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# Selected sectors of Poland's security concerning the migration of Ukrainian refugees

## Introduction

The armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which began in February 2014 by means of hybrid warfare, escalated at the end of February 2022 turning into an open armed conflict with the character of a regular war.

Due to the character of active measures and the unstable security situation, the Ukrainian population is forced to leave the corresponding territory to ensure the protection of health as well as life. The Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs of the European Commission (DG HOME) states that this type of migration is characterised by an element of coercion, which is linked to the threat to life and to the lack of basic living conditions. Many decisions as well as human activities causing danger in the area of armed conflict create a specific category of refugees. According to the definition of the DG HOME, a (civil) war refugee is a person who leaves a country to escape from the effects of armed conflict, with particular reference to the assaults of combat troops, the direct effects of fighting or displacement.<sup>1</sup>

According to data presented by UNHCR, in the first half of 2021 forced migration was estimated at more than 84 million on a global scale, of which more than half (48 million) were internally displaced, i.e. in their country of residence.<sup>2</sup> The lack of

<sup>1</sup> *(Civil) war refugee*, European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs, Glossary, [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/civil-war-refugee\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/civil-war-refugee_en) [accessed: 15.12.2022].

<sup>2</sup> *Refugee Population Statistics Database*, UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/> [accessed: 15.12.2022].

political and social stability, as well as the impact of armed conflicts, influences the forced movement process, as reflected in the population outflow statistics of the first half of 2021. According to the statistics, 68% of forced migrants came from Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Myanmar.<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that it is in these areas that the greatest humanitarian crises caused by armed conflict have occurred since 1960.<sup>4</sup> The face of danger, particularly related to military operations generating waves of migration, forces the population to seek a safe place in the immediate vicinity. Consequently, the most common refuge destination is considered to be the closest geographical and cultural neighbours. With regard to the above-mentioned countries, this was analogously the case of Turkey, Colombia and Pakistan.<sup>5</sup>

With regard to Ukrainian war refugees and external migration, the main destination becomes the immediate neighbouring countries of Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, Moldova and Poland. Based on data of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees of 7 September 2022, 7.2 million people have left Ukraine since the beginning of the war. According to Polish Border Guard statistics, Poland is the main country of choice for refugees. Between 24 February 2022 and 1 January 2023, more than 8.8 million refugees from Ukraine crossed the Polish-Ukrainian border.<sup>6</sup>

In order to solve the main research problem of the article (Does Poland have an adequate migration policy?) and verify the adopted hypotheses:

1. Poland does not have an adequate migration policy due to the new, previously unknown narrative,
2. the prospect of a long-term war contributes to forming negative opinions about refugees,

the author applied the following theoretical and empirical methods: analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalisation, inference, observation.

## Characteristics of the migration of Ukrainian war refugees in the face of an armed conflict

Today, international migration is recognised as an important element of the emerging international order. It is also a factor that has a significant impact on both internal and external policies within countries. A given country in the migration process can

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> *The 10 largest refugee crises in recent times, by number and population share*, Pew Research Center, 25.03.2022, [https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/03/25/after-a-month-of-war-ukrainian-refugee-crisis-ranks-among-the-worlds-worst-in-recent-history/ft\\_22-03-24\\_ukrainerefugees\\_1a/](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/03/25/after-a-month-of-war-ukrainian-refugee-crisis-ranks-among-the-worlds-worst-in-recent-history/ft_22-03-24_ukrainerefugees_1a/) [accessed: 15.12.2022].

<sup>5</sup> *Refugee Population Statistics...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> *Wojna w Ukrainie. Straż Graniczna podała dane o liczbie uchodźców*, Polsat News, 24.02.2023, <https://www.polsatnews.pl/wiadomosc/2023-02-24/wojna-w-ukrainie-straz-graniczna-podalala-dane-o-liczbie-uchodzcow/> [accessed: 24.02.2023].

assume three roles, namely that of a receiving actor, a sending actor or a transit actor (in this case, such a country is not a destination point for migrants, but lies on the path of further migration). For Ukraine, 2014 was one of the more pivotal years, as there was a military intervention in Crimea, which ended with its annexation by the Russian Federation, and also the war in Donbas began. The respective events contributed to the migration of Ukrainian citizens to their closest neighbours.

