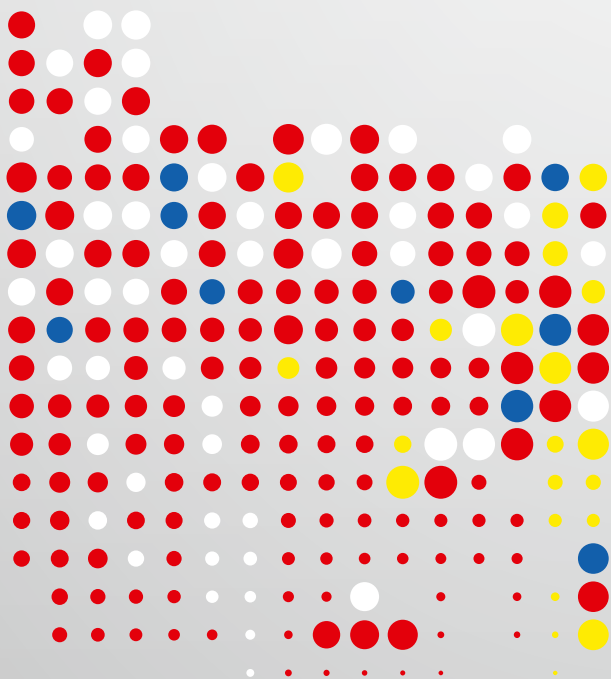


THE ARCHITECTURE OF HELP

Support for Ukrainian
refugees in the
Lubelskie Voivodeship
after Russia's invasion
of Ukraine

Structure of the aid
and factors of resilience



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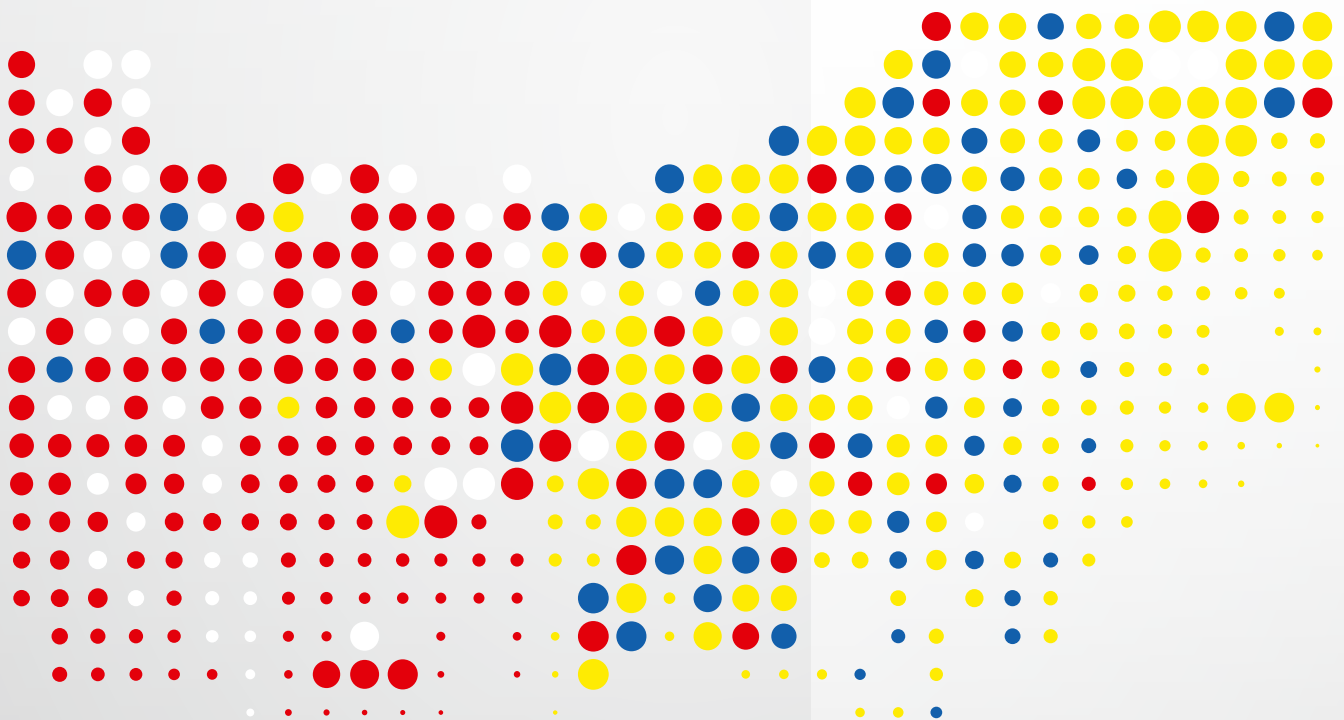
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Introduction and methodology



This report is the outcome of research conducted between October 2022 and March 2023. The objective of the research was to characterise aid activities that were conducted in the Lubelskie Voivodeship / Lubelskie Province in relation to the influx of war refugees from Ukraine arising from the military aggression of the Russian Federation, commenced on 24 February 2022. In particular, an attempt was made to specify what entities were engaged in aid efforts, and in what extent, and what mechanisms of cooperation and aid management have emerged in the course of the aid activities. Detailed research questions included such issues as:

- the characteristics of entities performing aid activities
- the range of activities that were conducted
- the range and forms of cooperation between various entities
- the means of communication and the flow of key information
- the resources being used
- the changes in the sphere of aid efforts taking place concurrently with the progressing situation
- the methods of activity management and coordination
- the key problems and sources of tensions
- success factors, good practices
- the assessment of the effectiveness of the activities being conducted and the developed aid management system.

The Lubelskie Province was a region where the majority of aid activities were centred, especially in the initial phase of the migration crisis, which results from its geographical location. There are four border crossings located in the region, and in relation to the influx of population, a total of eleven reception centres (and a virtual one) were launched here to provide the first basic assistance to refugees. The research was an attempt to capture the activities that were undertaken across the entire Province, so the selection of the research sample took into account the need to maintain proportions in respect of the type of localities where aid was provided, including big cities, small towns, and villages, their proximity to the Ukrainian border (borderland towns and villages), and the capital of the Province - Lublin. The selection of the proper research sample was preceded by a survey conducted in local government entities, the objective of which was to map entities comprising the aid system. The survey included questions about the entities operating in the territory of a given commune, and about the spheres that the aid included. Based on the survey results, six categories of such entities were identified, which was followed by their participation in a survey entailing a structured in-depth individual interview (IDI) and a focus group interview (FGI). The entities included representatives of local-government, central administration and their subordinate

institutions, non-governmental organisations and enterprises, the representatives of religious congregations and informal activists. Thanks to this approach, we managed to characterise the activities of various entities, taking into account the specificity arising from the selection criteria listed above.

As mentioned above, the research was conducted in two stages. The first one entailed a quantitative study featuring 59 local-government institutions based on an electronic survey distributed by e-mail. As a result, it was possible to conduct the preliminary mapping of entities engaged in aid and gain a general overview of the activities that were performed. The next and the key stage included a qualitative study, as part of which 68 individual interviews were conducted (6 with the representatives of central administration, 15 with local-government administration representatives, 13 with business representatives, 9 with informal initiatives, 14 with social organisations, and 11 with the representatives of religious entities), followed by two group interviews. The representatives of all categories of entities included in the research were invited to take part in group interviews, with particular attention to the entities located in capital of the region. The research material in the form of transcripts of interview recordings was encrypted with qualitative data analysis software (Dedoose).

As the research was preliminarily of a qualitative nature, and its objective was to provide in-depth understanding of the processes being studied, not to measure engagement levels, it is not representative in statistical sense. Therefore, not all activities and entities acting in the territory of the province have been described in this report.

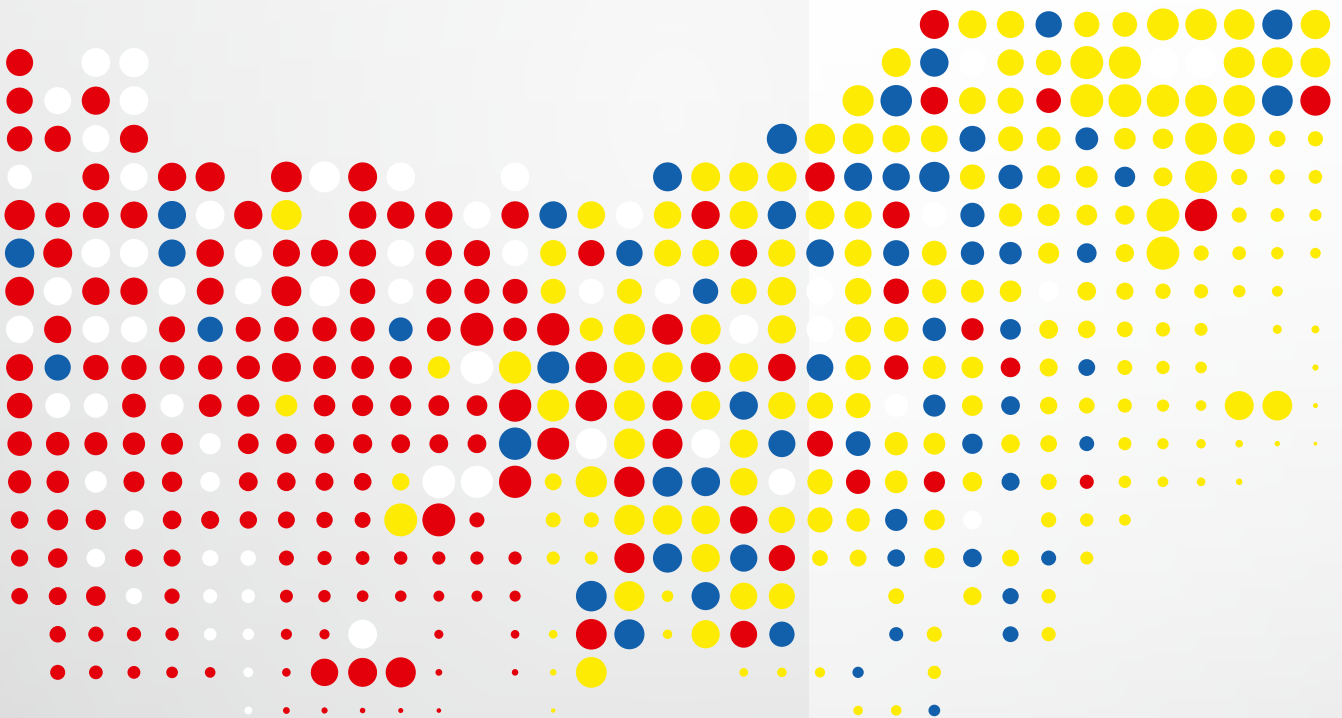
Preparing for the implementation of the project, we also conducted preliminary research in Lublin. It included 28 interviews held between May and September 2022. The materials have also been indirectly used in the analysis of the situation¹.

In the report, we use the term “refugees”, understood as persons fleeing Ukraine after 24 February 2022, notwithstanding their actual legal status in Poland.

¹ A detailed study on the results of the Lublin reserach can be found in the article: K. Podgórska; A. Jekaterynczuk; O. Yarosh; O. Kuzmuk; V. Liubchuk (2023). Support for Ukrainian refugees after Russia's invasion of Ukraine: aid structure and resilience factors. Case studies of Lublin and Lutsk, European Societies, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2023.2206892>

PART 1

Mapping entities



“ We anticipate various situations and various aspects. I must admit that, as a service, we have never dealt with humanitarian aid at such an enormous scale so far. (...) Let's face it. It was a surprise for us too. We had to arrange everything anew. We have never trained humanitarian aid at such a great scale. We have never trained humanitarian transport at such a great scale. (56_AC_WW_M_WOJEWÓDZTWO)

The first step in the designed research was to map aid actors, which is understood as gaining knowledge of the size and the types of the entities engaged in aid, as part of six pre-defined categories. Based on the available data (in addition to the preliminary survey, mainly media messages and our own contact network), we tried to get some insight into the type of the most and least active entities and select the broadest possible representation for our research. The collection of narratives from several dozen actors allowed us to discover a diverse landscape, not only in relation to the activities themselves, but also to the potential of the social actors participating in the research, which we were surprised to find in the Lublin region. One of the elements of this potential was the experience of individual entities in migration/refugee issues and in crisis management. The respondents generally pointed out to their insufficient experience in migration/refugee topics - except the representatives of central administration (which most of all results from the applicable laws), the Lublin local government (which mainly results from the operational model in place and the declared city values), and specialised NGOs. Some of the representatives of central administration, working with and for refugees, previously took part in training programmes and raised their competences in this respect.

Certain other local-government representatives, especially those from peripheral areas (outside the metropolis and within a certain distance from the border) had “some” experience, but it was usually limited to occasional actions. Similar experience was reported by the representatives of other types of entities, for example religious entities, business or most NGOs. It is worth stressing that there are several organisations specialising in support for migrants/refugees in the Lublin region, and they played a significant role in this emergency. They not only have the technical resources to take proper actions, but most of all, the know-how related to working with migrants.

The respondents sometimes mentioned mediated experience, namely the experience within other similar entity (e.g. with the same organisational structure but in another area), or experience which simply arises from the everyday presence of foreigners at a given territory and their life among us without any major problems (e.g. Ukrainian students) - however, as the respondents stressed, that had previously not generated the need to offer special measures, because the foreigners “were doing fine”.

A lot of entities that were engaged in aid activities in the Lublin region after 22 February 2022 had various experience related to broadly understood support (a part of the NGOs was

established for the purpose - their representatives stressed their statutory goals; business entities got engaged in such activities as part of their corporate social responsibility commitments). It involved support for various social groups in various situations and contexts, for example, food donations, organising activities for children, support for religious missions, fund-raising campaigns for the ill, etc.

What is interesting, if the survey participants were unable to describe their aid competencies directly, they tried to recreate memories related to experience that was distant from the humanitarian issues but was assessed as useful in certain respects (e.g., saving heritage), described as “life experience” or simply based on the attitude to life they demonstrated.

The respondents also recalled various hidden resources which turned out to be substantial to the effectiveness of the actions after 22 February, such as, for example, valuable contacts, language skills, experience in working with people (particularly in the sphere of culture), and even the use of business management techniques (agile methodology).

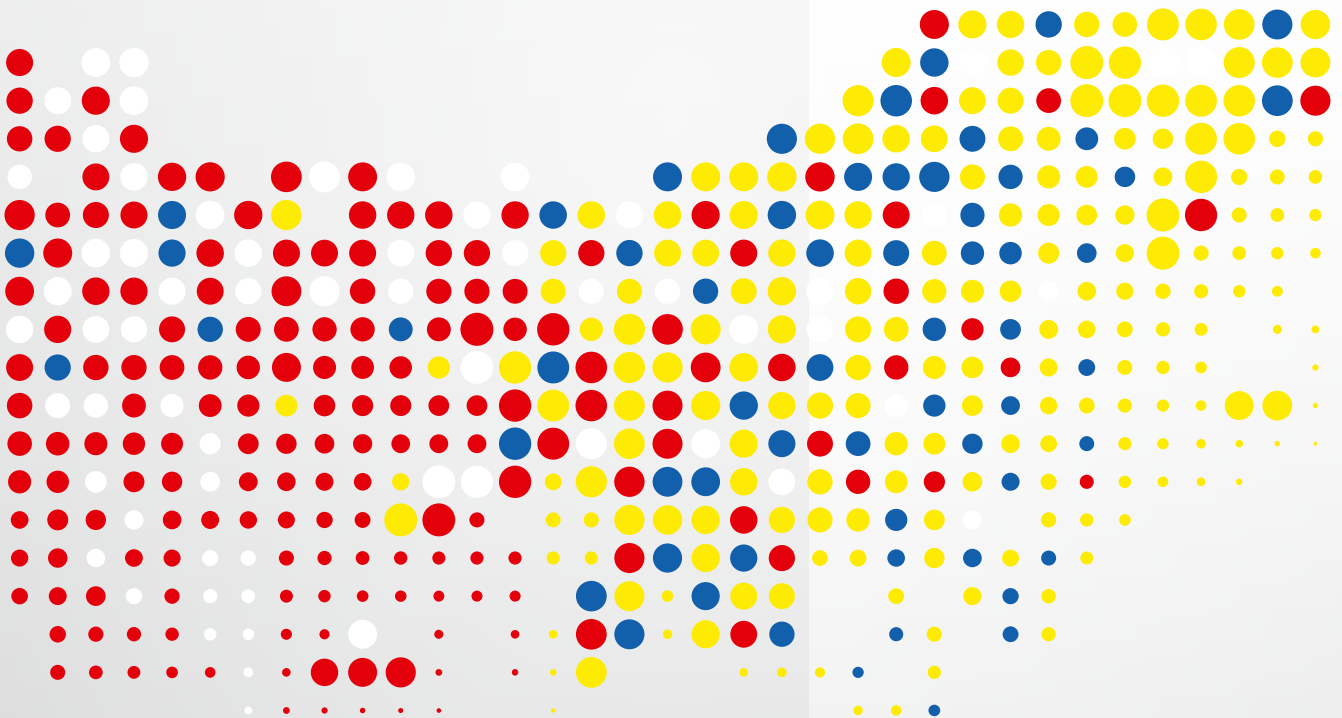
A specific group of experience to which our interviewees pointed out was the one gained in response to the war which was started by Russians in 2014. The efforts that were initiated at the time could be considered as first steps in developing the aid infrastructure. Nevertheless, experience in the sphere of refugee crisis management was practically not available to any of the entity types, except few specialists representing central administration. Apart from administration, we came across only one organisation whose statutory goal is the expressly stated readiness for emergency response.

The gap in the crisis management competencies was filled by the pandemic experience, mentioned by most of the entities taking part in the interviews. Certain entities from the borderland area also had additional experience related to the situation on the Poland-Belarus border.

However, the most frequent narrative concerned insufficient experience in the sphere of crisis management in this particular type of emergency involving refugees. Given the above, numerous engaged institutions (also public ones) and initiatives approached this subject-matter for the first time, be it the issue of crisis, humanitarian aid, refugees, or simply aid efforts (the last one being the least “unfamiliar”).

PART 2

Characteristics of aid



THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND THE ACTIVITIES

“ I also believe that we were guided by a normal human reaction to help others. (09_AS_WI_P_GMINA)

The motivations behind aid activities were mostly of a personal nature (dictated by “a surge of sympathetic emotions”), and of humanitarian nature. They referred to the moral imperative of solidarity with people in need and to the will to help them. The obligation is internalised so strongly that it was described as a natural, instinctive impulse, and the accompanying reactions were described as spontaneous. On some occasions, engagement in aid activities was referred to the categories of social or civic responsibility, and from a certain perspective it was assessed as a training in civic-mindedness, in particular for the young generation.

A decision to engage in aid was even more obvious if, before the outbreak of the war, a given respondent/entity maintained (personal or work-related) contacts with Ukrainians, or the ones who were providing support were Ukrainian nationals themselves. In the face of a threat, refugees would ask for help to persons whom they had known before or were offered aid directly by such friends.

