and your answers.
- Your answers will be kept **confidential**. This means that the research team only will have access to your personal answers. Your privacy is our priority and we will not share your answers with anyone outside the research team.

You are welcome to share and discuss this survey with your parents or guardians, and to seek their advice if you need it.

We want you to feel free to express your thoughts honestly and openly. You will be bound with no obligation to take part in the survey if you don't want to, but your help will count for much. If you decide that you no longer

want to participate, that will be absolutely OK. We will respect your decision without any detriment to you. If you decide to participate in the survey, you will also have the right to choose the questions you want to answer. If you are uncomfortable answering any of the questions, you can simply skip it. Your feelings and confidentiality are important to us, so please only answer questions that you feel comfortable answering. Your answers will help us to better understand children's experiences and perspectives, and will help us to make important decisions about how to improve services for Ukrainian children in the community.

I agree to participate in the survey

- Yes
- No (the survey ends here)
- I confirm that I am at least 13 years old

We will not cover any risks associated with your participation in this survey, but if you are upset over some things about it, or if you have any questions or concerns during this survey, please reach out to us at: ana@childhelplineinternational.org (English) or nelia@childhelplineinternational.org (Ukrainian)

Thank you for your participation and for helping us make a difference in this world.

Survey

How old are you? _____

You must be aged 13 or older to be able to participate in this survey.

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- I do not want to answer

What country are you from?

- Ukraine
- Other

If other, please specify _____

Which country do you currently live in?

- Hungary
- Poland
- Romania
- Slovakia

Suggested routing from here onwards — we would have four routes so that the questions can use the name of the country's child helpline and the information at the end of the survey is relevant to the country they are currently living in.

Have you heard of **Linka Detskej Istoty (LDI – Child Safety Line)**, a Hungarian child helpline that offers children counseling (i.e., if a child feels unsafe, misunderstood, unheard, lonely, or looking for support and protection, there will be someone for him/her to talk to) in Ukrainian?

The helpline operates on the principles of anonymity and confidentiality by providing its services free of charge. Anonymity means that it is impossible to identify the person calling, and confidentiality means keeping the information secret.

- Yes
- No

The navigation depends on the answer “yes” or “no” (if “no”, go to the “All children” section)

If yes,

How did you find out about **Linka Detskej Istoty (LDI)**?

Please choose all that apply

- At school
- At home
- From friends
- From social media
- From flyers/leaflets
- At Blue Dot Centre
- In the asylum centre
- TV
- Radio
- Other

If other, please specify _____

Which of these services does **Linka Detskej Istoty (LDI)** provide?

- A space where children can discuss their problems with a professional
- Help to keep them safe
- Receiving reports on abuse
- Help when children are being treated unfairly, used or abused
- Support for children from Ukrainian
- Other

If other, please specify _____

Have you ever contacted a child helpline?

- Yes
- No

If yes,

Have you experienced any problems when contacting the child helpline?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please specify _____

Why did you contact the child helpline?

- Help with homework
- Troubles with parents
- Troubles with friends
- Troubles at school
- Bullying
- Concerns about my mental health, such as feeling sad or anxious
- Concerns about personal safety
- Concerns about personal physical health
- Other

If other, please specify _____

If no,

If you have never contacted a child helpline, please tell us why? (Please choose all that apply)

- I don't need it.
- I do not think I should contact a helpline to address the problems I have
- I did not know that I could contact a helpline to address my problems
- I do not feel I have enough privacy to do so.
- I do not have the means of communication (phone or other device).
- I worry about how people might react to what I say.
- I am afraid that my parents might find out about what I say.
- I do not feel safe talking to local counsellors.
- Other

If other, please specify _____

All children

Do you think you will contact **Linka Detskej Istoty (LDI)**, which offers help to children in Ukrainian, in the future if you need it?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Which of the following social networks do you use?

- Facebook
- Instagram
- TikTok
- Twitter – X
- YouTube
- WhatsApp
- Telegram
- Viber
- WeChat
- Facebook Messenger
- Pinterest

Where do you communicate with other young people from Ukraine?

- Online
- Youth centres
- At school
- During events organized by local organizations
- Other

If other, please specify _____

What kind of help do you think you might need someday?

- Help with homework
- Troubles with parents
- Troubles with friends
- Troubles at school
- Bullying
- Concerns about my mental health, such as feeling sad or anxious
- Concerns about personal safety
- Concerns about personal physical health
- Other

If other, please specify _____

If you need help with any of these issues, whom you will most likely talk to?

- Family member
- Friend
- Teacher
- Private counsellor
- Child helpline
- I will research online
- Police
- Social services
- Other

If other, please specify _____

What do you think should be done to ensure that children know how to contact the child helpline?

Is there anything else you would like to share about these issues?

Survey results

Thank you for sharing your thoughts. Your contribution will help us create a safer and happier environment for all children.

We understand that some questions may have raised difficult emotions or questions for you. Remember, you are not alone. If you need to talk to someone or seek advice, please contact **Linka Detskej Istoty (LDI)**. Ukrainian-speaking child helpline professionals will be available from 18:00 to 22:00 to provide support and assistance whenever you need it. Your well-being is fundamentally important and we have the resources to provide the help and support you deserve.

The helpline operates on the principles of anonymity and confidentiality by providing its services free of charge. Anonymity means that it is impossible to identify the person calling, and confidentiality means keeping the information secret.

Moreover, if you are unable to contact the child helpline for any reason, you can contact our consultant Nelia Troichuk by sending an e-mail to nelia@childhelplineinternational.org. She is a qualified specialist who is always ready to listen and give advice. Remember that it is absolutely normal and courageous to ask for help when you need it.