The ongoing military operations in eastern Ukraine have resulted in a large number of internal displacements, i.e. people moving within the borders of the inhabited state. According to the International Organisation for Migration acting within the UN, more than 8 million people have been internally displaced from the start of the invasion until May 2022. The largest number of displacements was recorded in Dnipropetrovsk, Kyiv, Lviv, Vinnytsia and Poltava Oblasts. In addition to internally displaced persons, those leaving the national territory to seek protection in another country are distinguished. According to international law and the Geneva Convention of 1951, such persons are referred to as war refugees. In international law, there are a number of provisions that provide protection for people who are outside their country for fear of conflict, persecution or violence. Formally, such persons are covered by international protection, which in Polish law is regulated by the Act on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland<sup>7</sup> together with the Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU and the provisions of the Geneva Convention. They are therefore entitled to aid from non-governmental organisations as well as state authorities in safe countries. The martial law introduced by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and the ban on men aged between 18 and 60 leaving the country (only a narrow category of men, including single fathers, can legally leave) has changed the structure of war refugees in favour of women, children and the elderly.

As the surveys show, Ukrainian residents most often choose Poland (37.6%) as a place of refuge from war, followed by Germany (12.1%), the Czech Republic (7.6%), Italy (5.5%), Slovakia (3.8%), Lithuania (2.7%), Austria (2.7%), Spain (2.6%), Bulgaria (2.1%) and France (1.6%). Those seeking protection first turn to relatives and family for support, before turning to aid organisations. Poland is a major migration destination, not only because of its close geographical location. According to reports and people's opinions, Poland is the culturally closest neighbour of Ukraine, where Ukrainians very often have acquaintances, friends and family.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ustawa z dnia 13 czerwca 2003 r. o udzielaniu cudzoziemcom ochrony na terytorium Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, Dz.U. [Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland] 2003, no. 128, item 1176.

<sup>8</sup> Raport specjalny *Uchodźcy z Ukrainy w Polsce*, Platforma Migracyjna EWL, Fundacja Na Rzecz Wspierania Migrantów Na Rynku Pracy „EWL” i Studium Europy Wschodniej Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2022, p. 8, [https://ewl.com.pl/raport-specjalny-uchodzcy-z-ukrainy-w-polsce/?utm\\_term=&utm\\_campaign=PM+%7C+Poland+%7C+Basic&utm\\_so](https://ewl.com.pl/raport-specjalny-uchodzcy-z-ukrainy-w-polsce/?utm_term=&utm_campaign=PM+%7C+Poland+%7C+Basic&utm_so)

## Analysis of Poland's security sectors

The continually increasing influx of refugees generates a constant need for aid activities not only from millions of Poles, non-governmental organisations, local governments, but also the government. The Polish state is faced with a huge opportunity, which, in the absence of good coordination and a strategic plan, may turn into a huge problem. A wide range of structural challenges blocking the use of the full human potential remains to be solved. In such a situation, it seems essential to secure the housing market, the education system, the health system, the labour market, the social security system, as well as other remaining industries. Due to the necessary time of assimilation in the new country and independence, the Polish state is burdened with enormous costs of living.