The factor that motivated people to provide support was also the deep sense of empathy, expressed both at the cognitive and emotional level. The proximity of the border with Ukraine and direct contact with the surge of refugees provides extremely strong stimuli in this respect. Empathy was a popular motivation, and it is evidenced by the statements from most interviewees, notwithstanding their gender, the character of the entities they represent, or the distance from the Poland-Ukraine border.

Solidarity with Ukraine and engagement in aid activities also resulted from the sense of direct threat, not only to personal safety and the safety of their close ones, but also to the stability of living and working conditions. The sense of threat and the unpredictability of the unfolding situation were widespread, notwithstanding the distance from the Ukrainian border. It is interesting to know that the situation contributed to enhancing the identity of Roztocze, a geographic region located both in Poland and Ukraine.

As regards the participating entities, such as central administration, local-government units, and business, the motivations behind aid efforts went beyond humanitarian and emotional reasons. They resulted from the tasks ordered by higher-ranking entities (administration) or the specific nature of operations, e.g., working in a specific sector (business, NGOs). They were almost never the only reasons for engaging in the arrangement of aid for the refugees.

The engagement of institutional entities was sometimes a natural consequence of functioning in direct proximity to refugee accommodation facilities, which allowed an efficient support as part of the tasks they were entrusted with.

The motivation to help consisted in a complex set of justifications arising from the roles that particular individuals played, both in family and work settings (personal motivation, “following your heart”), and from the tasks entrusted to institutional entities. The combination of these two perspectives favoured a higher level of awareness of the scale of the problem, the arising needs, and the role of multi-level solutions.

The role of religious entities is also noteworthy, in particular in borderland areas, where communities of various religions and denominations co-exist. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, they became a natural first asylum for the refugees, mostly Orthodox church members. Our interlocutors representing various religious congregations declared that the aid they were offering was not conditional on the fact whether a given refugee was their fellow believer or not.

Notwithstanding the type of entity providing aid to refugees, or the area of its operations, all respondents stressed the selflessness of their actions.

THE NATURE OF THE ACTIONS FOR REFUGEES (AID AREAS)

“ (...) the original idea was to invite thirty, forty people for permanent stay, and then we launched a garage, a transit facility, where people would stay for a day or two, have some sleep, for maximum two nights, after which we would send them further, because we knew that there was not much space left in Lublin, that Lublin would soon be full, so we had to move them further West. (...) first to western Poland, and then to the west of Europe. (28_NF_MI_M_MIASTO)

Field research of various forms of aid provided in the Lubelskie Province by various actors allowed us to identify over ten aid areas. Some of them were common, and although the activities were conducted at a various scale, they were pursued comprehensively by different types of entities. Other forms of aid required specialisation and were not as common. In the first phase of the activities, aid concerned material/living issues and physical/health safety, but soft activities, concerning education, adaptation, integration, psychological support, and other similar measures soon proved to be indispensable.

Accommodation and transit to other destinations

One of the most pressing needs was to provide those fleeing war with a roof over their heads. Although a decision was made at a central level that the regions bordering on Ukraine (Lubelskie and Podkarpackie Voivodeships) must serve a transit function, various entities implemented different strategies in this respect. Lubelskie Province Governor's Office, coordinating the operations of twelve reception centres (located mostly in borderland towns and

in Lublin), basically attempted to direct refugees to more distant locations in other Provinces. At the same time, in response to some refugees' decision to stay close to the border with a view to returning to their homeland as soon as possible, some local governments, with the City of Lublin leading the way, some non-governmental organisations and local entrepreneurs, with the mass support from individuals offering places to stay in, decided to provide accommodation to refugees in the Lubelskie Province and in Lublin, while a significant share of the places was located in private houses. The accommodation campaign with the use of accommodation facilities coordinated by the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine (LSK-PU) was a model action in this respect. The City of Lublin created several group accommodation facilities ("Helios" student dormitory, sports halls at schools). Special attention should also be given to initiatives comprising refugees' transit to the partner cities of Lublin across Europe, and transit initiatives implemented by grass-roots entities, e.g., Liliowa 5 from Lublin or the Baptist Church in Chełm.

They offered short stay which was followed by transportation to other places in Poland and Europe to relieve the borderland region. The extensive engagement of individuals, enterprises (including transport companies), local government and state administration and their services (i.e., Municipal Public Transport Enterprise, Voluntary Fire Service and State Fire Service) in the transport of refugees, within cities, between cities and abroad, proved to be crucial.

Provision of meals

Another obvious area of support was to ensure meals to refugees, which was also often dealt with by entities providing accommodation. The refugees received meals immediately after crossing the border or in reception centres. However, we should not disregard the extensive participation of individuals, country women's associations, religious congregations, and the mobilisation of local communities organising food donations and fund-raising campaigns, local entrepreneurs, including restaurant owners, in providing meals to refugees during their journey, at railway stations, transport nodes, and Travellers' Service Areas. For some time, restaurant owners across the province provided catering services in group accommodation facilities, at their own cost or with the financial support from international organisations (e.g., World Central Kitchen). Domestic organisations also offered their support in their respect, including the Polish Red Cross, Caritas, and others. At a later stage, initiatives were launched to provide healthy food to families who have found shelter in the Lubelskie Province and in Lublin (e.g., healthy food parcels). In some schools in Lublin, lunches for Ukrainian children were voluntarily and anonymously financed by some parents of Polish children or by private companies.

Provision of clothing

Most of the entities indicated in the research offered clothing to refugees. Clothes were provided at the border by central administration, local administration, non-governmental organisations, religious congregations, individuals, and business representatives who bought

them using their own funds and brought them to designated centres. A substantial share of the clothing came from public donation campaigns and was given by private individuals. One of most interesting initiatives was a second-hand store called „FreeОдяг/WolneCiuchy” in Skende Lublin shopping centre where refugees had a chance to get clothes free-of-charge. Clothing was offered by the Polish Red Cross, Caritas and religious congregations thanks to the generosity of parishioners and other people.

Provision of hygienic products/medications and medical assistance

Hygienic products and medications were essential goods. Central and local-government authorities, NGOs, religious congregations, and private individuals were engaged in providing them. In particular, the representatives of the latter categories of entities used the support from pharmacies which offered discounts for the products. There were often situations where the medications and sanitary products were donated for free by physicians, chemists, wholesale stores, using official or non-official procedures. The goods were not only given to refugees who have found shelter in the Lubelskie Province, but were also often directed to Ukraine. Private enterprises quite often sent medical products to specified specialist hospitals in Ukraine, for example, to paediatric hospitals. Specialised medical, first-aid and sanitary products sent to the front line to Ukrainian soldiers constituted a separate aid category. In both cases, it was targeted aid which was to reach specific addressees.

All people fleeing war in Ukraine received access to free healthcare services in Poland as part of the National Health Fund system. Physicians running private practices joined the aid since the very first days of the war, and some of them offered their services free-of-charge. A noteworthy example is the Foundation for the Development of Central and Eastern Europe which focuses on, among others, creating employment opportunities in Poland for Ukrainian medical staff members, which seems vital considering the language barrier of refugees communicating with Polish doctors. They also provide employment opportunities for a part of the medical personnel members who left Ukraine after the Russian invasion. Some non-governmental organisations specialised in assisting persons suffering from diseases or persons with disabilities. Lublin-based hospitals also admitted injured Ukrainian soldiers and civilians.

Psychological counselling for refugees

The need to provide psychological support was noted since the very beginning due to traumatic experience and the difficulties that a vast share of refugees faced having been forced to leave their country. Such aid was offered at the border mainly by non-governmental organisations and local-government institutions. Schools secured psychological support for children, and some of them decided to employ Ukrainian psychologists or interpreters (mainly in Lublin). As regards interviewees representing clergy of various denominations, a lot of them turned out to have psychological qualifications and offered psychological support to refugees. Psychological support in the cities of the region was also dedicated to children and

women in a difficult situation. Professional psychological counselling in Ukrainian and Russian for various groups of people in need was further provided at the Baobab Space in Lublin, which serves as an integration centre for refugees and foreigners.

Language assistance in communicating and arranging documents/formalities

At multiple stages of aid, it was necessary to provide language support to refugees speaking Ukrainian or Russian, most of whom do not speak Polish. During the first phase of the refugee crisis, translation and interpretations assistance was offered mostly by Ukrainians, economic and educational migrants (volunteers) who had settled in Poland before the war. Their presence was notable in numerous aid initiatives promoted by central administration, local-government administration, NGOs, and in informal initiatives. Some aid activities were initiated by Ukrainians living in Poland. It is worth stressing that the City of Lublin had unique experience in this respect as it was one of the first cities in Poland where a decision had been made to employ foreigners in its organisational units many years before. The presence of Ukrainian nationals in the City Office team is considered to be as one of the factors contributing to Lublin's effective response to the refugee crisis. Lublin also became the forerunner when it comes to employing Ukrainian teachers, cultural assistants, and interpreters at schools. Translation and interpretation support was provided at a smaller scale by the representatives of Ukrainian minority in Poland and Russian language teachers whose skills were invaluable in offices, hospitals, etc. Persons providing translation services who have migration experience and know Polish reality, or the representatives of Ukrainian minority often assumed a double role of an interpreter and a guide, helping refugees arrange matters in offices, during doctor's appointments, at the bank, and aid institutions. Some NGOs also specialised in this aid sphere, including the Lublin-based Rule of Law Institute Foundation, providing broadly understood legal assistance for refugees. The next step was to allow possibilities to learn Polish to those who decided to stay in Poland. Additional Polish language classes were organised in some schools (the number of Polish foreign language lessons was officially increased). Polish (or English) courses for adults were organised by non-governmental organisations or private enterprises (e.g. language schools), and religious congregations (Greek Catholic and Orthodox Parishes in Lublin). Persons with migration experience were often employed to hold foreign language classes.

Free time for children

Some Ukrainian school-age children were enrolled to Polish educational establishments, at the same time attending online classes at their Ukrainian schools. In the period the respondents discussed, the City of Lublin addressed a number of cultural events to Ukrainian audience, including children (Baobab, Spilno, municipal cultural institutions). Information materials about cultural events in the city have been translated nearly in full into Ukrainian and

available online. Other towns in the Lubelskie Province (i.e., Chełm) also took efforts to adapt their proposal to the needs of refugee children.

The Ukrainian Sunday School, managed by the Ukrainian Association, has been operating in Lublin for years, and before 2022 it was attended by children from the Ukrainian minority and Ukrainian migrants. In addition, after 24 February 2022 the Ukrainian Saturday School was established by the Foundation of Spiritual Culture of the Borderland. Both initiatives are aimed at maintaining connections between Ukrainian children and their mother tongue and culture. Additional Ukrainian groups in Polish pre-schools were formed, also in private establishments. Quasi-nursery care was arranged by non-governmental organisations wishing to give women a chance to undertake employment or volunteer work for Ukraine (also in borderland communes). Integrative classes, music classes, handicraft workshops, and sports classes were initiated by parish communities (parafiada - parish games) and private business entities.

Pastoral service

Most religious entities declared the provision of pastoral service to refugees, yet only some of them provided the possibility to participate in services/prayers in Ukrainian (Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Baptist). Greek Catholic and Orthodox congregations declared a considerable influx of service attendees. Most of the respondents representing religious communities noted the reluctance on the part of some refugees to take part in the religious life of the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church, as a sign of criticism of its pro-Russian stance, although the representatives of the Church deny such approach. The interviewees representing Orthodox Church placed emphasis on strictly spiritual support, although they declared their assistance in various spheres. The representatives of other religious communities were more willing to go beyond spiritual and pastoral support. Grass-roots attempts were made to create a community of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (chaplaincy for refugees).

Other aid areas

Among other areas of aid, particular emphasis should be placed on initiatives aimed at ensuring access to reliable information (a help line in several languages run by the LSKPU). Another important aid activity consisted in support for animals that came with the refugees (food collection campaigns, veterinary care). Private individuals, business representatives and veterinary clinics were engaged in the latter form of aid. A separate form of aid also included trips with aid to Ukraine, organised by local governments, the State Fire Service, private individuals, business representatives, or churches.

THE RESOURCES BEING USED

“ The things you can do with the support from volunteers - it's a lot, and the scope of activities is great, but unfortunately funds are indispensable to implement a part of the measures. (40_NGO_M_M_WOJEWÓDZTWO)

› Human resources

Volunteering proved to be the key resource that contributed to the effective resolution of the refugee crisis. Nearly all respondents stressed its significance, used the support from volunteers or worked as volunteers themselves. The scale of engagement assumed the form of a spontaneous grass-roots movement which was centred around the idea of solidarity with people in need, and allowed the overcoming of social divisions. There were even comparisons to generation JP II whose self-proclamation constituted a vivid response of the young generation to the Pope's death. Engagement in the aid to war refugees was cross-generational, and was rather independent of the distance from the Poland-Ukraine border, or the type of tasks performed by the entities taking part in the study.

Volunteers expressed their will to work by personally turning to the leaders of informal campaigns or institutions, or through foundations engaged in aid activities. Social media played a key role in arranging volunteer work, they contributed to networking and multiplying private initiatives. In addition to the residents of the Lubelskie Voivodeship, people from other Polish regions, of various ages and various social status, also took part in volunteer work. The distance from the border is not a significant differentiating variable. In areas directly neighbouring on the border, a natural resource for recruiting volunteers could be found in higher-education institutions where Ukrainian nationals study and have engaged in the aid to refugees after the outbreak of the war.

Thanks to the global reach of social media, people living abroad also joined aid efforts. The respondents pointed to the following countries whose residents were engaged in aid activities conducted in the form of volunteer work: Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, France, Switzerland, Austria, Spain, Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, Belarus, Israel, the United Kingdom, Scandinavian countries, Canada, the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Japan. Foreigners would come to Poland and directly provide aid, or would search for information about the most necessary forms of support through their friends or social media, organise product donations, and sent them to Poland. They have also played a key part in refugee transit, offering them shelter, or otherwise arranging and providing ad hoc support in the countries of destination. Based on the interviews, it can be said that all aid activities that foreigners conducted were organised as part of volunteer work and through informal social networks which were established in response to the refugee crisis.

NGOs, religious entities, informal initiatives, and sometimes business entities were the ones to directly rely on volunteer work most often. As a rule, central administration and local government authorities would not recruit volunteers for aid activities, but used the resources offered by community organisations. What is important, personnel members of all entities taking part in the survey were engaged in volunteer work as part of efforts taken in their free time.

During the refugee crisis, volunteers provided comprehensive support, while the dominant forms of aid were correlated with the location of the entity taking part in the research, while the intensity of the activities depended on the stage of aid organisation. The peak phase of volunteer activities took place at the reception stage. Volunteers provided aid in direct contact with refugees (most of all in reception centres and in group accommodation facilities) or by supporting other aid activities (e.g. by arranging material support). The most frequent tasks included unloading and sorting products sent as part of material aid (food with a long use-by date, clothing, hygienic products etc.), preparing and distributing meals, maintaining cleanliness in group accommodation facilities, providing accommodation, providing language support (interpretation), assisting in procedures for obtaining documents, including assistance in offices or healthcare institutions, arranging free time activities for children, providing emotional support (not only in a professional manner).

The support from volunteers became particularly important at the reception phase, and the respondents noted that it had helped bridge the system gaps or actually had been the only form of aid, before the institutional inertia was broken, and administrative solutions were put in place. Volunteer work entered areas that had not been dealt with or have been dealt with to an insufficient extent owing to the scale of the phenomenon.

Vital human resources that the volunteers contributed to refugee crisis management were their contact networks and the multiplication mechanism. It was a key pillar of the effectiveness of volunteering activities influenced their flexibility. It was largely a decisive factor of the resilience of the entire aid system, and, as the respondents looked back at the events, it was assessed as one of the factors contributing to the effectiveness of aid activities.

› Financial and material resources

Funds were the most important non-human resource. They allowed the most accurate possible response to the needs arising from the current dynamic situation. The scale of the expenditures is clearly visible from the perspective of the Province capital which took the burden of solving the refugee crisis to the greatest extent. The main source of financing included own funds of local-government administration and funds from the State budget, in particular from the Aid Fund. The proportions differed depending on the location of a given administrative unit in relation to the Poland-Ukraine border and the scale of aid. The funds allowed, for instance, the provision of reception centre handling, or the support for local-government units in respect of pre-school education, school education and transport

services for schoolchildren. The funds supported measures both at the reception and integration phases.

Important funding sources included international organisations, and resources obtained by various foundations and from donations, largely granted by foreign donors. The two latter sources were particularly important in rural areas, especially those that are not located directly next to the Poland-Ukraine border. They constituted substantial support not only for local government units, but also for informal initiatives, and the initiatives that were launched by NGOs.

Long-term financial support, both at the reception phase and at later stages, was provided by business entities, notwithstanding their market reach and operational profile. They were the ones that handed over their own material resources, for example their cars, storage space, medications, and highly specialised medical equipment (e.g., ventilators). Most of all, they provided their products: building materials, fuel, food (i.a., fruit and vegetables, baking products, water), hygienic products, household chemicals, animal products (feed, litter boxes) and services (e.g. Polish language courses for refugees, veterinary services), food vouchers.

The volunteers' own resources, which are very difficult to estimate, were also a substantial source of financial and material support. The costs of numerous purchases, for instance basic necessities, fuel, food, and accommodation to the refugees whom they provided shelter, were covered from private funds. In time, as the refugee crisis persisted, various types of fund raising events began to be organised through social media and their own contact networks. The collected funds were still a resource belonging to those engaged in volunteering activities.

COOPERATION AND LACK OF COOPERATION BETWEEN ACTORS

› Cooperation

“ So, as I said at the beginning, this cooperation should be assessed by other people, not by me. But, in my opinion, it was really good. There were no conflicts between all the services involved. We were one, starting from the Provincial Office, through the uniformed services, to the commune and volunteers. It all looked really nice.

(03_AS_G_WI_GMINA)

Cooperation between various actors involved in aid activities was intensive and multi-faceted, taking place on inter- and intra-sectoral levels. In the material provided by the study, topics related to cooperation between these actors represent the largest portion. This can

hardly be reflected in detail in a summary report. Therefore, a very concise summary of this material is presented below.

As some of the aid activities were formalised and organised by public administration, most of the non-public actors providing support had more or less contact with it. Cooperation with public administration was not always related to the management and coordination of aid activities but it sometimes involved material aid (e.g., delivery of sandwiches by representatives of the provincial government to people on the railway station – which is managed by central administration).

The list of entities involved in the activities within each of the analysed categories is very extensive (they came not only from the province but also from other parts of Poland and the world, including Ukraine - e.g., the Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine who was involved in the activities of an additionally established consular post). Cooperation with state services (especially the National Fire Brigade) was assessed as very good by representatives of all entities involved in aid provision. Some organisations emphasised that, along with cooperation-oriented activities, they also followed their individual support processes. In the interviews, issues related to the temporary nature of some cooperation measures were raised in relation to: 1) the initial lack of cooperation or its establishing over time as aid activities developed, or 2) the initially intensive cooperation involving everyone, and a change in this pattern over time, with less-extensive cooperation with certain entities (e.g., because of specialization and focusing on other types of support or developing their own ideas).

