



# POLAND

## EVANGELICAL MISSION

March 2023

### A “Q & A” on Poland and Ukraine.

“On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine in a major escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War, which began in 2014. The invasion has caused tens of thousands of deaths on both sides and has instigated Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II.”

### How many Ukrainians have sought refuge in Poland?

Many nations are skeptical of refugees, if not downright hostile, and in the past Poland was no exception. A survey in August 2021, just six months before Russia invaded Ukraine, found a majority of Poles opposed to admitting migrants of any kind, including refugees, and nearly half agreed that Poland should build a wall along its border with Belarus, where thousands of Iraqis, Syrians, and other migrants were stranded.

But the mood changed dramatically when Ukrainians began arriving in February 2022. The numbers were overwhelming. As of this writing, there had been 6.8 million border crossings from Ukraine to Poland, far more than to any other country. Yet instead of averting their eyes or renewing calls for a wall, Poles rushed to welcome the newcomers.

### How have Poles responded to the influx of Ukrainians?

Poles' feelings for their neighbors were on display in every city. Blue and yellow Ukrainian flags hung in the streets, public signs welcomed the exiles; volunteers in day-glow vests helped staff reception points in train stations, bus depots, airports, and shopping malls. A visitor rarely met a Pole who was not doing something to help, often by donating money or making runs to the border with coats, blankets, hot food, or medical supplies. According to one study, more than two-thirds of Poles helped in some way.

Eight months later, an estimated 3.2 million Ukrainians remain in Poland, including 1.3 million labor migrants who were present before the Russian invasion, according to the Union of Polish Metropolises. Altogether, Ukrainians account for nearly 9 percent of Poland's population. (Cont. on pg. 2)



The war is raging as fiercely as ever, but the forced migration crisis no longer seems as urgent. The flow across the border has slowed to a trickle. Many who arrived last spring are returning to Ukraine, and those remaining in Poland are less visible. Importantly, there has been no public backlash against the new arrivals, a result perhaps of Poland's distinctive approach, which relies more on civil society than government subsidies. The newcomers' needs have changed; they are now less concerned about blankets and hot soup than jobs and schooling. But there are many challenges ahead and momentous questions for both Poles and Ukrainians.

Tamar Jacoby, *Living in Limbo: Displaced Ukrainians in Poland*, (Migration Information Source, November 2, 2022) <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/living-limbo-displaced-ukrainians-poland>



We have used the pictures above that depict Ukrainians in travel within Poland.

*"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."*

*Isaiah 41:10*

Please pray for Poland often!

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