The most important elements requiring adaptation in this respect are the labour market, education, health care and the real estate market. As at the end of June 2022:

- 209,000 refugees from Ukraine were working legally in Poland (mainly women on order contracts),
- 35% were living with friends or family, 23% were renting accommodation on their own, 12% were living with people previously unknown to them and 30% were using other options,
- 200,000 participated in educational activities in Polish institutions,
- people from Ukraine are employed in medical professions in an expedited manner,
- refugees widely benefit from Polish medical care, including preventive measures (vaccinations, well-child care).<sup>9</sup>

Appropriate aid measures have an impact on specific security sectors, which contributes to ensuring cohesion and stability in the community that hosts war refugees. By identifying the value of opportunities, threats, challenges and risks in the security sectors, actions can be designed that contribute to improving the security of the state. One tool to control the migration process in order to ensure public order and provide security is migration policy. According to the methodological concept, security sectors comprise the political/state, military, social, economic and environmental sectors.<sup>10</sup> An assessment of the factors that shape the situation in certain security sectors of the Polish state allows for the identification of specific problem areas, changes or needs in selected areas, as shown in the table 1.

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<sup>9</sup> Raport na temat obywateli Ukrainy (wg stanu na dzień 1 lipca 2022 r.), Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców, <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/10af1434-3351-489f-9337-99a2ba253461> [accessed: 30.12.2022].

<sup>10</sup> M. Musioł, *Znaczenie sekurytyzacji i sektorów bezpieczeństwa w ramach krytycznych studiów nad bezpieczeństwem*, „Historia i Polityka” 2018, no. 23(30), pp. 39–45.

Table 1. Security sectors and problem areas

Security sectors			
	State/Political	Economic	Socio-cultural
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– demonstrating humanitarianism,</li> <li>– realisation of basic democratic principles,</li> <li>– fulfilment of international obligations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– rejuvenation of society</li> <li>– affects the rescue of social security and pensions,</li> <li>– economic growth (new employees)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– increase in tolerance and expansion of culture</li> </ul>
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– lack of sufficient resources,</li> <li>– poor economic situation,</li> <li>– insufficient number of places to accommodate refugees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– high costs of living of refugees,</li> <li>– creation of a “shadow economy”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– deterioration of the stability of the social order,</li> <li>– social pathologies,</li> <li>– differences in culture and religion</li> </ul>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– combating disinformation,</li> <li>– creation of new legal solutions,</li> <li>– introduction of a migration policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– necessity to ensure language learning, finding a job,</li> <li>– providing health care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– assimilation,</li> <li>– uniform relocation,</li> <li>– language learning,</li> <li>– finding a job and housing</li> </ul>
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– multiculturalism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– unemployment,</li> <li>– increased national debt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– increase in crime,</li> <li>– social stratification</li> </ul>

Source: author's own elaboration based on S. Olszyk, *Czy uchodźcy stanowią zagrożenie dla bezpieczeństwa? Opinie społeczeństwa polskiego*, „Rynek – Społeczeństwo – Kultura” 2017, no. 4(25), p. 62.

The majority of the factors listed in the security sectors can influence each other and often blur the boundary between sectors, e.g. like the extension of culture in Polish society, which has a high ethnic homogeneity. On the one hand, a given factor can create opportunities for cultural development, but also a threat to cultural social cohesion. It is worth emphasising that it is the state and political sector that is the overriding determinant of further developments in the other sectors. For it is the decisions of a state and politics that influence the course and situation in the other sectors. It therefore seems to be a priority to develop long-term strategies and action plans with regard to migration measures.

The projected document “Poland's migration policy and directions for action”<sup>11</sup> appeared in 2021 and contains 22 pages with the message of assimilation of arrivals rather than integration. It also seems crucial to develop a new document, coherent overall and coordinating the state's actions, which will cover issues related to illegal and legal migration, repatriation, emigration of Poles, protection of foreigners and

<sup>11</sup> Polityka migracyjna Polski – kierunki działań 2021–2022, MSWiA, <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/d6fe13b6-96ca-4f16-a196-a63d064e41ba> [accessed: 8.05.2023].

ensuring their right to retain their own identity. The previous document was cancelled in 2016 and a proper, in-depth analysis of measures is still missing today. In addition to expanding and supplementing the plan of measures, the document should include details on safeguarding the common interests of non-governmental organisations with government bodies. Another important element is to ensure access to valuable and relevant information, as a response to Russia's disinformation activities over the years. The intensification of propaganda information within Poland is aimed at spreading fear, uncertainty and chaos. Undermining confidence in the measures of the services and authorities towards war refugees introduces a destabilising situation in the country.