Representatives of some actors declared that they had themselves sought opportunities to cooperate, while others claimed that they had not taken any active steps in this direction, but when someone came forward, they did not refuse, or that they only sought cooperation when resources had been lacking. Some religious actors were disappointed with there being no need for cooperation on the part of formal actors. Representatives of business circles, in turn, repeatedly described situations in which they provided support to formal and informal initiatives by offering, for example, storage space - consequently, aid from different sources often “met” under their roof. Practically speaking, cooperation was established by different actors in response to the ongoing needs (making intensive use of the existing and emerging social networks), but its character was sometimes structural (e.g., local-government activities with twin towns/cities) or informal and more sentimental (“they were our former business partners”). The co-operatives formed between different actors sometimes turned into symbiotic relationships, with all actors involved benefiting in some way - e.g., a local foundation brought lunches for refugees to an aid post on a daily basis, receiving funds for its activities from a foreign foundation which, in turn, needed to identify a specific entity to be assisted through an intermediary. Another example was the cooperation between a company which agreed to host refugees in its buildings on a free-of-charge basis on condition that the local government contributed to fuel and electricity expenses. Also of note was the cooperation between central administration and an international organisation which

provided assistance not to the central administration office (as this would be formally impossible) but to a selected social partner (a social organisation). Many actors involved in the aid provision process shared or exchanged their resources, making up for the shortages or minimising surplus supplies from community fundraising.

The activities of the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine, an informal platform for cooperation based on resource sharing, constituted a unique form of cooperation. Under this initiative, the local-government bodies provided contacts, personnel (delegated officials) and the building of a municipal cultural institution, while the specialised social organisations (with experience in providing aid and assistance to migrants) offered their personnel and operational resources. They devoted most of their resources to the assistance process, acting with greater flexibility and promptness than public administration bodies. As described by a business representative, cooperation with the Committee involved helping one another and informing people in need about the aid and assistance they could receive from different partners, rather than the management of activities by the Committee.

› Lack of cooperation

“*Frankly speaking, this is what disappointed us. We were probably counting on the fact that we could always call them and get help, while it turned out that they offered us maybe two or three transports of water, and we almost had to beg for them.* (16_BS_WI_G_INNE)

The lack of cooperation threads were brought out most of all by the representatives of religious entities, business, and occasionally informal initiatives. This can be also said about statements of the respondents representing the entities from the borderland areas.

As regards religious entities, the recurring themes included internal religious conflicts between various churches or denominations of the same church, which in turn resulted in the lack of synergy or the absence of the representatives of a given church in the aid landscape, incomprehensible for a given community. Most of interviewees from religious entities noted that the involvement of the Orthodox Church had been less intense than expected, in their opinion (such expectations are based on the large share of the Orthodox population among the refugees). At the same time, the entities representing all religious communities (including the Orthodox Church) expressed the opinion that they had done everything they could in the sphere of aid. Some of them also paid attention to the fact that certain churches and religious communities were competing for congregation members.

The representative of one of the religious entities operating in the borderland area stressed the disappointment with the fact that his organisation had not been taken into account in the overall official aid system, and this shortcoming was reflected in both the failure to recognise “the institutional subjectivity” of parishes (also by church authorities, as it would seem),

and in ignoring the aid proposals addressed to official aid centres, such as the reception centre managed by the Province Governor's Office.

In turn, business representatives reported the lack of cooperation with public agencies - both at the local and central levels, and with organisations which are strictly oriented to charity, such as Caritas or the Polish Red Cross.

No cooperation between actors occasionally took the form of hindering the operations of a given entity, when, for example, official aid centres did not want to provide information about the refugees' needs or other tensions would occur. However, collaboration was not always expected, and this approach was mainly adopted by business entities, both in terms of formalities, the belief about such entities' self-sufficiency, and the opinion about the tardiness of official procedures.

In general, the respondents reported much less examples of non-existent or insufficient cooperation than the examples of effective collaboration. At times, the existing joint efforts were assessed as inadequate.

There were also instances of resignation from instituting partnerships or terminating them because of various conflicts (ideological or political in nature) or due to challenges arising from the need to ensure the security and transparency of activities.

MANAGEMENT OF AID ACTIVITIES

Coordination of activities

“ Together with the Provincial Office, we were coordinating the organisation of these reception points, as well as support for border crossings - we provided them with our heated pneumatic tents so that people fleeing the conflict zone could warm up for a while, eat something and then get ready to move on. (56_AC_WW_M_WOJEWÓDZTWO)

While trying to answer the question about how the aid provided after 24 February was coordinated, it is necessary to refer to the operational scope of individual entities. The system architecture, related to the functioning of public authorities, at central and local-government levels, includes rules for their cooperation in strictly defined spheres. The main organiser of aid at the state system level was the Province Governor on the territory of the Lubelskie Province. The reception centres were established at his request by plenipotentiaries appointed by the Province Governor in collaboration with local government units. There was also cooperation between the plenipotentiaries who would try to optimise the measures they were undertaking.

After a while (about a month) the reception centres were fully coordinated by local authorities, but a rule was introduced according to which the Governor's plenipotentiaries would continue their work, becoming liaisons between local government bodies and central authorities. There was also another rule stating that the position of a reception centre manager could only be given to an official with a strong position in local-government structures, well acquainted with local circumstances and the procedural intricacies of administrative matters. The Province Governor was responsible for securing the reception centres in financial terms.

Another coordination-related task entrusted to Province Governor's services was to ensure the effective relocation of refugees from temporary accommodations to final destinations, prepared in other parts of Poland farther from the border. This logistics required good coordination, so that none of the temporary stay (reception) locations would become overcrowded. The Province Governor was also engaged in other activities, such as, organising in-kind support (coordination of warehouses for donations) or providing (on the basis of subcontracting tasks to NGOs) essential services at railway stations and support points established as part of grass-roots initiatives, where the creators lost the ability to continue their efforts or their resources ran out (MOP Markuszów - Travellers' Service Area - can serve as a good example here). Various state services also played a key role in handling railway station points. Their efforts were also notable at border crossings and in reception centres.

In addition to reception centres, the entities that were organising and coordinating systemic aid activities on site included local government units, with city and town mayors, commune heads and village heads in the lead, often also cooperating with state services and local organisations (or supporting them). They used local resources, e.g. sports halls or schools to organise aid, and engaged local institutions, such as culture centres, schools, or social welfare centres.

Voivodeship- and District-level local governments also contributed to the efforts, undertaking activities alongside city and village authorities, at times duplicating their aid proposal or powers, and searching for synergy with lower-level local governments on other occasions. Describing the organisation of aid activities, one of the respondents found it difficult to identify in detail who had actually been responsible for the establishment of the reception centre in one of borderland towns.

Duplicated competences constituted a challenge in large urban centres, particularly in Lublin where measures were taken by the municipal emergency response team, LSKPU as a form of a partnership between the city and NGOs, and Province authorities, also developing specific initiatives in the city.

Coordination challenges were also related to other issues, i.a. an uninterrupted arrangement of accommodation for refugees, volunteers, and delegated representatives of services, which was provided unofficially in aid points, for example in Commune Offices, in parish premises, and organised at the request of NGOs. As already mentioned, the relocation of refugees

across the Province and the country was coordinated by Province authorities as part of a logistic centre established at a later stage - in the event of available places, individual local governments would “take over” and collect refugees from reception centres, transfer junctions or the border. “System” transport was provided by state services (Fire Service), while in Lublin the City Guard was also engaged in aid. Of course, due to the scale of the phenomenon, the possibility of temporary stay was offered not only by the reception centres but also by numerous points run by NGOs, parishes or private companies.

The collection of donations was also a considerable coordination challenge. It was dealt with by various entities, from central administration, through the Government Agency for Strategic Reserves, local governments (e.g. the emergency response teams operating in communes used some of their premises as collection points), NGOs (not only those that do not perform such activities on a daily basis but most of all those that operate in this area: the Polish Red Cross or Caritas), informal initiatives, to religious organisations or business, often having an appropriate contact network and experience in performing these activities.

In addition to public authorities, aid activities were also coordinated by groups that were established for the purpose or had been operating before the war. LSKPU can serve as a perfect example of the former one. In turn, an example of cooperation network that existed in the same formula before 24 February and still exists today is an initiative bringing together enterprises, providing aid to Ukraine since 2014 and expanding it after the full-scale Russian invasion with new people and new activities.

In the collected material, a lot of statements can be found to illustrate the transforming coordination process, starting from the first “chaotic” attempts, diagnosing gaps, and attempting to go beyond the visible limitations. Coordination sometimes involved referring the persons concerned to other entities with greater capabilities in a given area, networking and providing details of where to look for further information. The coordination of volunteer work posed a significant challenge. This was handled by individual entities, but in the event of a large aid hub, the tasks were distributed. Coordination sometimes took the form of a grass-roots process and on other occasions a higher-ranking institution played a vital part.

According to the conversations with the respondents, specific individuals played a key role in coordination efforts, as it was their enthusiasm, courage, skills, and even cleverness that allowed effective management of activities. It happened that the entire arrangement of activities in a given location was entrusted to one person only. The decisions that such person took were not always approved by the other people involved. The ones that managed aid activities were not always officially appointed for that role, but that formal aspect usually played a marginal role, at least in the public perception.

According to the views expressed in the interviews, good communication was one of the fundamental factors contributing to effective coordination, both within a given entity, and with external stakeholders and partners. The combination of the above elements is reflected in the description of effective activities of one of non-governmental organisations from Lublin:

Lack of coordination

“ *It was a complete mess. There is no other way to describe it. There were some coordination efforts here in Zamość; there was a swimming pool here, and actually things began stabilising and they were beginning to get the grip of the situation, but, you know, with all those people, although I was not going to the border in the beginning myself, I believe that, based on what those travelling there often at the time would note, there had not been any state aid there.*

(14_BS_MI_P_INNE)

The lack of coordination was mainly mentioned by the representatives of religious entities and informal initiatives. The representatives of public administration discussed the aspect less frequently, although they also noticed some shortcomings. One of the flaws was insufficient information about available accommodation options.

The topics related to the lack of coordination were brought up most of all in relation to the operations of entities that were active at the border or in communes near the border, and in more distant locations. Most respondents understood the lack of coordination as the absence of a certain superior structure, and they most often noted that such structures should include government bodies or services.

There were also voices indicating the lack of coordination at the sub-regional level in Districts. Such type of problems also occurred in bigger towns, and in fact, according to the respondents, Lublin was one of few cities where the aid was properly coordinated (in this city, LSKPU is a perfect example of successful coordination).

The main difficulty of coordination, as mentioned by the interviewees, was the non-existent information flow management and the resulting failure to diagnose the needs or improper analysis of such needs, and in consequence insufficient use of resources, particularly the material resources (food waste, surplus donations, etc.). The most frequent expression recurring in the narratives was “chaos”.

Some places offering comprehensive support at a larger scale (not strictly reception centres) lacked coordinators, understood as specified persons of specified skills and qualifications to manage people, to give instructions, make strategic decisions, and respond to the needs related to providing emotional support and specialist medical assistance. These obvious gaps were often “filled” by grass-roots initiatives, although persons managing individual locations voiced mixed opinions about them.

Some entities intentionally resigned from coordination measures or institutional participation in specified activities, while others pointed to the insufficient exploitation of their potential due to inept coordination.

Evaluating and optimising activities

“ I mean, there was this change – we turned the stationary facility into a transit one. We noticed that there was a wave of refugees all the time, and they were growing in numbers. We gave up the idea of providing permanent accommodation to these people here. We found other premises all over Poland, directing them there, and the whole house was changed overnight as we decided to turn it into a transit facility. (28_NF_MI_M_MIASTO)

Along with the gradual improvement of information flow and extended experience, the entities engaged in aid were optimising their activities. Operational patterns and the mechanisms of their coordination were created on a bottom-up basis in response to the emerging problems and needs.

One of the first attempts to optimise the activities was the discontinuance of spontaneous collection and purchase of various products, and improved planning preceded by the analysis of current needs.

Lists of necessities were compiled and shared to ensure the aptness of the aid to be provided. For instance, pharmacies had lists of necessities which could be used when someone wished to buy things that were high in demand at a given time. Records of products in stock were maintained to avoid wasting food.

Attempts were also made to direct aid to places where the most pressing needs were reported, and the beneficiaries of aid were subject to verification, e.g., the donors tried to identify refugees crossing the border and those who were travelling to Poland to work. Visits to Ukraine were also organised to directly verify whether the aid had reached the intended places and locations where it was most required.

In the course of gaining experience and better understanding of the situation and the needs, some organisations reformulated their operations, targeting them to selected support areas, and made decisions on narrowing them down to those they have experience in or are able to handle. Beneficiaries reporting other needs were referred to other entities specialising in a given sphere. Thanks to such specialisation of activities, other entities, i.a., those operating far from the centre of events, could count on the support of the entities that had the required knowledge and capabilities. Some organisations took on the task of collecting and distributing required information. Team members responsible for analysing information from the web and other sources for coordination purposes were appointed within their structures.

In numerous entities, internal structures were adapted, detailed task plans and coordination mechanisms were put in place, and in time, the scope of engagement in aid was gradually increased, going far beyond statutory activities. Such changes were caused by the need to adapt to the specific nature of a given problem and to the needs that were encountered.

The optimisation of activities also consisted in a better verification of volunteers that were recruited to work, and the assurance of their appropriate number to avoid coordination issues. The scope and scale of operations was aligned with their capabilities. The professionalisation of the activities also entails the organisation of relevant training for those who joined the aid, and cooperation with entities that specialise in a given domain.

In time, activities were systematised through the maintenance of detailed documentation of activities and needs, as well as lists of persons. Management was also based on the use of electronic tools, including accommodation booking apps, maps, spreadsheets, and a virtual reception centre was established. In time, logistics was arranged in such a way to optimise the costs of aid, e.g., transport-related expenses.

With a view to optimising activities, inspections of reception centres were carried out, the services were controlled, and conclusions were drawn from their operations to develop recommendations for other entities.

Activities in line with procedures and outside procedures

“ To some extent, we relied on the migration procedures that had been developed – if I remember well – back in two thousand fifteen. So, we had some procedural outline. But this time, it was on a whole different scale, and scale played a very significant role here.

(41_AC_WW_M_WOJEWÓDZTWO)

“ There are no procedures to speak of, as this kind of situation had never occurred before, and there had in fact been no need to even consider whether there should be any processes or procedures in place.

(64_BS_MI_M_INNE)

“ The acceptance process took place after three or four days. The beds were ready, and everything else was ready, but the sanitary authorities had to check everything, even bed spacing. And it took them four days! People were coming in and there was nowhere to put them. So, they slept on one another because everything had to be made by the books. Everybody had to consult what to do and was afraid of accountability. (28_NF_MI_M_MIASTO)

Another thread that we identified in the respondents' narratives included so called procedures (understood both as the existing operational guidelines and the applicable laws), and actions taken as part of such procedures and outside them. The functioning of the

procedures was mostly mentioned by the representatives of public administration who consider them to be a starting point for the entire aid arrangement process (stressing the framework nature of the procedures in place).

Our interviewees pointed to several functions of the procedures they have identified:

- procedures allowed the official launch of activities (in the event of entities representing public administration) - this was usually done fast, although for some institutions, the response time was not necessarily commensurate with actions in emergency situations
- ensuring security
- procedures related to the assurance of security and the legitimisation of activities
- ensuring the transparency of activities
- hindering the performance of specified types of activities and slowing them down
- process handling - sometimes described as hidden activity (e.g., the hidden and underestimated office work on documentation).

As the time passed, a more flexible approach to the procedures or a tendency to simplify them emerged, while at the same time they were being implemented, both at the system-solution level and in the local dimension.

A substantial part of the entities conducted their activities outside procedures or at their boundary. Activities were run outside procedures most often for two reasons. Firstly, sometimes there was no procedure in place, so there was nothing to break, or the existing frameworks were seen as useless. Secondly - circumventing/bending procedures allowed faster more comprehensive and thus more effective actions.

The advantages of operating beyond procedures involved the possibility to make independent decisions and a more efficient use of the available resources.

The examples of identified activities outside procedures include, the organisation of collective aid in places that have not been inspected by, e.g., sanitary and epidemiological services, no volunteer work agreements, circumvention of customs laws, no administrative decisions concerning specific actions, informal arrangement of services, e.g. issuing prescriptions, no documentation of the support granted, provision of institutional resources (e.g. premises) to private individuals, or crossing the state border without control.

The disadvantages of acting outside procedures mostly involved the unavailability of system infrastructure and no possibility to offer aid using the infrastructure.

Some respondents associated the lack of procedures, formal processes in place or division of tasks with spontaneity. Novel solutions and innovations appeared spontaneously, tailored to the refugees' current needs and their situations on the one hand, and to the capabilities and resources held by those engaged, especially the ones creating informal initiatives, on the other hand.

As the level of self-organisation was progressing in respect of activities pursued by individual entities, as the procedures occurred or the actions were adapted to them (or they were omitted to ensure greater effectiveness), spontaneity would transform into strategic planning and effective management. As one of the respondents said, spontaneous aid began to be “spontaneously ordered”. Of course, additional resources were provided (e.g. funds) to implement the actions.

We have also come across the opinions that after a while, procedures turned out to be unnecessary, or their development did not bring anything new, because the existing operations of a given entity created a model system of aid in an intuitive way.

Spontaneous actions involved the impulse to ensure a safe shelter to people exposed to the atrocities of war, without any detailed consideration and without waiting for any external stimuli. At that stage, public officials also took part in the activities, acting like “tender volunteers”, as one of the respondents put it. However, spontaneity was still visible at further stages of the support, where reception turned into long-term activities, for example actions related to meeting educational needs.

Networking initiatives

“ We were actually a kind of transfer point. People could go there to get in contact. What we actually did was a sort of networking, i.e., establishing contacts between different organisations and entities that had different tasks. There was another great initiative like this – called the Artsmasters Foundation, I guess. They also helped a lot to establish these links. (05_AC_WW_M_WOJEWÓDZTWO)

“ But, the work leaves were eventually over, and people were still there. They still needed help, so a bottom-up initiative was launched, with – as probably not many people know – some social welfare centres starting to establish quasi teams or... Perhaps that's not a good word. These were actually really professional assistance teams including social workers, medical workers, a community nurse, a fire fighter. All the different aspects were catered for. Many other people were also involved - teachers, educators, even psychologists. So we had whole teams that went in there to ensure comprehensive services for the whole facility. (05_AC_WW_M_WOJEWÓDZTWO)

Networking initiatives were taken by most entities, and most of them took part in such endeavours. They took on various forms:

- creating a space for meetings and exchange of experience, management and coordination, with regular meetings of LSKPU and regular meetings of the Lublin Coordination Group at the Province Governor's Office serving as perfect examples here;
- creating communities that provide aid through the launch of targeted initiatives, e.g. an account for fund-raising purposes;
- organising events that bring together those who provide aid, e.g. cultural event;
- providing information about the activities being performed and the resources on stock and reporting preparedness for action;
- supporting information-exchange initiatives (e.g. running the PomagamUkrainie website);
- using private contacts;
- launching innovative and spontaneous tools (such as, for example, creating mobile professional aid teams at Social Welfare Centres);
- passing potential resources further;
- sometimes, networking also occurred by chance.