Appendix B: Local Service Map

Barrier-Free Counsel Centre	Provides psychological counselling services tailored specifically for young people with disabilities, accessible through the internet. The virtual counselling centre offers a safe and supportive environment where individuals can seek professional guidance and support from licensed therapists.
Bratislava Arch-Diocese Charity/Solidarity Centre	Helps people in need by providing them with donated clothes, food and items for children and households.
Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	Website contains information on employment, care for people with psychophysical developmental disabilities, placement of children in schools and kindergartens, etc. In addition to this information there is a list of examples of applications for applying for the above assistance.
Center for the International Legal Protection of Children and Youth	Main goal is to guarantee the protection and enforcement of children's rights worldwide. Delivers a variety of services, focusing on the child's best interests, thoroughly examining each case and considering the specific circumstances of each child.
Daily Centre for Mothers	Provides support for mothers and families, aiming to enhance the experience of maternity leave by reducing social isolation. Also offers a safe and creative play environment for children, fostering their exploration of the world and the development of their first social relationships.
Family Centre	Activities for various generations and people who want to improve society. Facilitates clothing exchanges and upcycling, and redistributes unsold food items. Supports marginalized people.
Human Rights League	Provides free legal aid and information to foreigners and refugees in Slovakia.
IOM UN Migration	Helpline (with possibility to use video call) offering free and anonymous psychological and psychiatric assistance to war-affected persons. Free calls from Slovakia. Helpline is open daily from 10:00 to 20:00 (Kyiv time). +421 800 601 078
IPCHKO Crisis helpline in Ukrainian	Provides free, anonymous psychological assistance and support in Ukrainian to individuals or their loved ones who find themselves in a crisis due to the war in Ukraine. 0800 500 888.
League for Mental Health Linka dovery Nezabudka	Provides psychological support services for both children and adults, with Ukrainian speakers available. 24 hours: 0800 800 556, 0800 222 450.
Linka Detskej Istoty	National child helpline using the EU harmonized 116 111 number, also providing services in Ukrainian for Ukrainian children, young people and adults who make contact (also in Russian). Ukrainian services available every Tuesday from 13.30 to 19.30, free and anonymous, also daily via email . 0800 500 500.
mafU	Provides material aid to Ukraine, and to families from Ukraine fleeing the war and coming to Slovakia.

Mamila	Supports breastfeeding mothers who are living in Slovakia due to the war in Ukraine. Additional services for mothers with young children.
Mareena	Supports the integration of refugees and other foreigners into Slovak society. Provides comprehensive support, including psychological assistance for children and adults, financial aid, and informational and legal services.
Ministry of Health	Provides psychological consultations, crisis intervention and a safe space for discussing insecurities, fears or psychological issues due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Services are provided by mental health professionals, specifically psychologists specializing in clinical psychology and psychiatrists. Helpline (with Ukrainian speakers) operates on working days from 14:00 to 22:00 and on weekends from 10:00 to 18:00. 0800 193 193
Mládež Ulice	Focuses on field social work with children, young people and their families. Develops skills and potential of young people and guides them in dealing with difficult life choices. Provides counselling to families and parents.
People in Need	Helps people who, for various reasons, have lost their safety, dignity or freedom, through developmental humanitarian aid, social education programmes and global education. Services for children and adults.
Ráčik Family Centre	Playroom for refugees from Ukraine: mothers with children, every Tuesday and Thursday from 08:30 to 11:30.
Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology	Psychological advice for parents and their children regarding the war in Ukraine
Slovak Disability Council	Offers a range of services aimed at helping individuals from Ukraine with disabilities. Focuses on gathering and disseminating information, coordinating requests for assistance from individuals with specific disabilities and directing them to member organizations specializing in specific disabilities.
Slovak Red Cross	Provides accommodation and financial help. Intercity transportation service is designed for people with special needs or disabilities who have been displaced because of the war in Ukraine. Opening hours: 09:00 – 17:00, Monday to Friday, available in Slovak, Ukrainian, Russian and English. +421 910 910 116
SME-SPOLU Ukraine-Slovakia SOS	Provides psychological support services for both children and adults. This includes educational and leisure activities, social inclusion activities, psychological support and information provision. Facebook page and calendar of activities for children from Ukraine .
Tenenet	Provides services for children and adults such as assistance with accommodation, provision of humanitarian and material aid, basic healthcare services and guidance on feeding babies and small children. Offers psychological counselling as psychosocial support, crisis intervention for individuals and groups, counselling for children, psychological and educational counselling for children. Provides ongoing support and adaptation programmes for mothers with children. +421 220 201 111

Ukraine Community Centre in Bratislava	Twice-weekly meeting and excursion for people from Ukraine refugees to be able to get useful information on getting to know the city/country they are staying in better. Additionally, provides psychological support for improving mental, spiritual and physical condition of people from Ukraine.
UkraineSlovakia.sk	Map of services for refugees from Ukraine, including services for children.



**Every child has a voice.
No child should be left unheard.**

**Published by Child Helpline International
August 2024**

Child Helpline International is a collective impact organization with more than 150 members in over 130 countries and territories around the world.

We coordinate information, viewpoints, knowledge and data from our child helpline members, partners and external sources. This exceptional resource is used to help and support child protection systems globally, regionally and nationally, and to help our members advocate for the rights of children and amplify their voices.

Child Helpline International

Bruggebouw Suite 5.08
Bos en Lommerplein 280
1055 RW Amsterdam
The Netherlands

www.childhelplineinternational.org

Support us!



Every child has a voice.
Your support helps us
continue **our** work to ensure
their voices are heard.

Donate today via PayPal