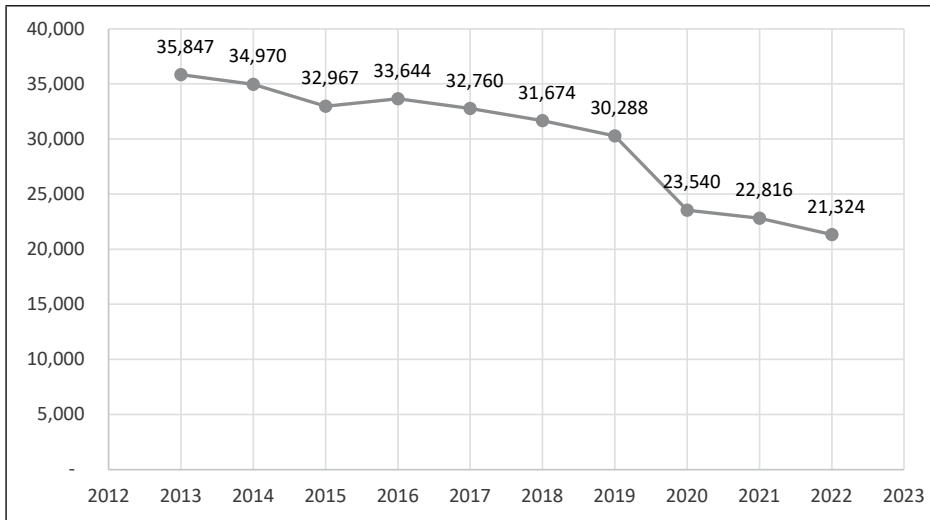
The economic sector has the potential to benefit from the refugee situation, which may have a positive impact on the Polish economy. The situation may reduce unemployment. According to the "Special Report: Refugees from Ukraine in Poland", the vast majority – 63% of people want to benefit from the solutions introduced by the Polish government, including taking up employment. It should be noted that more than half of the refugees have a higher education, but also represent professions that are nowadays considered to be in deficit in Poland. Every third refugee from Ukraine declares to stay in Poland for a longer period of time, which means that their inflow may also support the Polish labour market in the long term. On the one hand, due to reverse gender migration, we are facing a growing shortage of men ready to take up work, and on the other hand, a surplus of women who are persistently looking for work. Finding legal work can have a positive effect on the demand for professionals in niche, high-skilled or low-skilled occupations. It therefore seems necessary for the Polish Border Guard and the National Labour Inspectorate to remain on standby with regard to compliance with regulated rules. The social sector, on the other hand, relies primarily on uniform relocation in order not to exhaust the potential and capacity of the reception centres.<sup>12</sup>

With regard to internal security, war refugees may represent a potential group of victims or perpetrators of crime. In recent times, it is very common to encounter controversial shaping of public opinion by the Russian wave of disinformation. The titles of articles are most often formulated as follows: "Drunk Ukrainian drove into bridge".<sup>13</sup> Such headlines are created in order to make unambiguous associations that with the influx of migrants it has become more dangerous on the roads because refugees do not respect the prohibitions and orders that are in force in Poland. However, official statistics are forgotten (figure 1).

<sup>12</sup> Raport specjalny *Uchodźcy z Ukrainy w Polsce*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> *O niemal 80 proc. wzrosła liczba wypadków spowodowanych przez kierowców z zagranicy*, RP.pl, 12.12.2022, <https://www.rp.pl/wypadki/art37595001-o-niemal-80-proc-wzrosla-liczba-wypadkow-spowodowanych-przez-kierowcow-z-zagranicy> [accessed: 8.05.2023].