Approach to security, legitimacy of activities and trust

“ I remember an entrepreneur from Switzerland came one day (...) So, the first thing we did was to check who that person was through the embassy, the Ministry of the Interior, or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (...) We did not let people go merely because they wanted to help. They could also help in their own country. (02_AC_WW_M_WOJEWÓDZTWO)

“ - Above all, we were using our common sense, bearing in mind terrorist threats, and, most importantly, the well-being and safety of the people who fled the war.

- So, if someone cooked soup and brought it here, you did not let them distribute it?

- No. And those people were really mad at us, to the point of insulting us. But we remained calm and explained to them that it was simply not an option for sanitary reasons. (04_AC_WW_M_WOJEWÓDZTWO)

The topic of security related to aid activities was very often brought up in our respondents' narratives and was focused on two dimensions: the security of the refugees themselves, and the safety of those who provided aid. Shortly after the outbreak of the Russian aggression, the issue was not visible. However, most entities have stressed that they soon realised that the actions in this respect were necessary and needed to be taken in two ways, either on the basis of internal procedures created ad hoc (as regards NGOs, grass-roots initiatives, religious entities, business) or with the use of "dedicated" resources, such as state services (e.g., the police) and other official organisations (consulates, ministries). It was often the case that the procedures would intermingle, but it also happened that potential cooperation was hindered by bureaucracy.

As the respondents asserted, the key criterion for organising such activities was common sense, and specifying in detail who would receive such aid was a considerable challenge as well (in practice, it meant the need to verify that it was a person fleeing Ukraine after 24 February).

The challenges related to ensuring security to refugees most frequently entailed three areas:

- **travel**

The most frequent narrative that was shared by all types of entities concerned actions to counteract irregularities related to the transport and relocation of refugees to other parts of Poland and, most of all, abroad. In their narratives, the respondents mentioned such travel-related offences as human trafficking, sexual abuse, or frauds (where so-called free transport service turned out to be a paid one). Some respondents personally encountered instances of such infringements, while others heard about them on the media.

Another significant thread was the one concerning aid reaching Ukraine, which included various types of in-kind support and ways to ensure security to official or unofficial humanitarian shipments (and making sure that they reach the planned destination).

- **accommodation**

Security related to offering accommodation was verified against the registers maintained by entities engaged in aid and thanks to cooperation with other actors. However, not all large aid centres decided to keep such registers - due to local governments' concerns about assuming responsibility for the quality of all offers. The approach to such issue was not uniform - there were local governments that served as intermediaries between the refugees and individual residents offering a place to stay.

- **demonstrable social issues, e.g. responding to socially unacceptable behaviour displayed by aid beneficiaries, and those who offered support**

Various approaches to ensuring security in transport and accommodation were an interesting theme that occurred in our interviews. Some entities adopted extremely restrictive rules of procedure, while others left a considerable degree of decision-making freedom to

the refugees. It is worth mentioning here that the right to independently decide about one's own fate was generally accepted by all entities engaged in aid: refugees were able to decide about what they wished to do, whether to move further west or stay in the region. The nuances that gave rise to differences in the operations of individual entities were related to the question whether refugees should be informed about all available options (also the informal ones) and how to make sure that the outcome of support was consistent with the one that had been offered.

There were several methods to provide assurance and security, and in reception centres, they were even applied in situations when a family came to collect the refugees. Special forms were developed and drivers had to provide their details by filling them in, phone calls to foreign centres were made, photographs of cars and drivers were taken, and the refugees were asked to take photographs during their travel and after they come to their final destination (the same applied to the goods transported to Ukraine), and were asked to contact the reception centres after they arrive at a designated place. Overcoming refugees' fears and concerns about the quality of aid providers' intentions - it is a sphere where appropriately used social networks proved to be of great support.

The second thread that occurred in the interviews concerned the security of the individuals who provided aid. To some of them, working in aid points involved a risk of potentially dangerous situations. In one of large aid points, a decision was made to restrict availability, allowing only a small group of aid providers, which was meant to prevent chaos and ensure greater security to aid providers and refugees alike. The installation of CCTV cameras in one of informal aid points was also thought to bring similar results. The issue of transparency of the activities was also significant:

In all security-related activities, the operations of state services, such as the police, the fire service, and the border guard, were assessed well. Such views were expressed by respondents representing all types of entities. The organisation of aid for refugees could not compromise the resources whose task was to ensure day-to-day security to residents. As the representatives of the services stressed, these resources were not compromised.

The actors that were engaged in aid, both the ones with the powers vested in local authorities, state services or renowned organisations, and the ones that arranged informal aid, tried to adopt various measures to legitimise their operations in the eyes of both the beneficiaries and aid providers. A wide range of activities could serve the purpose, such as, for instance,

- initiating cooperation with administration bodies
- documenting activities
- taking official steps

As regards a number of activities, the first step to ensure security, and a peculiar filter, was trust: as the situation was new to (almost) all actors, measures were adopted intuitively and were largely based on the assumption of mutually good intentions on both sides.

Trust in activities had several sources:

- cooperation before the invasion
- networks of (cordial) contacts existing before the invasion, which gave rise to numerous operational “bonds” during the crisis (so called bridging social capital)
- local origin of a given entity
- long-term functioning of the entity in support circles and its experience in organising aid
- a very strong urge to provide aid
- effectiveness and efficiency of actions
- taking into account various forms of verification, both of those offering aid, and its beneficiaries

Trust was also a very important issue in the context of aid provided on the territory of Ukraine. One of the respondents, representative of a grass-roots initiative, noted that the care for Ukraine's security was also the foundation for mutual trust. On the other hand, the awareness of military operations, and the resulting risk of unforeseeable situations contributed to utmost caution, and triggered the development of effective and safe strategies to deliver aid.

The experience gained in the first months of the aid, the established and “exploited” contacts have led to the construction of the kind of trust which can constitute a capital for the future.

The emergence/recognition of leaders and the recruitment of aid providers

“ There were a few people (...) who sort of started to coordinate, because they saw that it was more than needed (...). They weren't affiliated with any institution as far as I knew (...). I didn't know them personally. So, I think they just became coordinators through experience (...). It's simple - whoever spent more time there knew how things were done, and so they naturally became coordinators. (13_NGO_WI_P_GMINA)

The emergence of the so-called aid leaders may be analysed in two contexts: individual context (aid providers) and institutional context (leading aid actors). The role of specified actors is described in the part concerning the assessment of system operation. It is worth stressing here that the factors contributing to a given actor's leading position at a given territory were diverse, whereas the administrative and formal factors were prevailing. The aid landscape was also “filled” with inconspicuous entities which, for various reasons, responded to the

demand for aid at a given point in time. An example of such situation was the launch of aid activities by one of religious entities which was the first one to arrange comprehensive aid in one of the towns in the region, and the information about its operations has spread very fast.

Another issue concerns the emergence of individual leaders, namely the circumstances and factors favourable to considering a given person as a leader or, most often, aid coordinator. In the analysed narratives, there were numerous stories about the spontaneous emergence of “self-proclaimed” leaders.

Sometimes the scale of engagement of individual persons was the outcome of a specific chain of circumstances, defined as “coincidence”. Based on a deep insight, it turned out that the majority of such situations was based on existing, sometimes unconscious, competencies, mainly soft skills, and was the outcome of revealing a certain potential, understood as intellectual capital. Its proper use proved to be the key to the success of the activities being undertaken.

The emergence of competent staff was appreciated and turned into regular employment, a situation that can be called the professionalisation of volunteer work and constitutes an example of fulfilling the potential that has been demonstrated. Based on the analysis of the materials, it can be stated that these “competent human resources” in the Province turned out to be very broad. However, it sometimes gave rise to certain problems related to coordination or conflicts between individual leaders.

The emergence of informal leaders acting individually was not received well by formal actors (administration), due to potential threats resulting from the inability to define accountability for activities in problematic situations. They preferred a situation where the affiliation and identification with entities running official operations was specified.

The recruitment of volunteers for aid activities was handled in various ways. Some entities simply hired anyone who was willing to help, while others implemented measures resembling qualification proceedings. All narratives had one thing in common, and it was a part related to the multitude of submission and those willing to help. All professional groups were engaged in the aid (including court enforcement officers, Supreme Court judges, teachers, students, old-age pensioners and the homeless). Some entities were running their operations using various volunteer groups (sourced through diverse channels).

A specific form of aid engagement was the participation of persons who were not volunteers but were able to help actively through, for example, hiring refugees.

Ukrainian speakers were most often recruited from the Ukrainian diaspora living in Poland before the war (on a permanent or temporary basis) or from among Ukrainian students, and in some cases the refugees themselves expressed their willingness to help or were asked to engage in aid activities.

Informal initiatives were based on their own networks of acquaintances and friends and relied on external volunteers less intensely. The procedure for engaging the representatives

of central administration was different and consisted in a top-down delegation of specified tasks. They were first entrusted to persons employed in entities related to emergency response, and at subsequent stages, based on the arising needs, further persons were appointed (usually those having coordination experience or whose existing job position was somehow related to the subject-matter). The employees who were assigned this function could count on financial reward. In addition to qualifications and skills, the conditions for their selection included the possibility to devote time for additional tasks and the will of the persons concerned themselves.

Mechanisms of identifying and developing aid providers' competencies

“ An important thing, which is part of this cooperation and which I would like to mention, is the fact that fifty people continue to learn the Ukrainian language. Actually, sixty-one people, because there are fifty people from the municipal office, plus eleven librarians. It came out quite naturally. ([37_AS_MI_M_MIASTO](#))

As the aid activities were progressing (yet not in their first stage), initiatives were proposed in some entities to develop the competencies of aid providers. Such measures, similarly to the professionalisation of volunteer work, are also a sign that the revealed intellectual potential has been noted and needs to be taken advantage of. The examples of such activities include the training support for LSKPU volunteers, and Ukrainian language courses for the employees of municipal institutions in Lublin. According to the stories told, in most cases the aid providers would develop their skills spontaneously, through dealing with problems, and overcoming new obstacles independently. One of the respondents placed emphasis on the uniqueness of such region-specific experience at the national level.

An interesting point is also the one related to the clash of typically clerical skills and the official mode of operation with the need to maintain flexibility, to negotiate, and to arrive at a solution instead of enforcing instructions on a top-down basis. Such challenges were reported by officials responsible for process management.

The role of the media

“ We also heard from XX, who lives in Spain but comes from Lublin (...). It turned out that he used to be a scout. I used to be a scout, too. Although he's been living in Spain for ten or fifteen years now, it turned out that we had a couple of mutual scout friends, so we could verify his identity right away. He became our man in Spain. He posted on Spanish forums, he said there had been much information flowing around, but Spaniards didn't know where to go, how to help, what

to do to help. So, he instructed those people to contact us. He helped us a lot out there in Spain. He practically mobilised all those in Spain who wanted to help, he got us in touch virtually with anyone posting online that they would like to help. (28_NF_MI_M_MIASTO)

“ *I looked through millions of adverts and groups, at first those established in Lublin, and then nationwide. So, I could see if there were flats to rent, I knew how many refugees there were, what locations they were staying in, how many families were looking for accommodation, which families they were (...). We noticed that, during the day, there were a lot of “I’ll take in a family” adverts, but as it was getting dark and cold, there were less and less such adverts. There were only a lot of adverts displayed by those “looking for” but not those “offering”, so we didn’t act or take in new refugees until, let’s say, six o’clock. It was only after six o’clock that we used our contacts (...), to take in those people who arrived later, where it was already dark and cold, and they had nowhere else to go (...). So, we filled this night-and-cold gap, so to say. (28_NF_MI_M_MIASTO)*

Based on the research results, social media played a critical role in various contexts of shaping the aid system. In addition to facilitating the coordination of first spontaneous self-organisation measures, they also provided an opportunity to initiate quick and effective international cooperation.

The visual features of this type of media also turned out to be vital (e.g. posting photos and videos). They also directly showed the situation and its scale, which proved to be particularly important in the context of reducing uncertainties and adding credibility to the actions to be taken. The informal grass-roots initiative centred around the transit point in Liliowa St. in Lublin, which transformed into an informal network of transit operations at an international scale, was able to provide information about its activities on an ongoing basis through the social media, documenting them in the form of photographs and videos, which allowed the identification of persons who were benefiting from aid and who were responsible for transport to various countries. Furthermore, materials about the further fate of the persons who left were provided, showing that they also received support at their destination, and documenting the receipt of parcels with aid sent to Ukraine.

The social media also constituted a source of certain meta information. As evidenced by one of the entities, traffic on the internet and in groups was analysed, which allowed the assessment of the times with the highest number of requests for support and the lowest numbers of aid proposals. That way supply gaps were identified, and attempts were made to fill them (e.g. refugees were admitted during night hours).

Social media also facilitated efforts to verify and provide further details to the general news released in traditional media, such as television and radio (both national and local ones). As the respondents noted, detailed and specific information about the needs and the actions that need to be taken at a given moment came from social media. Providing an opportunity to comment on the incoming information, social media allowed their fast verification and updates by those who were closest to the ones that were in need.

As the interview participants noted, social media and messaging apps provided a speedy flow of information among the refugees. It was particularly demonstrable in the event of information being passed on by refugees that were already in Poland to those waiting to cross the border or planning to do it.

Flexibility

“ They wrote that some hot meals would be welcome. People would set up more and more tables. I thought to myself: why don't we fix some pancakes? I wrote on a Facebook group that we could fix some pancakes. And it turned out great. (61_NF_WI_P_GMINA)

One of the key features of humanitarian aid in the region was its flexibility. Four areas of flexibility were identified:

■ the flexibility of organisations and working hours in aiding entities

The respondents representing various categories of entities believed that the working hours needed to be flexible as they depended on the current needs and the rapidly changing challenges. Responding to them on an ongoing basis was a rule. Central-administration employees adjusted the hours of their duty service in reception centres to the expected time of refugees' arrival, considering night-time (all-night work outside official business hours of offices). Schools extended the opening hours of after-school clubs, so that the mothers of Ukrainian children could pick them up as late as possible to engage in work and arrange official matters. School directors allowed their employees to leave work early, so they could go to refugee aid points and support them as volunteers. Some interviewees paid attention to the fact that senior secondary-school students were engaged in volunteer work, as they had fewer regular classes, which allowed them to take night-time shifts. The premises that were collecting in-kind support from donors were also open at nights.

The response to the crisis affected decision-making processes in many institutions. Based on the interviews, it can be said that government administration adopted some of the most standard solutions at the top central level. However, some of the non-standard matters were settled on a fast-track basis at lower administration levels because the experience of lowest-ranking officials needed to be considered. The respondents stressed that that mechanism had not been previously applied by the central administration. Central administration

representatives also appreciated the unofficial flow of information in its ranks and its importance in emergency response.

The absence of rigid rules and decision-making structures was commonly assessed well in interviews with the representatives of informal initiatives, some non-governmental organisations and religious entities.

■ **the flexibility of the aid proposal**

The procedures for enrolling refugee children to school were made more flexible. Forms in Ukrainian were prepared. One of the signs of flexibility in this respect was aid profiling and the will to reach specific groups of beneficiaries with specified needs (e.g. to artistically gifted children, pet owners). Some aid entities decided to hire additional personnel or change their proposal. In response to refugees' needs, some religious entities decided to increase the number of services. New ministers were hired for pastoral service. They resigned from remuneration for pastoral work from congregation members. The refugees received access to parish common rooms for the purpose of integration, establishment of contacts and networking.

■ **the flexibility of cooperation between various categories of entities**

The flexibility of religious entities was expressed through the use of various instruments, e.g., a parish offered strictly pastoral support, and a foundation related to the same religious community, which was able to apply for funding from other sources and for other purposes, focused on broadly understood humanitarian aid and refugee integration. Even though the parish and the foundation were formally separate entities, they collaborated closely, performing specific aid tasks on a complementary basis.

One of the parishes declared that parishioners willing to aid were not obliged to act only within the parish structures. If such parishioners were able to engage in the activities of other structures with more effective tools, the parish would not have any problem with that.

Local administration bodies and NGOs complemented each other. For instance, NGOs helped local government administration in the sphere of transport services and in finding and paying for storage space intended for in-kind support. Local governments also benefited from the contacts of NGOs on the Ukrainian side to find partners in borderland municipalities that could hand over or mediate in the provision of aid from Poland. Moreover, the complementary cooperation between local governments and NGOs eliminated the need to pay taxes, as NGOs were exempt from such payments for the aid provided to Ukraine.

■ **the flexibility in the use of resources**

The flexibility was expressed in the possibly most effective use of means of transport. The cars owned by private companies sending in-kind support to Ukraine were used to transport refugees on their way back. At times, despite financial limitations, the flexibility of private business was expressed in the fact that they tried not to seek external funds for some

of the activities, because they understood that the required procedures would delay the actions, and time was of the essence. Business owners would hire Ukrainians to load the goods donated by borderland communes, being aware of their strong motivation.

In addition to aiding incoming refugee groups, individual entities tried to support other entities providing assistance, e.g., by transferring surplus products. It was made possible thanks to the flow of information between the aiding entities.

As part of their flexible approach, religious entities engaged lay congregation members brought together in religious associations or took actions in collaboration with religious foundations whose members/founders were persons belonging to these religious communities and sometimes even clergymen.

The interviews also revealed flexibility expressed through mutual support of informal initiatives and private business, engaged in aid to Ukrainian families.

Another example of flexibility related to the use of resources was the extension of space for hosting refugees by private individuals by converting and using utility rooms and the hosts' moving out of their own house to a hotel during the refugees' stay (refugees being provided access to the entire house).

In the opinion of the interviewees, the flexibility of private initiatives was possible because it was based on persons representing various professions and with diverse contact networks in Poland and abroad, which allowed further organisation of comprehensive aid to refugees, even in niche and challenging areas. The complementing of knowledge and activities was made possible thanks to communication between the representatives of various aid sector at multiple levels.

The flexible approach to managing resources is also a characteristic feature of various services. For instance, the centralised coordination tasks performed by the State Fire Service concerned only some necessary actions taken by the voluntary Fire Service, at the same time allowing bottom-up activities and flexible response of these entities. The respondents also noticed a flexible approach in the work of some officials as an important factor.

Support to aid providers

“ There was such an opportunity. Volunteers could seek psychological advice. And the psychologists working at refugee points also had access to professional psychological support. That's how it worked.

(27_NF_MI_G_WOJEWÓDZTWO)

The emergency aid activities often required the support for the aid providers themselves, which proved necessary sooner or later. The availability of such support was diverse. On the one hand, the respondents pointed to its absence. On the other hand, there were narratives

about noting such need and the functioning of some kind of support - financial, organisational, informational, and psychological support. The latter ones were available for a substantial number of aid providers, sometimes intentionally (through ensuring psychologists dedicated to volunteers and employees of entities engaged in aid, and even psychologists helping the refugees), and at times the aid providers were able to use the same resources that the refugees were benefiting from.

The provision of overnight stay to volunteers coming from abroad or from other parts of Poland constituted a specific form of support to aid providers. Such places were often prepared in the offices of the engaged organisations, also in public administration premises.

The respondents also mentioned numerous examples of financial support or support entailing the arrangement of specific procedures or the provision of specified services. At times such support came from distant places or from individuals who were not related to the aiding entity in any way, and took the form of “volunteering for volunteers”.

One of the local governments decided to introduce an additional financial allowance to private individuals who decided to host refugees in their houses. In the same location, the possibility to offer gainful employment to volunteers was provided.

Diverse identification of aid providers

“*Probably we were employees and volunteers at the same time (...). We were a bit of both, and it's hard to tell the difference at this point.* (58_AS_MI_M_MIASTO)

“*I have a double role – as a representative of the city, I try to keep on top of the city's tasks while coordinating them with what the bottom-up initiatives and NGOs are doing.* (FOCUS_2)

The persons engaged in aid activities represented various entities and sometimes these representations overlapped. In the interviews, emphasis was placed on such diversity at numerous occasions, and it was seen as an advantage, because it allowed the organisation of aid through several channels and the use of resources belonging to different “worlds”, which resulted in improved synergy and the success of the activities. A special case was the engagement of local-government employees in the work of emergency response teams, reaching far beyond mere office work, both in terms of the subject-matter and the time devoted to work. According to the research material, parishes emerged as particularly vivid examples of synergy: parishioners, assuming various functions and practising diverse professions in their daily work, were brought together under the banner of a given religious entity, organising comprehensive aid.

The fact that persons assuming various concurrent roles formally combined aid activities created the possibility to seek more effective administrative solutions. For instance, a company running language courses could not apply for local-government funding for such operations, but a foundation managed by the employee or owner of the company could do that. A parish provided access to its premises for various activities, but it was the foundation managed by the parish that was responsible for financial settlements.

The common feature for the vast majority of aid providers representing institutional entities was also an additional, personal engagement involving, e.g., the provision of private residential premises or using private contacts. It sometimes took the form of sectoral solidarity with persons working in the same industry, performing similar tasks and having similar functions.

During the interviews, some respondents made a clear distinction in terms of self-identification (for example, the employees of various institutions stressed that the support they offered was not institutional and they donated their gifts as private individuals). Diverse identifications also concerned the refugees themselves when they got engaged in aid activities for other people in need, becoming a link in the aid chain.

Organisational changes

“ If we have employees who support, for example, the employment of teachers, the management of teachers, it is not only the education department, but also the employees of the culture department and they, with permission of the management, have reorganized their work to make this possible. (...) There are also... yes, there are employees who perform new duties in a place where they have not performed them before. Only those related to refugees (...), previously they were not in any positions related to it. (37_AS_MI_M_MIASTO)

Organisational changes were a frequent consequence of the involvement of various entities in aid/support activities for Ukrainian refugees. These included staff/member count changes, management model revisions, as well as changes in the activity profiles of some entities.

■ staff count' changes

As regards public administration entities, only a few offices declared that they had managed to increase employment. They did that by obtaining external funds as part of foreign projects devoted to refugee crisis management (however, most offices declared that the increased workload caused by the refugee crisis had not entailed any additional remuneration for the existing staff). In schools, the growing number of Ukrainian students made it necessary to hire new teachers (mainly Polish-language teachers) and to revise class arrangements. School also had to work overtime.

Employment in large local NGOs increased, and in some of them it soared (e.g., from three employees to several dozen). It was frequent for volunteers to be eventually offered employment (the professionalisation of volunteer work). The NGOs that became involved in helping refugees, and that had previous experience of supporting excluded people, sought to involve the previous beneficiaries of their support in these activities. In one such organisation, employment was increased in line with the social economy principle set down in its charter.

Religious entities using volunteer support hardly ever sought volunteer loyalty/exclusivity and did not create any barriers to their engagement in initiatives launched by other actors. They realised that by moving from one initiative to another, volunteers wanted to use the most effective aid instruments provided by specific entities/organisations.

Some parishes sought to make their services more flexible by holding more masses and engaging additional clergymen (although only some churches were able to arrange services in the Ukrainian language or provided access to prayer translations).

■ **changes in management methods**

The engagement of official institution in aid activities did not generally result in any formal – i.e., statutory or based on rules and regulations – changes in their management methods, but rather in adjusting them on an as-needed basis. One example is sending staff delegations to aid activities (paid extra or, generally, on existing terms and conditions). Another example relates to sharing experiences between different local-government bodies responsible for different areas. Some interviewees pointed to a specific consequence of the experience gathered in connection with the refugee crisis - namely, the acceleration of standard procedures in official institutions. In order to increase their effectiveness, some understaffed entities also expected that the aid beneficiaries would gradually become more independent. This would relieve their employees from some of the workload (for example, cleaning).

One of the most spectacular examples of organisational changes involved two prayer venues being made available by communities originating from the evangelical tradition (in Lublin and Chełm) to accommodate refugees. Similar actions were implemented by some businesses, which had suspended their commercial activities to, for example, provide rooms for the refugees in need. Another change in the management approach involved translating recruitment procedures into Ukrainian in anticipation of increased demand for jobs among incoming Ukrainians. Meanwhile, some production facilities declared increased production.

Religious entities involved in aid activities used their networks abroad (Europe and the USA) to increase their effectiveness. Their representatives were unanimous in the opinion that the aid activities consolidated, integrated, and “refreshed” these religious communities spiritually, and also enhanced their recognition and credibility in local communities.

Changes in the management methods of informal initiatives were hardly ever codified or written down in any way. Rather, they served as *ad hoc* responses to the situation. This flexibility translated into high efficiency and operational optimisation.

■ changes in the activity profile

In the Lublin and provincial aid landscape, actors from different sectors undertook a variety of initiatives in the narrower or broader thematic areas, responding to the needs of refugees or Ukraine itself. One such strategy adopted by NGOs was to re-profile, focus on one area/some of the areas of their activities, while suspending those they engaged in before 24 February 2022 (complementarity).

In contrast, some interviewees representing both local and central administration authorities claimed that their increased involvement in providing aid to refugees had not affected the effectiveness of their existing statutory activities or the quality of services provided to Polish citizens. Despite a wide range of new duties, representatives of the uniformed services (e.g., the National Fire Service) also claimed that they had no difficulty in fulfilling their regular tasks, while emphasising the role of support from entities outside the province (e.g., the police). Respondents from local administration bodies emphasised that, despite these new challenges, the residents and their needs had remained their priority, and similar declarations were made by state services.

At the same time, the interviewees representing cultural institutions pointed out that, by becoming involved in helping refugees, they had to acquire new competencies (the Ukrainian language) or adapt their infrastructure to women with little children. Sometimes these cultural institutions became nurseries. A similar adaptation of institutional premises to the emerging needs was mentioned by officials at different levels. For instance, rooms for mothers with children were established at PESEL (personal identification number) issue points.

A significant change in the Lublin cultural landscape was the diversification of the cultural services addressed to the Ukrainian community, available in the Ukrainian language. This affected the functioning of the Ukrainian national minority organisation that, prior to 2022, had not only tried to work for the preservation of the national and cultural identity by the Ukrainian citizens representing the national minority, but also addressed their cultural services to Ukrainian migrants. The latter function was largely taken over by the city, which meant that the minority organisation had to change its operational model in the new reality.

TURNING POINTS

“ I think that the culminating point was when they were travelling on foot, and such individuals arrived here, and we had to do everything for them. The first thing to do was to calm them down and provide a quiet place, we needed to provide food and help mothers with children. Unfortunately, most of them were mothers with children then. To help those children, to help their mothers. ([54_REL_WW_M_MIASTO](#))

The conversations with the respondents revealed various moments reflecting changes in the scale of engagement and the needs that had to be met. The situation that took place right after 24 February was described as a time when most of the refugees came to Poland by car. There was a huge shift after the borders were opened and travellers were allowed to cross the border on foot. At this point complete chaos broke out at border crossings, and it turned out that they had not been prepared for such an emergency, and those circumstances triggered social activities for aid with a view to meeting essential needs. This was followed by the second wave of refugee influx which was more problematic, because it entailed migrants from Eastern Ukraine, who were more exhausted and traumatised, were in a worse financial situation and had a more serious language barrier.

The most challenging stage lasted until the end of April, when the situation began stabilising and various forms of coordination emerged, also at the system level. It was preceded by the adoption of the Special Act on Aid to Ukrainian Citizens (12 March), although no significant changes were noted in aid activities right after its entry into force, according to the respondents.

A vital moment, which marked the beginning of coordinated forms of the activities, was the engagement of major organisations in aid, including international ones, and the launch of financial support from the state budget. In time, the activities assumed a more well-organised form and were supported by various entities.

Starting from May, the activities began redirecting to integration and support in refugees' adaptation to Polish conditions. The material support from Polish state authorities resulted in the gradual limitation of charity activities, such as fund-raising or donation campaigns. The changing needs and the decrease in the number of incoming refugees resulted in the fact that certain activities were being phased out in a natural way.

Such activities were no longer spontaneous in the integration phase, becoming more systemic and institutionalised. Integration programmes, training courses and language courses were being implemented. Attempts were also made to ensure support in employment and childcare, by providing places in pre-schools and admitting children to schools. Scholarship support was offered to artistically gifted young people, and their free time was organised,

e.g., by activating them in the sphere of cultural activities, which also included adults. Attempts were made to engage refugees in religious practices.

Special places were established to serve integration purposes, such as common rooms, and works began on the creation of the Baobab Space in Lublin. The refugees also received welfare support, arranged by municipal and commune Social Welfare Centres. A lot of entities provided support consisting in the broadly understood refugee self-reliance. They helped refugees find a job, arrange formal matters, or find a place to stay. The aid was becoming institutionalised, which means that the most important tasks were taken over by relevant institutions, specialising in a given field.

As the research has shown, the entities that were the fastest ones to respond most of all included public administration institutions, non-governmental organisations, church institutions and state services, in particular those in borderland areas and in towns where the first reception centres were organised. A considerable degree of engagement was also displayed by entities from the central part of the province since the very beginning. These entities were the first ones to examine the situation and refugees' needs and disseminated information about them.

The direct monitoring of the situation was a very important signal to act, and a source of knowledge of the actions that needed to be taken. The first thing to do was to arrange the first collection points where clothes and food were distributed. In time, the form of aid would change, and it was adapted to better identified needs, e.g. hygiene products and medical products, especially for children were donated, while at the same time clothing donations were limited. The entities that were the fastest to respond were often well acquainted with the situation in Ukraine, for example, through the contact they had established, due to their experience in aid, which allowed a fast response.

The entities which got engaged a bit later, but still in the first week of the crisis, continued to provide aid in the sphere of the most pressing needs, e.g., provision of food, but also began actions concerning the search for accommodation, including in private houses. The first lists of contact details of persons willing to host refugees in their houses, and Facebook groups and pages, were maintained. A lot of people came directly on site and offered their help in the form of accommodation, and spontaneously organised aid transport to key locations.

In response to the chaos related to the substantial influx of individuals, administration units created information points and posted information on their websites. Special helplines were also launched. The situation required an information flow system, and practically all social media were used for the purpose. The attempts to avert the chaos also entailed the creation of lists of refugee needs which were analysed on an ongoing basis at border crossings and in reception centres.

A fast large-scale response resulted in a considerable inflow of aid from Poland and abroad. Lorries filled with donations were arriving, that is why it was necessary to plan the logistics

since the very beginning, to find appropriate places to store products, and to adopt solutions aimed at distributing them to the people in need, including the delivery of the goods to Ukraine.

Private individuals, not associated with any institutions, responded to the crisis very fast. Institutional decisions and solutions were developed at a later stage, which resulted from organisational and procedural implications. NGOs were quicker to act than administration, but informal initiatives left everyone behind in terms of the response time.

KNOWLEDGE OF SYSTEM OPERATIONS

“ Our knowledge was not much more extensive than, so to speak, general or public knowledge transmitted through the mass media. I mean that we roughly knew how many people there were in Lviv, because it is the closest city. But... anyway, we surely expected an increased influx in the winter. Since November, since December. And it was a surprise to everyone that nothing like that happened. We would wait and see what happens next. If, so to speak, there is an offensive ... if the situation with the refugee influx recurs. So far, it is a surprise to everyone that the traffic is, well, as it is. (02_AC_WW_M_WOJEWÓDZTWO)

The sudden nature of the process in question was its vital element. Although Russian aggression had been expected for some time, the timing, and the scale of the crisis it caused was not anticipated in full. The knowledge of the topic was very general, and was based on predictions, i.a., by the representatives of Ukrainian authorities and media releases. A lot of public administration representatives taking part in the interviews declared, however, that they had had operational knowledge in advance (from state authorities) and the time to initiate certain preparatory measures. They were put in place by the Province Governor's Office in Lublin. Preparations began after the Russian army began gathering at the Ukrainian border under the pretence of military exercises. Meetings/video conferences were organised (with the representatives of local governments, some NGOs and state services), as part of which information on operating schemes was provided and disseminated, and emergency response procedures were discussed at various levels of public administration, and the first reception centres were prepared - they were ready two days before the invasion. The preparations proved to be insufficient due to the scale of the process which shocked everyone.

In the opinion of a large number of respondents, the initial stage of the crisis was a complete chaos and spontaneous bottom-up organisation of aid activities, featuring entities without any experience or knowledge of actions in emergency situations, in particular this specific crisis. Therefore, the uncertainty and insufficient information on what actions should be taken posed a major problem in the first phase.

The conducted research shows that communication mechanisms, necessary for cooperation in the scope and at the pace adequate to the abruptness and scale of the crisis, emerged gradually and in two main dimensions. Based on the collected data, the following processes related to the acquisition and flow of information can be identified: 1) two-way flow of information based on the existing, formalised institutional and organisational structures, such as state and local-government administration at various levels, religious institutions, non-governmental sector organisations, and business, 2) bottom-up and spontaneous development of cooperation networks and flat communication.

In the first of the dimensions, communication activities were performed based on the existing structures of relations, such as various levels of state administration, uniformed services, supra-local non-governmental organisations and enterprises with branches in several locations. Such type of communication was of a two-way nature, which is best evidenced in public administration. Although, as already mentioned, the first guidelines were provided on a top-down basis, i.e., through the Province Governor's Office, during the crisis the authorities acquired knowledge on the current situation and needs from various entities operating in areas that were closest to border crossings and reception centres. These communication tasks were performed by way of regular video conferences organised by the Province Governor's Office in Lublin as part of the emergency response team, composed of the representatives of many entities, such as state services, public administration, non-governmental organisations, and business.

It was also stated that the solutions that were adopted at the central level were directly modelled on the ones that spontaneously emerged as a result of self-organisation of activities and coordination methods, which shows that there was a certain type of feedback based on the two-way information flow. Entities maintaining contacts with central level administration (province and national levels) constituted another source of information for other entities directly engaged in aid activities and the ones wishing to participate in such efforts. They provided information about top-down solutions, procedures, and the operations of the comprehensive aid management system that was being developed. This allowed various entities to get some insight into the way support may be granted for undertaking measures and where it may be obtained.

A similar way of two-way communication and alignment of activities may be noted in the event of church institutions, non-governmental organisations and business (e.g. Caritas, Biedronka Foundation, etc.). Contact networks based on institutional structures and links also facilitated information flows between the Polish and Ukrainian partners. International organisations, partner cities and institutions, church structures and international enterprises used the existing communication channels to identify most pressing needs and monitor the current situation.

Decentralised cooperation and information-exchange networks, based on informal contacts between persons who know each other in person, were shaping concurrently to the aforementioned processes. In response to the rather general media reports, a lot of individuals came to border crossing and refugee arrival locations, such as railway and bus stations, reception centres, etc., and used their own contacts by phone, social media or online messaging apps. The direct presence and the observation of the circumstances constituted a basic source of knowledge of the incomers' problems and needs.

Social media groups and messaging apps, such as WhatsApp, Messenger, etc. played a very important role in informal communication which allowed its participants to get the general knowledge of the situation and overcome the chaos. They also facilitated fast information flow between individuals who were present in places where Ukrainian refugees were arriving and a wider group of people who wished to engage in aid, and thanks to this they knew what kind of aid was the most requires at a given moment. Direct communication also allowed prompt mobilisation of institutional resources. This gave rise to the coordinated actions of entities that operate in different sectors on a daily basis. The most prominent example of this is the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine, established several hours after the invasion. It brings together representatives of public-administration institutions, non-governmental organisations, such institutions as the Regional Bar Association or the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association. The fast launch of the Committee was made possible through the contacts between individuals who knew each other directly and used their private phone numbers, which enabled them to by-pass the formal communication procedures. The Committee became one of the first and major information hubs, allowing the coordination of activities at a wider scale. At the same time, multiple communication nodes were emerging, where a key role was played by entities that are operating in the spheres related to welfare and humanitarian support on a daily basis, as a lot of individuals seeking support would turn there. Some of them focused their activities on information support addressed to other actors engaged in aid. These types of activities were also taken by persons centred around informal initiatives.

Informal communication channels also constituted a source of information on the situation on the Ukrainian side of the border. Direct acquaintance with individuals having Ukrainian background, who, for instance, had come to Poland before and returned to Ukraine, or individuals staying in Ukraine, allowed the entities to gain knowledge of the needs and to provide corresponding aid. Direct contact also constituted a reliable source of information and allowed the verification of the reports being published in various places.

Nonetheless, it should be stressed that the occurrence of the communication nodes, both the formal and the bottom-up communication, would not always result in consolidation and the emergence of a single information-flow system. Although both dimensions were enhancing and complementing each other, a lot of entities and the initiatives that were launched within their structures remained at the level of informal self-organisation and did not engage in system activities at a larger scale.

The interviewees also pointed to areas of ignorance and uncertainty. The multitude of activities and their dispersion made it impossible to gain full knowledge of all engaged entities and the activities they were performing, and for that reason the attempts to centralise and consolidate information flow were not always successful, and a lot of persons would not receive support in the form of operational guidelines.

A serious obstacle, in particular in the first phase of the crisis, was posed by limited access to knowledge of operational procedures. A lot of entities declared that they had acted in the circumstances of great uncertainty and made decisions not knowing whether their activities were compliant with, i.a., safety regulations or other laws. The uncertainty was also related to the fact whether the aid reached the place it should have been sent to, in particular in the event of transporting it to individuals staying on the territory of Ukraine.

A lot of entities did not know where to turn to engage in aid or where they can provide financial or material support. In time, as a result of the emergence of the communication structures described above, the availability of knowledge, both of the evolving needs and the operation of the system as a whole, was improving, although not all conclusions would turn out to be accurate.

Great uncertainty was accompanying aid activities since the very beginning, both in respect of the way of engaging in aid, and of how the situation would unfold. The available information and predictions often turned out to be inapt.

ACTIVITIES IN CITIES AND ACTIVITIES IN RURAL AREAS/ ACTIVITIES IN THE CENTRE AND IN THE PERIPHERIES

“ Things could be better (...) At the moment there is a point like the one in Globus in Lublin, but, for example, such organisations could be established a bit closer to the border (...). I think that a certain share of the incomers has stayed here. For example, based on what I've heard from younger children (I have siblings myself), new students joined their classes. I believe that it is still difficult for them to find their way around here, nearly after a year. It is not an easy thing to do for them. So, I think that such points should be closer to the border and in cities that, so to speak, had the greatest share in aid efforts. (31_NF_MI_P_MIASTO)

The analysis of the aid activities being a response the refugee crisis showed differences between rural and urban areas, and a division in respect of the central or peripheral role of a given centre in the region. Borderland areas, in particular rural ones, were only places where the refugees would transfer, and were not taken into account in their survival strategies as a place where they could find permanent residence.