Figure 1. Number of car accidents on Polish roads by year



Source: Wypadki drogowe – raporty roczne, Portal polskiej Policji. Statystyka, <https://statystyka.policja.pl/st/ruch-drogowy/76562,wypadki-drogowe-raporty-roczne.html> [accessed: 2.01.2023].

Analysing the above statistics, it should be noted that in reality the increase in migration from the eastern border has not contributed to an increase in accidents on Polish roads. Since 2013, we have seen a stable decrease in the number of accidents, which means that a false belief has been created among the public about a danger that does not exist.

However, human trafficking has become a current and very serious problem. The vast majority of refugees are women with children who, in the absence of family or relatives, can become easy targets for criminal groups. The lull in vigilance at the prospect of a multi-day migration automatically, often unnoticed, creates a huge risk. In order to ensure proper security, it seems necessary to build awareness of possible threats through information campaigns targeting war refugees immediately after crossing the border. It is also important to make concerted and joint decisions between non-governmental organisations and state bodies to minimise the victimisation of refugees from Ukraine.

## Public attitudes towards war refugees from Ukraine

Nevertheless, an equally important aspect is the factors that influence the cost of day-to-day operation. The sanctioning of the Russian (and partly Belarussian) economy, and the exclusion of Ukraine from the international supply chain has caused a number of trade problems and made it impossible to secure supplies of goods on a permanent basis. The ongoing armed aggression, the epidemiological

situation and the government's inappropriate financial policy have led to very high inflation throughout Europe, i.e. to a reduction in the value of money. In a situation where Poland is the main host country for war refugees, such costs are significantly higher in comparison to other countries and the situation before the aggression. Increasing funds for the provision of social aid to refugees, with poor economic stability as a consequence, may lead to the formation of a negative social perception. Current data from the Polish Social Insurance Institution shows that in the last reference period, i.e. from May 2022 to May 2023 – more than 440,000 Ukrainian refugees received the right to 500 plus benefit.<sup>14</sup> According to a survey “Poles towards the war in Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees” conducted by the Centre for Public Opinion Research (Pol. Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, CBOS) in August 2022, 96% of respondents were in favour of accepting Ukrainian refugees from conflict areas. It is worth citing that in 2018 this was only 56%.<sup>15</sup> The survey reflected an increase in the favourability of Polish society. However, in the long term, we should expect social fatigue and a reduction of aid measures from the government (e.g. payment of a temporary cash benefit for accommodation and food, PLN 40 a day). Which was reflected in the question about offering voluntary and unpaid aid. In April 2022, 63% of opinion leaders provided aid, while in July it was only 53%.<sup>16</sup> The results also showed that Polish society is most afraid of high prices (71%), war (70%) and illness (64%). Also noteworthy is the fact that three out of four respondents (75%) now feel that the war in Ukraine threatens Poland's security,<sup>17</sup> a mild two-point drop from the previous measurement. This percentage was highest immediately after the outbreak of the conflict (85% in March), but has remained consistently high since then and has never fallen below the 70% threshold. The spread of the conflict in Ukraine has strongly shaken Poles' sense of security. The prospect of long-term aid and involvement may lead to negative attitudes towards refugees. More than 25% of respondents in the survey conducted by the CBOS said that they had encountered difficulties in using the health care system.<sup>18</sup> According to the law, Ukrainian citizens have access to medical services in Poland, but they do not have priority over Poles, but this does not change the fact that medical facilities in Poland face a very difficult situation of overcrowding and huge costs.