The main obstacle preventing their settlement in borderland areas was their peripheral position in relation to large urban centres, and a limited access to the labour market and services. In addition, the proximity of the border with Belarus would not encourage them to stay. In a long-term perspective, such conditions would significantly complicate the refugees' survival strategies.

The peripheral location and the related transport exclusion also generated problems and additional challenges for entities providing aid to refugees. They mainly concerned the possibility to meet the needs of migrating individuals, if a trip to a bigger town or city was needed to arrange various matters.

Information exchange and access to the knowledge of the necessary activities via the social media was a specific feature of rural areas. NGOs and informal leaders often noted that they needed to search for information about the formal matters related to refugees' stay in Poland themselves. Messages from public administration bodies or other state institutions were scarce and were not disseminated effectively.

From the perspective of NGOs and informal initiatives, peripheral areas lacked humanitarian activities that were the domain of international charity organisations providing aid to refugees, or such humanitarian aid was negligible. The differences in the scope and the methods of aid between the Province capital and the peripheries were also demonstrable.

In the peripheries, the demand for aid would not be distributed evenly, making smaller communities face challenges that would require extraordinary mobilisation from them. Based on the analysis of the interviews, the differences between the size and type of resources available in rural areas were revealed, in particular in respect of human resources. For small business entities, especially from rural areas, it was often the first experience in providing humanitarian aid.

In some aspects, rural areas displayed a certain specificity as to the aid activities performed by engaged entities:

- religious entities providing spiritual and psychological support, often as the only local entity among those providing aid in a given area;
- NGOs (in particular Country Women's Associations/*Koła Gospodyń Wiejskich* and Voluntary Fire Service/*Ochotnicza Straż Pożarna* units), acting through local leaders, both the official and informal ones, were treated as material social and intellectual capital resources with a high degree of flexibility and the ability to respond fast to the emerging needs.

Rural areas also demonstrated their specific nature in the sphere of coordinating aid activities. Commune offices were most often responsible for the synergy of activities, and local social capital networks were the dominant source of legitimising the activities. The majority of financial resources allocated for aid activities came from various types of foundations and donations. They played a major function in rural areas located within a considerable distance from the Poland-Ukraine border. These resources accounted for a vital financing source for

informal initiatives and the initiatives that were launched by NGOs and supported the operations of local-government units.

The most notable differences in the way the refugee crisis was handled, in relation to other areas of the Province, could be observed in Lublin. It is a consequence of Lublin's status as the capital of the region, and as the seat of two levels of authorities: local-government and provincial bodies. The rank of the city makes it a perfect location for numerous non-governmental organisations of diverse operational profiles. These factors contribute to the economic and social capital and affect the flow of initiative networking processes. In the context of the refugee crisis, this affected the scope of aid activities and their coordination methods. A unique phenomenon, not only at the regional but also at the national scale, was the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine, already mentioned in this study, a grass-roots social movement supporting the public aid system and a joint initiative of the city authorities and Lublin-based non-governmental organisations. In the peak moment of the crisis, 270 volunteers were engaged in aid activities. Moreover, the activities of the Committee were supported by volunteer members of non-governmental organisations participating in the works of the Committee, several dozen employees of the Lublin City Office, and representatives of cultural institutions from Lublin, delegated by the Mayor of Lublin. The operations of LSKPU were highly valued by all the respondents, representing various types of the entities based in Lublin. Although the overall assessment of aid activities and of their coordination was high, our interviewees noted certain problems which were not experienced in rural areas. In the Province capital, for instance, there were instances of refugees' misusing aid, which resulted from the scale of the support and the inability to verify its addressees in detail.

The functioning of several categories of entities providing aid to refugees in the city space sometimes gave rise to certain tensions. They were related to duplicating activities, and different approaches to the role that individual actors should play. Clashes of interests and political conflicts have revealed in the metropolis more clearly than in other areas.

OTHER ASPECTS OF ORGANISING AID AND ACTIVITIES IN AN EMERGENCY

“ (...) I can give an example of a man who was perhaps eighty, or eighty-one years old, he was disabled, his legs had been deformed when he was a child during the war, and so on; a health problem occurred, and we were wondering what to do. We went to hospital, and I practically spent a whole day there, because I brought him there, and it took a whole day before they performed some tests, then the results, and then the medical consultation, so I returned here at about eleven at night. (23_REL_MI_M_MIASTO)

The types of the aid beneficiaries that have been identified in the research are an interesting aspect of aid activities. The prominent groups include:

- **women and children**

Women with children accounted for the most numerous group of aid beneficiaries, and support was most often dedicated to them. A vast majority of entities, notwithstanding their categories, declared that their actions had been aligned to the needs of children and their mothers. The most comprehensive aid proposal was addressed to women and children: from in-kind support and security to the educational, leisure-activity, and integration proposal. Women and children are the face of refugees from Ukraine, not only in the Lubelskie Province but also across the entire country.

- **ill persons, persons with physical and intellectual disabilities, and the elderly**

Persons with physical and intellectual disabilities accounted for a small yet a demanding group of aid beneficiaries. It may come as a surprise that in addition to specialised health care establishments from the state and public sector, some non-governmental organisations and informal initiatives specialised in aid provided to this category of beneficiaries, using their comprehensive contact networks in Poland and abroad among the circles of medical professionals and private sponsors.

Persons with medical conditions and the elderly could also count on specialist bespoke aid, often better than one they would be able to receive in Ukraine, thanks to the engagement of Polish and western medical establishments and sponsors.

- **persons who are not Ukrainian nationals**

The category of refugees from Ukraine with a nationality other than Ukrainian was occasionally mentioned in the interviews. At the national scale, the group was seen as a problematic one (racist sentiment, language barrier). In our survey, there was a mention about Spanish-speaking refugees from South America. They received aid from a resident of the region with a South American background at the request of the diplomatic posts of the refugees' home countries. This situation might prove that there is no system-wide strategy of aid to this group of refugees.

- **“everybody”**

Most entities engaged in aid activities declared that they addressed their support to everyone in need, notwithstanding their personal or cultural features. There were instances where aid was initially offered to specified groups of beneficiaries (religion or nationality criteria), but in the face of the scale of the crisis, a given entity decided to help everyone.

- **ethnic minorities (Roma)**

The presence of ethnic minorities among the refugees was noted at the LSKPU where a coordinator of aid addressed to Ukrainian Roma was appointed. The negative stereotypes about Roma among the aid providers could be the reason behind providing tailored aid to the Roma.

■ other groups

A separate group of aid beneficiaries included persons returning to Ukraine even in the early months of the war. The interviewees were astonished by the attachment to land and belongings of people returning to Ukraine, even in the face of a threat to their lives.

Another interesting aspect concerned the beneficiaries' attitudes towards aid. In the course of the research, three main categories of aid beneficiaries were identified. This distinction is all the more so important if we take into account the actual impact of the refugee image on aid providers' motivation.

- **grateful ones:** a vast majority of the respondents stressed the gratitude for the aid granted, at times taking the form of surprise at the scale of aid that the Ukrainians were given in Poland; some of the refugees even doubted whether they would be so generous and selfless in a reverse situation
- **ungrateful ones:** instances of ungrateful refugees were noted, but they are outnumbered by the grateful ones
- **“professional aid beneficiaries” (misusing aid):** some of the interviewees mentioned the presence of refugees misusing aid and taking unjust advantage of the humanitarian aid system, and demanding beneficiaries
- **other attitudes:** alongside the negative approach, responsible attitudes of less affluent refugees were noted, as they tried not to use the aid excessively, so that others could benefit from it as well in an emergency situation

CONFLICTS AND PROBLEMATIC SITUATIONS

“ (...) we wanted to keep them here until the end of May, and we cancelled two big events; we managed to reschedule one of them, but we had to cancel the first communion receptions we have planned for May, and this affected us in the sense that we had opinions on the Internet that we shouldn't have done that ... that Poles should be most important, right? [\(16_BS_WI_P_INNE\)](#)”

Several threads emerged from our interviews with the respondents in relation to problems the aid actors most often struggled with. These include:

■ conflicts of interest

As the time passed, some of the volunteers began perceiving refugees as a threat and competition on the labour market and in terms of benefits. Such views can be interpreted as a sign of fatigue and frustration with the prolonged refugee crisis, no end of was in sight, and the deteriorating economic situation.

One of the areas where such types of conflict was demonstrable was school and the inclusion of refugee children in the general education system. This was sometimes related to the concerns of parents that working with refugees will “divert” teachers from their existing obligations towards pupils. The conflicts related to the growing number of children and potential excessive strain on teachers were partly mitigated by the employment of Ukrainian assistants at schools.

Another facet of the same phenomenon was the example of Poles’ dissatisfaction with the fact of cancelling parties at wedding houses due to the use of the premises to cater for the needs of the refugees.

Another conflict axis concerned the relationships between various categories of aiding entities. The tensions between the actions of central authorities and local governments may serve as a good example here. Some of the respondents noted that avoiding contacts and joint initiatives was seen as a solution for a conflict between local governments and the City Office. The avoidance of shared initiatives also seems to be a strategy for some informal initiatives and formalised campaigns, and cooperation between local-government administrations, NGOs, and central administration. All the entities tried to engage in different aid spheres.

The respondents also noted conflicts of interest in persistent sanitary inspections and procedural misunderstandings between the District Governor’s Office and business representatives. Conflicts of interest may also be related to financial issues. According to one of the respondents, a private entity managing one of the railway stations wanted to remove a reception centre from the area under its administration, as it had a negative impact on its profits and generated inconvenience entailing increased costs of toilet cleaning services, unavailability of lavatories for Polish passengers, crowds, etc.

■ **competence conflicts**

Other problems that our interviewees mentioned included insufficient competencies of some aid providers delegated to work with refugees, xenophobic attitudes, no sensitivity to cultural differences and traumatic experience of aid beneficiaries.

■ **procedural limitations**

As regards the initial phase of the war, the respondents complained about insufficient knowledge of procedures, organisational chaos, which was solved at a later stage. One of the problems was a limitation concerning the local governments’ obligation to spend public funds only on selected products, when other expenditures were crucial. The representatives of local-government administration complained about limited possibilities to cover the costs of storage spaces used for the aid to refugees from government resources.

■ **mental exhaustion and the sense of uncertainty among aid providers**

Nearly all entities declared mental exhaustion due to long-term engagement in aid activities. The sense of uncertainty and concerns also accompanied persons who hosted refugees in their houses. Women with a small number of children were invited to stay more willingly.

Some respondents indicated fatigue with the presence of strangers in their space and difficulties fitting in.

■ **logistic problems**

As regards this time of obstacles, the respondents described various situations:

- trade in cars by Ukrainian traders at a mass scale (it jammed the border, delayed transports with humanitarian aid and discouraged aid providers from Western Europe)
- unsorted gifts, generating an immense workload (food best-before dates, clothing sizes, a wide range of items from one donor)
- excessive amounts of items and food products that were not in demand at a given point in time and their waste, while at the same time there were deficits of necessary products
- presence of foreign volunteers without language skills (too engaging for the hosting party)
- problems with observing sanitary rules in group accommodation facilities (the pandemic context)
- refugees that were sent to rural areas in a certain distance from cities complained about limited possibilities to engage in volunteer work for Ukraine in aid points due to the limited access to public transport services
- insufficient workforce to reload lorries with aid late at night

■ **financial problems**

The representatives of various categories of entities declared financial problems after using own funds and stocks in the first phase of aid, and this was true for individual volunteers, non-governmental organisations, and local governments alike. Businesses from the borderland area also reported financial difficulties due to limited trade activities with Ukrainian entities. Considerable sums were allocated for fuel intended for transport to Ukraine. Polish entrepreneurs incurred substantial costs by refuelling Ukrainian cars in Poland due to deficits on the Ukrainian side.

Difficulties were also reported by non-governmental organisations which could not continue their aid activities in the face of the lack of funds. In turn, some of the organisations used international supports (INGOs, donors). The aid activities that were pursued by the City of Lublin further aggravated its challenging financial situation.

■ **administrative problems**

Some interviewees noted procedural overload, changes to legal regulations and excessive quantity of required documents, hindering aid activities. The respondents representing informal initiatives stressed the inability to use co-financing as part of the government programme (40+) for hosting refugees by entities that invited them to stay for a short time as part of transit operations.

■ **lack of (sufficient) skills/know-how**

The shifting of responsibility for persons with serious health conditions was a phenomenon that generated certain problems. Non-specialist entities often lacked the competencies to provide appropriate support to them. New volunteers also lacked sufficient skills, which could result in the paralysis/restriction of a given entity's performance.

■ **beneficiaries misusing aid**

Some entities reported instances of aid misuse on the part of beneficiaries and their demanding attitude which negatively affected motivation among the aid providers. Some Ukrainian volunteers also noted that, and at times they stated that they had tried to curb such conduct being concerned about the image of their compatriots. Some entities noted the need to verify the authenticity of the needs and save resources. The aid providers were also irritated by high demands and complaints about the quality of products which were given away to refugees as part of aid activities.

■ **competition with other entities**

One of the interviewees described a case when an employee of a local-government institution was reluctant to cooperate with a minority religious group, very engaged in aid, and disseminated unofficial, groundless, and stigmatising accusations/suspicions about child trafficking. This resulted in the lack of any cooperation with municipal authorities due to the loss of trust. Active aid efforts and the effectiveness on the part of one of minority religious communities was seen as competition by local-government administration according to the representative of this community.

■ **other reported issues**

- abuses related to, i.a., the operations of criminal organisations on the Ukrainian side, taking over aid transport, and theft of products intended for refugees from reception centres by local residents
- the wealth of persons fleeing Ukraine was also problematic to some of the aid providers in Poland - this is how the stereotype of a poor refugee came to light (and the stereotype of a less affluent Ukrainian national, being an obstacle to aid)
- different aid management mechanisms and attitudes to procedures: NGOs and some respondents representing local governments criticised the central administration for tardiness and inflexibility; in turn, the same critical views were expressed by the representatives of informal initiatives about the operations of, e.g., LSKPU
- ideological and political leaning of leaders heading individual entities, which translated into their willingness to cooperate with other entities

SUCCESS FACTORS

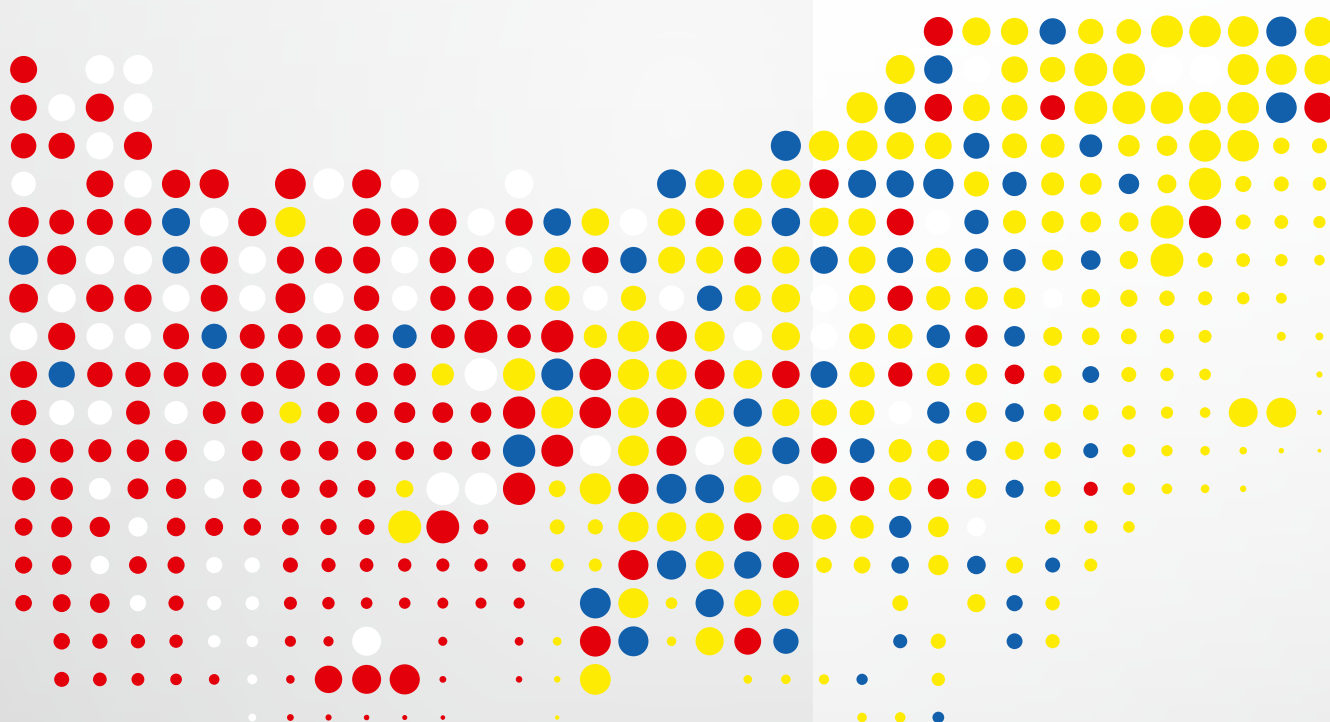
“ *The Committee played a vital part here, together with the fact that several organisations were brought together, and the authorities, at least some of their departments, joined it. It worked and other cities did not come up with such an idea, and that is why they struggled somehow...* ([20_REL_MI_M_MIASTO](#))

Based on the collected materials, we managed to identify the following success factors (assuming that the aid activities turned out to be effective, and this could be regarded as success):

- aid providers' personal traits
- networks, acquaintances
- solidarity, aid spirit, grass-roots initiatives
- volunteer support
- mutual trust
- the will to aid among the refugees themselves and, in a broader sense, among the Ukrainian diaspora
- collaboration between various entities (of different nature), and cooperation within a single entity
- hard skills - e.g. language skills
- the possibility to use various resources, e.g. time
- satisfaction and the sense of agency
- response time and pace
- distribution of competences
- a certain degree of freedom in following procedures / omitting procedures / no procedures - acting without any constraints

PART 3

Overall assessment of the regional system of assistance



ASSESSMENT OF CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES

“ This work may not bring tangible outcomes since it is not intended to benefit a particular person or refugee. Nonetheless, the work that is done here, the allocation of funds, the collection and passing of information – this is the kind of effort that needs to be appreciated. This is not the sort of work that NGOs would do, because they were operating out there in the cold and freezing temperature, right? But office staff were out there, too, at the reception points, working 24/7. Not to mention that, at some point, there was a shortage of staff both from the governor’s office and from the local government. (05_AC_M_WW_WOJEWÓDZTWO)

The assessments of central administration activities vary. Entities operating outside the public administration domain use a narrative that is consistent with the message prevailing in Poland, i.e., that “the government did nothing”. At the provincial (voivodeship) level, the emphasis is often on the delayed government response understood as the response of the province governor’s services. The absence of “the government” is also highlighted in the narratives concerning the border itself, where there was extraordinary chaos and incoordination in the early days of the invasion, and where coordination and top-down decisions were most needed.