<sup>14</sup> M. Topolewska, *500 plus, zasiłki, rodzinny kapitał opiekuńczy. 1 mld zł na świadczenia dla ukraińskich dzieci*, *Gazeta Prawna*, 1.09.2022, <https://serwisy.gazetaprawna.pl/samorząd/artykuły/8527589,wypłaty-500-plus-dla-ukrajinow-swiadczenia-zasilki-rodzinne.html> [accessed: 30.12.2022]. The government's 500+ program provides families with childcare benefit in the amount of PLN 500 (approximately EUR 110), regardless of the amount of income. The allowance is granted for every child up to the age of 18.

<sup>15</sup> *Polacy wobec wojny na Ukrainie i ukraińskich uchodźców*, „Komunikat z Badań CBOS” 2022, no. 101, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.



## Conclusion

The ongoing war in the neighbouring country for almost a year presents a number of challenges that create a new, previously unknown narrative. Building perspectives as well as spaces for war refugees is a special task not only for state bodies. In the long term, there is a huge risk of creating a negative perception of refugees as a threat. In the context of continually increasing numbers, it is important to create an extended migration policy that safeguards the security sectors. Regulations should also include elements of building awareness of potential threats to both Polish and Ukrainian society. However, no less important in the dimension of international migration is the very process of assimilation of people who decide to flee from the impact of war in order to protect their health or their lives. The majority of women and children who flee, as well as the elderly, are a vulnerable group, requiring the creation of a so-called safe space that will enable their self-development and subsequent independence.

According to Jacek Piechota, president of the Polish-Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce, "the challenge is to create such a system, in which Ukrainians in Poland will not be competition for Polish workers. Today, Ukrainians in Poland need flexible forms of employment. They are first of all mothers with children who need to take care of their children and at the same time would like to find employment". Facing finding a job, refugees should be aware of, among other things, minimum wages, holiday entitlement, benefits or types of contracts. It is therefore important to know the applicable law in Poland, which will contribute to a sense of security which will consequently increase human potential.

By means of specific forms of aid and the individual competences of refugees, these people have the opportunity to look for other places to live in Western Europe. It is worth noting that in many countries the social and living conditions are at a much higher level than in Poland. According to statistics shown by the EWL migration platform, only 7% of all arriving Ukrainian refugees plan to settle in Poland, and immediately after the end of the war, more than 50% of them plan to return to their country.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the design of aid programmes should be universal in nature and address only real needs. It should also limit the possibility of any abuse and minimise the previously diagnosed threats, so as to maintain a balance in the security sectors of the Polish state.

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<sup>19</sup> S. Bryzek, *Praca, zatrudnianie cudzoziemców, kadry – tygodniowy przegląd EWL (12–19 kwietnia 2022)*, Platforma Migracyjna EWL, <https://ewl.com.pl/praca-zatrudnianie-cudzoziemcow-kadry-tygodniowy-przeglad-cwl-12-19-kwietnia/> [accessed: 08.05.2023].

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- (*Civil*) *war refugee*, European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs, Glossary, [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/civil-war-refugee\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/civil-war-refugee_en) [accessed: 15.12.2022].
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*Selected sectors of Poland's security concerning  
the migration of Ukrainian refugees*

*Abstract*

The nature of the modern military operations conducted on Ukrainian territory has generated a wave of mass emigration focused on the nearest safe areas. Poland, too, as one of the neighbouring countries, is a fundamental migration target for war refugees. Russian armed aggression began in February 2014, and on February 24, 2022 turned into a regular war. As a result of martial law, a number of children, women and the elderly (over 60 years of age) range seek protection on Polish territory. The influx of people became the basis for the creation of an important law of March 12, 2022 on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of that country. The legislation regulates the rules of legalization of residence, guarantees access to the labour market, health care, as well as benefits and social assistance. A number of aid measures issued for Ukrainian migrants, high inflation as well as Russian propaganda used for information warfare have negatively affected public sentiment towards factors shaping security. Therefore, an analysis of selected security sectors identifies threats as well as problem areas along with opportunities to ensure security.

Keywords: Ukraine, state security, emigration, armed aggression, war