Nonetheless, some favourable opinions regarding the state’s actions were expressed by the respondents from outside the public administration domain.

Many interviewees emphasised that the initial chaos eventually became manageable through effective solutions developed over time.

Conversely, representatives of central administration and local authorities made an altogether different assessment of central government administration’s involvement in the region. In their opinion, they used their best endeavours to respond commensurately and effectively, “inventing solutions as they went along”. An interviewee representing central administration stressed that the whole public administration – rather than central authorities only – was responsible (in accordance with the Act on Crisis Management of 26 April 2007, which was in force at that time, Journal of Laws 2007 No. 89 item 590). It is worth highlighting that the level of knowledge about the distribution of competences and responsibilities, and individual coordination roles assigned to public administration bodies, vary greatly not only among public administration respondents, but also among representatives of other types of actors.

Preparedness was another topic raised in the interviews. According to representatives of central administration in the region, preparations were carried out in an accurate and timely manner, sometimes even ahead of time. For instance, the first reception points were ready (i.e., they had undergone all the required security and safety inspections) a few days before the invasion.

Such preparations, however, are two-dimensional. The first dimension relates to the logistic and operational aspects mentioned by provincial authorities (arranging and securing the first reception points envisaged in the plans). This also included communicating and cooperating with the local-government authorities in the areas where these points had been established (some respondents argued, however, that putting refugees into schools or gyms was a short-sighted measure and that there were no well-thought-out systemic solutions to this challenge). The second dimension is broader, as it involves the competence of those in charge of organising and providing aid. In this context, respondents noted a lack of preparation in the peripheral areas in terms of educating local-government bodies on the different aspects of working with migrants/refugees, the nature of such work, and the tools used to facilitate it. Representatives of social and private actors further pointed to a lack of pre-established and well-rehearsed procedures.

Central administration respondents had very favourable views of state services' performance, including the State Fire Service, the Police, the Border Guard, and the Territorial Defence Forces. In fact, their work was assessed positively across all interviewed groups; in terms of self-assessment, respondents from these services also had favourable opinions. However, the Fire Service respondents, for example, additionally emphasised the scale of challenges, and the fact that the Fire Service had previously focused on completely different types of tasks. They also highlighted the role of non-formal contact networks which. These, along with the procedures, facilitated the initial response.

There are some interesting points to be raised about the involvement of specific central administration representatives (province governor's representatives). When describing the degree of their engagement (daily commuting to the reception points, performing their duties day and night, being forced to face completely new challenges), some officials stressed that they felt invisible in the aid system. They felt operating in the background, "outside Facebook and posters", as the effort they put into administrative decision-making and procedures was hardly ever noticed. Here, it is important to reiterate one point: while the work of central administration "as a whole" was seen negatively, individual efforts were seen in a positive light. Our interviewees, representing different categories of entities, mentioned that they could establish good working relationships with individual officials. The officials themselves spoke with much appreciation about the Lublin Province Governor's coordination and motivation skills, as well as his determination to act. Where cooperation was generally viewed (e.g., by volunteers, organisations operating in a given location, etc.) as challenging, the office reacted by trying to change the composition of the team involved (e.g., the situation at the central bus station in Lublin). The officials involved in aid activities were not selected at random - the first to be involved were employees of the Crisis Management Department, followed by people with substantial organisational experience and managerial skills (most of whom did not specialise in emergency response). Overall, about two hundred Lublin Provincial Office employees were involved in the aid activities.

However, social organisations blamed representatives of central authorities for their lack of foresight already at the planning stage. This logistic aspect of the aid - related purely to the reception process - was not complemented by any joint plans to secure the needs of refugees that were about to emerge, as the local social organisations had predicted.

Another critical issue was the sluggishness of the authorities as they struggled to operate within procedural constraints.

Other negative aspects that the respondents mentioned in relation to their cooperation with central authorities included difficulties faced by some local-government bodies in the financial settlement of their measures to support refugees (unclear settlement criteria) and apprehension about following government instructions due to refinancing uncertainty.

Some interviewees also noted that refugees of non-Ukrainian origin were not treated equally as Ukrainians. As reported by a respondent from an informal initiative, state services would bring people with disabilities, cancer patients or other vulnerable people who required specialised support to their aid hub. The cooperation was eventually discontinued.

ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL-GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES

“ Local-government bodies had to bear the brunt of work. But they handled the tasks well. Imagine the state did not have local-government authorities at its disposal as, in fact, these were not duties of the local-government administration. That's how things are.

(34_AS_G_MI_POWIAT)

The scale of involvement of individual local-government bodies at the provincial level varied. Special measures were undertaken by those local-government bodies in particular that were involved in setting up reception points in their area, and also by those that dealt with establishing shelter and accommodation facilities, information points and support hubs. Not all towns and cities were involved to the same extent (also compared to other provinces), and these were their autonomous decisions. It is worth noting that the numbers of people in need varied considerably by location.

Aid centres established by local-government bodies played a special role in small localities where commune offices usually constituted local command centres. In these places, officials automatically became major coordinators of aid activities, often without any extra remuneration for these new duties. The assessment of local-government actions was generally positive and frequently contrasted with those by central-government authorities, the latter being considered as less efficient and slow.

One local-government administration representative emphasised that the local authorities were well-prepared for this type of effort due to crisis management plans being in place. In contrast, an NGO respondent remarked that it was not always local-government bodies that came up with local aid initiatives. Sometimes local-government bodies joined existing bottom-up aid campaigns instead of imitating them.

Local-government bodies established broad cooperation with different types of entities, with the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine being the most spectacular example. It was a non-formal model of cooperation between the Lublin City Hall and three NGOs operating in the city, which was then extended by other community partners. The local government's presence in that structure helped to legitimise the measures taken by social organisations, while its informal character allowed more expediency and flexibility than would be possible within public administration structures.

Schools, local cultural institutions, and other establishments managed by local-government authorities were important venues for organising or coordinating aid within the local-government structure. In small localities, they are often reservoirs of social and intellectual capital, and this capital had been immediately deployed in response to the crisis.

While assessing the activities of the lowest-level local-government bodies in a generally positive way, some of our interviewees pointed out that the aid offered at different levels, particularly at the municipality and district levels, sometimes overlapped. The Marshal's Office aid services were sometimes similar to those of the Lublin City Hall as well. However, as stressed by the respondents, this was not an issue. Some respondents complained about inefficient fund management by the local government. Representatives of one informal initiative stressed that financial arrangements should have been different (more specifically, this concerned the municipal shelter which, in their opinion, should have been a transit hub).

In one of the towns, the municipal shelter and an aid hub run by a religious organisation went into a sort of "aid competition" with each other. This approach came from the municipal shelter, a "systemically" legitimised entity, and was marked by distrust and refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of what the other organisation was doing (e.g., a suspicion of child trafficking when the religious organisation organised aid for a large group of children from the Ukrainian orphanage).

ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS ACTIVITIES

“ We took up the role of facilitators and arrangers. (35_NGO_G_MI_MIASTO)

All groups of respondents assessed the activities of NGOs very favourably. The interviewees stressed that local organisations from rural areas, both large and small, and those which had just been launched (as bottom-up initiatives), played crucial roles in the aid system, filling in

where public administration failed to act. In rural areas, their activities were particularly important due to the lower density of social organisations compared to, for instance, big cities. This ancillary and sometimes initiative-building role that NGOs played in relation to administrative structures resulted from the shortage of administrative resources to tackle all the emerging challenges.

However, as stressed by some interviewees (representatives of businesses and NGOs), this process should be the other way around - it is the state administration that should provide access to its own resources, mainly financial, to third-sector organisations in order to let them pursue their missions in an effective way.

Faced with the influx of people fleeing the war in Ukraine, NGOs first used their own resources and only later could reach for those provided by public administration (e.g., ordered by the provincial governor) or externally (provided by international organisations). Attempts to establish cooperation between the third sector and the administration sector were burdened with risk, with potential difficulties related to finding a common language on an ideological level (not only in the administration-NGOs relationship, but also between different social organisations). Given that challenge, the establishing and functioning of a cooperation platform such as the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine (comprising organisations with different profiles and backgrounds) is a remarkable success story.

According to one of the interviewees, the Committee's success (and the difficulties in communication between central administration and NGOs as well) was due to different approaches to cooperation adopted by local-government bodies, on the one hand, and central administration, on the other - whereas the former was "based on partnership" and not burdened by ideological and political preferences, the other was essentially "ideological".

However, there was some tension between various NGOs themselves, and between NGOs and informal aid initiatives. This was caused by overlapping measures, different modes and pace of action, and frictions connected with the place individual initiatives within the aid landscape.

Our interviewees also expressed critical opinions about measures taken by experienced large national aid organisations. Representatives of local initiatives blamed one such organisation for providing aid not exactly to those who had needed it on the spot (they were sent to other entities), "but not quite sure where" (no transparency). The respondents also pointed out that the local response of these organisations was belated.

ASSESSMENT OF INFORMAL INITIATIVES ACTIVITIES

“ They also announced that mattresses and things like that were needed. As we found some at home, we called them, but it turned out that they didn't need them anymore. People reacted so quickly that if you didn't call in five minutes, they had already gotten everything they needed. (53_NF_M_MI_MIASTO)

A variety of informal initiatives appeared within the aid landscape. This included providing critical aid resources (housing, food, labour), as well as support in extraordinary situations, such as neighbourly help in repairing cars damaged by bullets, providing storage space for refugees' belongings (prams, car seats, etc.), organising computer equipment for Ukrainian children, providing information on free medical advice for Ukrainians, supplying meal ingredients, etc. Foreign aid provided through informal channels also played an important role - collections organised by Poles abroad, e.g., former residents of a particular town in the Lublin region, or people of Ukrainian origin, provided directly to social organisations, informal initiatives or local authorities. Informal aid efforts also included support for those involved in providing aid. This was often volunteering effort, i.e. volunteer-to-volunteer support.

Central-government representatives recognised the invaluable role of informal initiatives, especially volunteers, as actors mitigating systemic constraints (e.g., related to staff shortages or the lack of translation and interpretation skills). At the same time, representatives of central administration talked about difficulties with coordinating the aid offered by informal initiatives, as well as about excess or overlapping aid, resulting in wasted resources.

Representatives of informal initiatives, in turn, assessed their efforts as “saving the situation” and “sustaining the system”, conducted in a professional, prompt and comprehensive manner. A similar “saving-the-system” narrative regarding informal initiatives could be noted among local-government officials. Representatives of business and religious entities also spoke in a similar way.

Another interesting issue raised by the interviewees concerns the expenses incurred by those representing informal initiatives - whether as volunteers doing hands-on work or supporters of various fund-raising actions aimed at providing ongoing supplies to aid points. Some interviewed respondents even mentioned “going into debt” to keep the supplies going.

It is worth mentioning the informal activities by representatives of specific institutions who acted in a private capacity.

It merits recognition that volunteers were often employees of the administration sector or state-owned companies. These individuals engaged in aid activities anonymously and outside their working hours.

ASSESSMENT OF THE BUSINESS SECTOR'S INVOLVEMENT

“ You'd need some document, letter or permission. You'd have to wait for the papers while there were people out there, freezing and hungry. So, some local businesses decided to get involved. Their owners and the locals knew each other well. (48_NF_P_MI_INNE)

The involvement of businesses took various forms – from financial support to materials, logistics or personal support. Local business circles were involved, including large companies (such as Stokrotka or Cisowianka), but mostly medium-sized and smaller ones. Local businesses supplied the necessities, e.g., bread, water, etc., responding to announcements e.g. on social networking sites, or to direct requests (also in parishes), as well as inquiring about the actual needs and offering goods or services themselves.

Interviewees frequently mentioned institutional constraints related to how different entities operate. For instance, businesses can respond quickly, but may not use donations. As a result, other actors (e.g., foundations) must become involved, and, conversely, they need businesses to organise some standard services, such as transport.

The assessment of business activities was very positive, especially outside large urban centres and in the border areas, where the number of institutional actors involved was smaller. Privately owned local businesses, with their quick reaction times and relatively unconstrained operational methods, filled this gap, offering support that was mostly related to their specific industry. Financial support from businesses often took the form of earmarked subsidies, as well as vouchers and gift cards.

Attention should also be drawn to the involvement of businesses in the provision of direct support for informal initiatives that were in no way institutionally anchored, as well as to the emergence of initiatives bringing together the entire local business circle to provide sectoral support to the helpers themselves, which included providing them with meals. Some businesses also initiated aid themselves. Only one respondent pointed to fraud on the part of the business circle, claiming that it sought to make money from the provision of aid.

For smaller businesses, the involvement in aid activities sometimes led to incurring exorbitant costs that no one would have initially foreseen. Some businesses located in the border area experienced the negative consequences of the economic downturn, which had sometimes been evident since the pandemic and then intensified due to reduced cross-border trade during the war. Some companies concentrated on aid activities so intensely that they practically abandoned their usual operations, even if this entailed losing customers and, in consequence, incurring losses.

ASSESSMENT OF RELIGIOUS ENTITIES ACTIVITIES

“ One can view the parish not only as a community but also as an institution. And the parish, as an institution, was left out of all this. (...) but there was no information from the curial side that, say, there was any agreement between the bishop and the province governor.

(59_REL_G_WI_GMINA)

Churches and religious communities had an important role to play in the aid process in that they provided the aid directly (from food and other supplies, through accommodation, to supporting volunteers in other locations). Religious entities often cooperated with local businesses, asking for support on various occasions. Initial activities were primarily intended to help members of specific denominations, but they quickly extended to all individuals in need.

Two religious centres became, quite unexpectedly and on their own initiative, local aid hubs - the Baptist community in Chełm and the Jewish community in Lublin. The Baptists organised aid faster than the municipal structures or other local actors, and over time they formalised it, becoming part of the so-called Baptist Charity Action. In some locations, despite their diversity of religious communities, which is characteristic of border areas, only some communities (not necessarily the largest ones) took action.

The involvement of local religious structures was reflected in the activity and transfer of support from coreligionists around the world, as well as in the cooperation established with religious structures in Ukraine. What is noteworthy is the relatively - given its potential reach - poor involvement of the Catholic Church, especially in large urban centres.

Catholic parishes and churches played a greater role in small localities. At the same time, despite constituting major centres for local community integration, they sometimes felt left out of the official communication channel. In this sense, parishes were not treated as institutions that were part of the aid system. In addition, their aid activities connected, for example, with organising the arrival of refugees to the area of a given parish met, at one point, with scepticism from the local authorities, which were unsure whether they would be able to keep so many people in need within their area, especially given that the initiating party (the church) had not received any prior funding for such aid activities.

An additional, but also important, function of religious communities was to provide psychological and spiritual support, also for local inhabitants, especially in border communities strongly affected by war-related anxiety. Their task was also to arrange denomination-specific religion lessons at schools when it turned out that the young people from Ukraine were not Roman Catholics.

In the interviews, religious entities were mentioned as performing some rather unusual functions, such as becoming a residence centre for young people waiting to go to the front, the purchase and official lease of a car (under a notarial deed) by a priest to the refugees travelling farther, to Germany, and parish-based financial support for an informal initiative (donating money obtained through a parish-based fund-raising action to pay the bills in a private house providing accommodation to refugees).

Ecumenical services were organised in Lublin for representatives of the Greek Catholic, Evangelical and Roman Catholic Churches while the Orthodox Church operated separately. Some representatives of religious communities mentioned that the Orthodox Church's involvement was poor due to internal problems and divisions.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE SYSTEM - A SUMMARY

“ *If the government had told us to do it, we would not have done it. Frankly, we would not have organised ourselves so well. I don't know what your political views are, everyone has their own. But we would not have been as well organised as we were, that's for sure.*

(61_NF_WI_P_GMINA)

“ *You could say that one good thing that came out of this tragic crisis was that it led to incredible mobilisation and a revival of local solidarity. As a member of the solidarity generation, I personally felt that the situation was similar to 1980s Poland – people got together around a common goal. Of course, the goals were totally different back then. But it was amazing to see the community bond like that again. As the Mayor told me: “Look at these women. They haven't spoken to each another for four years, and now they're getting together to cook for Ukrainians”. He, too, saw the local community getting reborn with his own eyes.*

(41_AC_M_WW_WOJEWÓDZTWO)

In our study, the term *system* refers to all the actors involved in aid activities in the region, including those representing public administration (central and local-government administration of all levels), social organisations (non-governmental, international, and local ones, such as the Rural Housewives' Circles), religious and business entities, as well as a very diverse landscape of bottom-up initiatives, mostly informal (or formalised in the course of providing aid), and volunteer initiatives. Within the system defined as such, various interactions took place, the nature of which was determined by a wide array of factors, including previous experience, structural competence and external legitimacy, motivation to act, knowledge,

modes of communication, level of trust, initial and acquired resources, internal organisation, degree of flexibility, and opportunities to optimise action. None of the actors involved operated in isolation, and the intensity and scale of activities in the province caused the vast majority of entities to interact with one another (by cooperating, competing, complementing or duplicating one another's activities).

The assessment of aid activities as a collective response of the region varies by category of respondents. What is common to all their narratives is the belief that the overall effort was a success, understood as the provision of basic, effective, and efficient humanitarian aid, and the mobilisation of all possible resources and capital that constituted the hidden potential of various actors involved.

However, opinions on who exactly should be credited with the success tend to differ. The views expressed by representatives of central administration suggest that the actions taken at this level were adequate and met the objectives. Nonetheless, some of them emphasise the joint effort of various actors engaged in aid provision. This collective aspect of support was indicated much more often by representatives of other types of entities who, at the same time, spoke about the suitability and promptness of the response provided at the central level in a negative way. According to these narratives, official actions were taken at the end of the process, i.e., they followed the actions taken by ordinary people, then by NGOs, and then by local-government bodies.

The narrative that "the government did too little" or that "official solutions didn't work well" appears especially in the opinions expressed by major actors operating in border areas (parishes, local NGOs, businesses), and by informal actors. A key problem that runs through these narratives is the fact that information and communication regarding the actions taken at the top level was very limited for local actors other than local-government bodies, especially before the invasion and in its initial phase, which was often described as "chaos". One interviewee indicated the discrepancy between the official (government) message and the reality, the latter being much more complex and challenging.

The issue of recognising and giving legitimacy to the implemented measures is also significant. Some entities who acted as important local-activity centres (especially in peripheral areas) felt left out of the official message, although they also had the resources to take effective action (e.g., parishes).

At a later stage, this lack of communication also engendered a lack of knowledge about, or the difficulty in keeping up with, the consequences of centrally adopted legislative changes affecting particular aspects of aid activities. Unfamiliarity with external aid options, e.g., the extent of participation of EU structures in aid activities, was also mentioned.

The interviewees representing central structures stressed their preparedness for aid activities, noting that the reception points had been established in advance, and that they engaged in cooperation with local-government bodies. Representatives of the latter also spoke in a similar tone.

However, as stressed by an NGO representative, these actions were implemented without proper foundations, e.g., in the form of prior systemic education addressed to local-government bodies concerning issues of migration, terminology and challenges involved in these processes. These shortcomings were generally described as lack of crisis preparedness. In contrast, those who were prepared – not by the system but through efforts of their own – acted effectively and promptly. The establishment of the Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine is a good example here, with Homo Faber - an institution experienced in helping refugees in the forests on the Polish-Belarusian border - playing a key role.

Respondents also complained that, at the central (provincial) preparation stage, the issues raised by NGOs - concerning the plan for meeting the refugees' needs other than bare necessities (i.e., short-term accommodation and food) - were not addressed. These two kinds of needs were met through the operation of reception points and are assessed by central authorities as effective.

The lack of preparation was also noted in relation to those actors that, theoretically, should have been perfectly prepared, since, for instance, they represented large international organisations or structures professionally involved in humanitarian aid. According to some “non-affiliated” respondents, the solutions they proposed sometimes turned out to be out of step with the reality. One respondent also expressed an opinion that, in general, all the so-called official initiatives did not effectively tackle the challenges posed by the crisis.

Assessments concerning the system also mentioned some positive effects of the implemented measures, noting that they had moved from chaos to better coordinated and targeted actions. Many interviewees stressed the scale of the crisis that was surprising even for those entities that declared to have been prepared to respond effectively. Over time, by activating different resources and revising its approaches, the system improved its response methods. “Lessons were learnt” in many aspects.

The positive effects of the situation, mentioned by the interviewees, include in particular:

- acquiring specialised competencies which can be used in the future (for crisis response/work with migrants/humanitarian aid)
- changing how individual institutions function, e.g., the thriving of NGOs, establishing new partnerships, gaining recognition and credibility by previously marginal or narrowly specialised institutions
- changing the attitude to Ukrainians in the region (and in Poland)
- developing response plans that could be used in similar situations in the future
- integrating local communities
- identifying the potential of local communities (their knowledge, competencies, social networks, personality traits), with an important role played by individual leaders launching aid initiatives, both in public institutions and in civil society at large

DEVELOPMENT OF NEW PROCEDURES AND SOLUTIONS

“ We already have some experience and contacts. We know where to go, whom to address, where to arrange things - the logistics of it all.

(13_NGO_P_WI_GMINA)

“ Let me put it this way: we had a fire four or five days ago, in our village. An elderly man's house burned down. As a village leader, I had another clash with reality. I tried that too, because the ladies from the social welfare centre did not really know how to help this poor man. What could they do? Well, maybe someone could take him in, maybe some family, maybe this, maybe that... This made me realise that not everyone learnt their lesson and drew conclusions. I suspect people were mobilised to act when it was absolutely necessary. Now, the worst is behind us, and let's hope it will not happen again (...). This recent experience showed me that once again, we had to mobilise our contacts, we had to inquire about compensation. Someone said they knew people at the insurance company, others knew people in other important places. As for the ladies from the social welfare centre, I had to give them an earful, and they found that elderly man a place to stay for a couple of days, in the same hotel where Ukrainians are staying. We will see what happens next. So, it's not all roses. Not everyone has learnt their lesson. That's how it is. (52_NF_P_WI_WIES)

The issue of developing concrete solutions for the future seems particularly interesting. Most interviewees talked about some new ways of responding to the crisis that had been developed and that new approaches had to be tried. However, these narratives took two directions. On the one hand, some interviewees described their own experience, often gathered through trial and error or intuitive action, as the one that could form the basis for similar potential actions in the future. All types of actors, including public administration and state services, were faced with new challenges, and had to instantly tackle them. It was not uncommon for the experience gathered by actors outside the public administration domain to become benchmarks or to find direct application/replication at public institutions or head offices managing specific organisations.

The other narrative focused on indicating specific procedures that were established in case of similar emergencies in the future. However, in the latter context, different opinions were expressed as regards the developed patterns and preparations for another possible crisis. Representatives of the central government and some local-government bodies talked about preparedness and plans being in place (which also involved clarifying the general

procedures in place and adapting them to local needs). These actors were familiar with the existing procedures and arrangements for systemic response. At the same time, opinions were expressed that, should the crisis reoccur, there would be no pre-existing mechanisms, as the current ones, especially at the central level (which could promote better coordination of local aid activities), are insufficient or people have no knowledge of them - therefore, it would be unclear how to react in similar situations.

One respondent from a rural area also noticed that the procedures of how to deal with crisis situations other than the influx of refugees - also related to emergencies threatening the well-being of individuals - were fundamentally lacking. Most interviewees mentioned acting without updated knowledge and information about procedures and other matters, even after a long period of involvement, and having to constantly "struggle to get things".

Interestingly, some respondents talked about changes taking place over time, with a shift towards the public-service mainstreaming of support to Ukrainian refugees connected with fortuitous events during their stay in Poland (e.g., proceedings to obtain a disability certificate or be awarded social benefits).

The overall assessment of the aid activities in the Lubelskie Province is positive. One respondent emphasised the separate tasks and challenges faced by different types of entities, claiming that each of them faced different problems, so it cannot be said that any element of the system remained inactive.

The aid response in the region varied geographically - the scale of operations was the largest in Lublin and in other cities in the east of the Province (Chełm, Hrubieszów, Zamość), as well as in the border communes. Activities were also particularly intensive in the reception points situated in Chełm (2), Dołhobyczów, Dorohusk, Horodło, Hrubieszów (2), Lubycza Królewska, Mircze, Tomaszów Lubelski and Zamość. One unique example of a facility located away from the crisis "epicentre" was the traveller service point in Markuszów on the Warsaw-Lublin route. Actions taken in urban and rural areas had the same objective, but their implementation methods differed. In rural areas, the key role was played by local-government bodies and bottom-up/community initiatives while in urban areas, NGOs took on a large share of the work. Businesses were heavily involved in both urban and rural areas. In the border areas and in Lublin, international organisations also made their presence felt as the crisis unfolded.

The major shortcomings in systemic activities were related to coordination, especially in the first, most sensitive period of the crisis – although the question arises as to who should actually coordinate the entire effort of so many various actors. Action was most frequently expected from government structures (one respondent pointed to the President, for example). Interestingly, provincial officials (specific individuals) are often put on a par with the "government", with the activities of these two actors being assessed in contradictory ways (a negative assessment of the institution as a whole and a positive assessment of cooperation with specific officials).

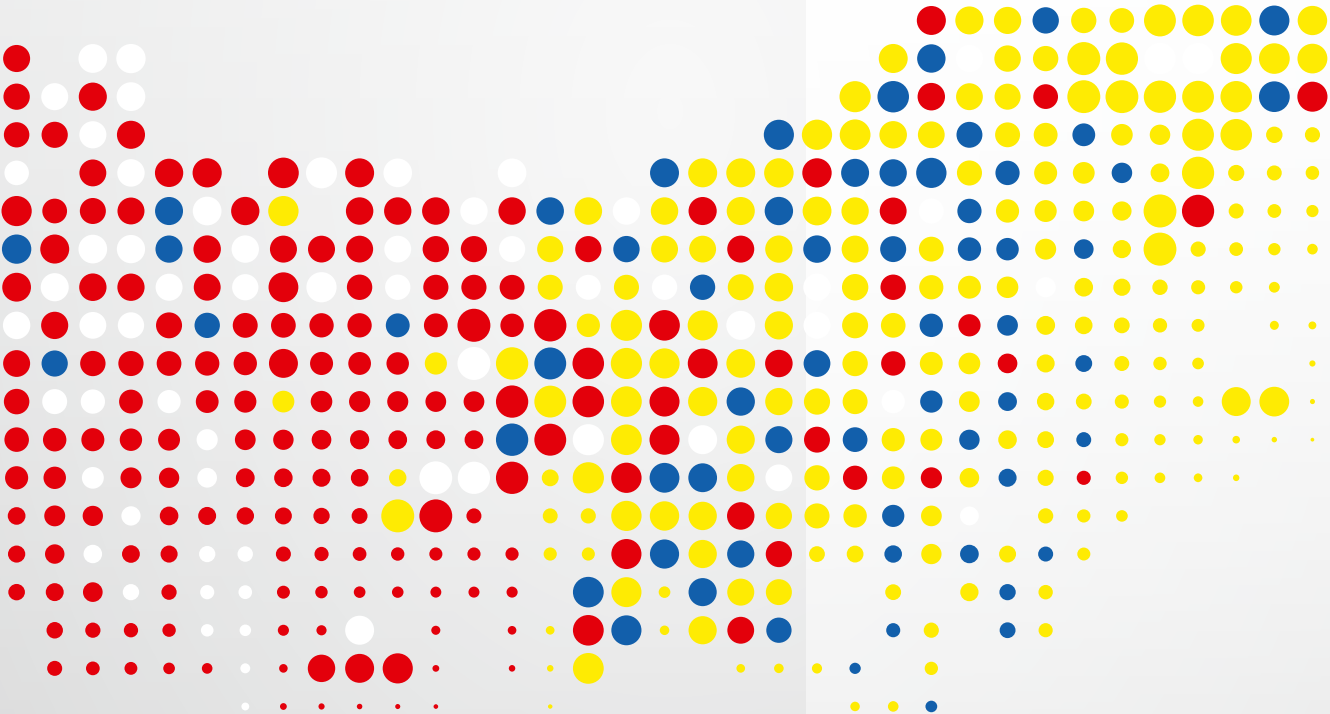
The lack of comprehensive, top-down coordination often led to wasted resources or overlapped aid, as some important issues being left unaddressed, such as those related to the registration of refugees at the border, which was initially not performed and then resulted in difficulties to provide support in locations situated away from the border.

Another considerable challenge involved the relationship between official institutions (administration, organisations) and informal initiatives or religious communities. These entities were sometimes not recognised, not informed, or not legitimised as entities performing equally important roles (albeit informally). As a result, their efforts were not supported or altogether ignored by larger stakeholders. This concerned the following three cases in particular:

- a change in cooperation arrangements between state services and one informal initiative in Lublin (initially, the services transported refugees from local stations to a privately-run care and transit point; after some time, this cooperation broke down, which the services explained by the initiative not having been formalised)
- difficulties in obtaining information on the refugees' needs in shelters (concerning their transit plans as well as other needs, e.g. related to practising their religion), experienced by informal initiatives and religious actors
- tensions between an aid hub run by a religious community in one of the cities in the region (undermining competencies and credibility, accusations of illegal practices) and representatives of a municipal aid hub

Informal actors said that they would prefer the authorities “not to interfere” with what they were doing. This suggestion related to the informal efforts - objectively assessed as effective - leads to further conclusions related to the explanation of the aid phenomenon in the Lublin Region. There is a common agreement that systemic gaps need to be filled through bottom-up, social and informal initiatives, which can be summed up with the following sentence: “the state/government/authorities was/were not there/it/they was/were belated, so we had to take matters into our hands”. However, based on the analysed material, it can be concluded that there was also another process at work. It can be described as “we helped because we could” - because the state was not there to hold us back. Consequently, we had the space to tap the potential. Had any framework been established right at the start, it would probably not have been possible to unlock the potential on such a scale. Ultimately, what primarily emerged from the interviews was the multi-sectoral cooperation of different actors (and the willingness to cooperate).

Concluding remarks

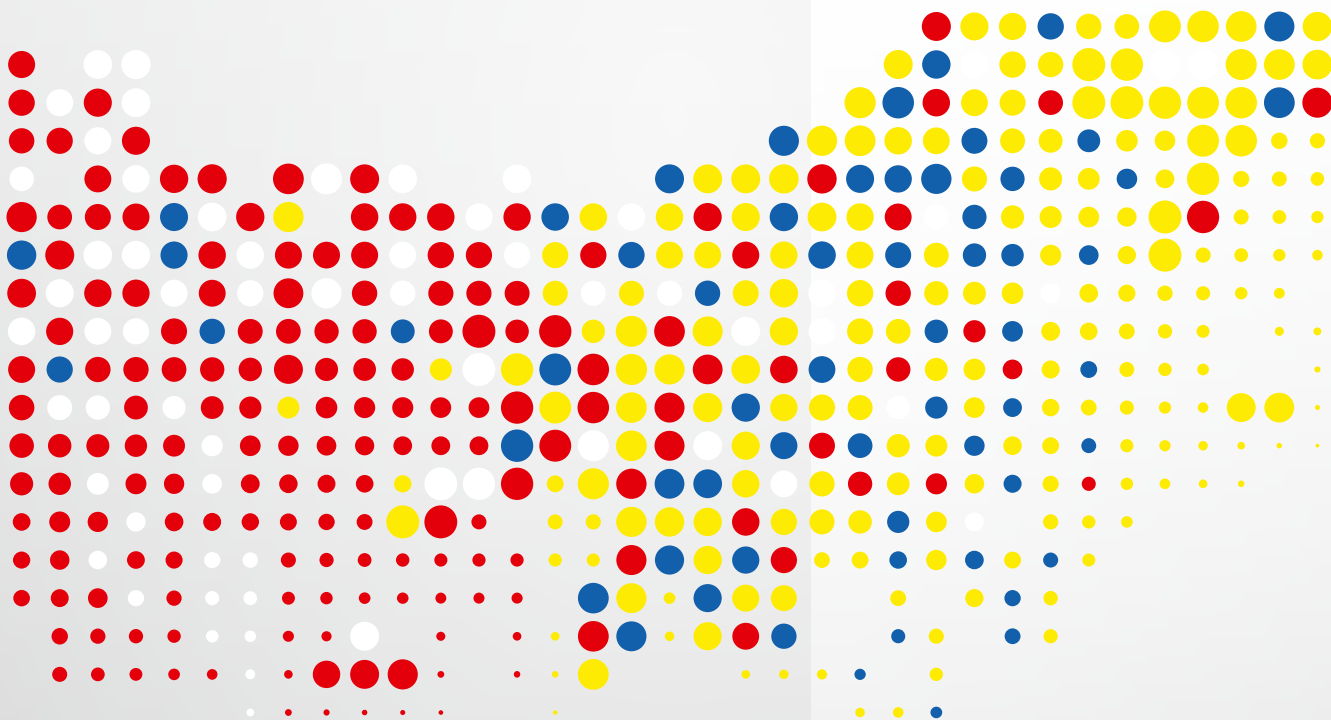


This report is based on the extensive qualitative-study material collected through individual and group interviews with representatives of aid actors operating in the Lubelskie Voivodeship. It is concerned mainly with the so-called reception phase of the aid process, up to just over a year from the day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This material provides a remarkable testament to the commitment and openness displayed by the various aid communities. We believe that the report will offer new insights into their relationships and the outcomes of their initiatives. This, in turn, might help develop more effective solutions in the future, tapping the enormous social, intellectual, and organisational capital that has been revealed locally, in the Lublin Province.

While the assessments of individual categories of actors spanned a spectrum of opinions, there was a uniform view of local aid "systems" as a whole, and this view was favourable. This testifies to the strong synergies between individual actors - together, they coped with the challenge.

The research team engaged in the project titled "Multi-level management of the humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian aggression against Ukraine, using the examples of activities in the Lubelskie Voivodeship (PL) and the Volyn Oblast (UA)" would like to thank all the interviewees who agreed to take part in the survey for their time and for sharing their - often difficult - experiences. As researchers, we would also like to express our appreciation of your openness and dedication to social work, without which Ukrainian refugees would not have received such massive support.

ANNEX: List of the interlocutors



number of the interview	category of entity ²	the nature of the place where the entity comes from ³	distance from the border ⁴	area of activity ⁵
01	AS	WW	M	województwo
02	AC	WW	M	województwo
03	AS	WI	G	gmina
04	AC	WW	M	województwo
05	AC	WW	M	województwo
06	AS	MW	P	gmina
07	AC	WW	M	województwo
08	AS	MI	P	miasto
09	AS	WI	P	gmina
10	NGO	MI	G	powiat
11	BS	WI	P	gmina
12	NGO	MI	P	inne
13	NGO	WI	P	gmina
14	BS	MI	P	inne
15	NGO	WI	P	wieś
16	BS	WI	P	inne
17	NGO	WI	P	gmina
18	BS	WI	P	inne
19	BS	OG	P	inne
20	REL	MI	M	miasto
21	REL	MI	M	miasto
22	REL	MI	M	miasto
23	REL	MI	M	miasto
24	REL	MI	M	miasto
25	REL	MI	M	miasto
26	REL	MI	M	miasto

² AC – administracja centralna/central administration; AS – administracja samorządowa/local administration; NGO – organizacje społeczne/social organisations (NGOs, INGOs, IGOs); BS – biznes/business; REL – podmioty religijne/religious entities; NF – inicjatywy nieformalne/informal initiatives

³ WW – województwo/voivodeship; WI – gmina wiejska/rural municipality; MW – gmina miejsko – wiejska/urban-rural municipality; MI – gmina miejska/urban municipality

⁴ M – metropolia/metropolis (capital of the region); G – położenie przy granicy z Ukrainą/border location; P – położenie peryferyjne względem granicy z Ukrainą/peripheral location (in relation to the border with Ukraine); I – inne/other

⁵ miasto/wieś – city(town)/village; gmina – commune; powiat – county; województwo – voivodeship/region; inne – other

number of the interview	category of entity ²	the nature of the place where the entity comes from ³	distance from the border ⁴	area of activity ⁵
27	NF	MI	G	województwo
28	NF	MI	M	miasto
29	REL	MI	M	miasto
30	NGO	OG	I	inne
31	NF	MI	P	miasto
32	NGO	MI	P	inne
33	AS	MI	M	miasto
34	AS	MI	G	powiat
35	NGO	MI	G	miasto
36	BS	MI	M	gmina
37	AS	MI	M	miasto
38	BS	WI	P	gmina
39	AS	MI	P	miasto
40	NGO	MI	P	miasto
41	AC	WW	M	województwo
42	AS	MI	G	miasto
43	AS	MI	G	miasto
44	NGO	MI	G	miasto
45	NGO	MI	M	miasto
46	NGO	MI	M	miasto
47	BS	MI	M	miasto
48	NF	MI	P	inne
49	BS	MI	M	miasto
50	NF	WI	G	gmina
51	BS	WI	G	inne
52	NF	WI	P	wieś

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number of the interview	category of entity ²	the nature of the place where the entity comes from ³	distance from the border ⁴	area of activity ⁵
53	NF	MI	M	miasto
54	REL	MI	P	miasto
55	AS	WI	P	gmina
56	AC	WW	M	województwo
57	NF	MI	M	inne
58	AS	MI	M	miasto
59	REL	WI	G	gmina
60	REL	WI	G	gmina
61	NF	WI	P	gmina
62	NGO	MI	M	województwo
63	BS	MI	I	inne
64	BS	MI	M	inne
65	BS	MI	M	inne
66	AS	WI	P	gmina
67	NGO	WI	P	gmina
68	AS	WI	P	gmina
Focus Group n° 1			FOCUS_1	
Focus Group n° 2			FOCUS_2	

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³ WW – województwo/voivodeship; WI – gmina wiejska/rural municipality; MW – gmina miejsko – wiejska/urban-rural municipality; MI – gmina miejska/urban municipality

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