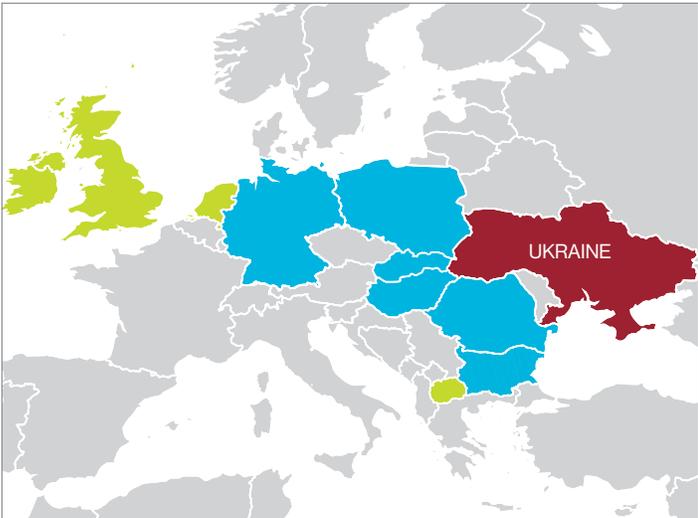




# 100 days on

## Habitat for Humanity's response to the Ukraine crisis

Poland – Romania – Hungary – Slovakia – Germany – Bulgaria



■ Habitat response countries
 ■ Additional countries in Europe with Habitat organizations

Just days after Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, Habitat for Humanity teams began responding to the resulting refugee crisis by helping displaced families with shelter and other emergency needs at Ukraine's border with Romania and Hungary. Help was also provided in major cities such as Warsaw, Poland; Bucharest, Romania; and Budapest, Hungary.

Habitat for Humanity has been supporting shelter needs in Central and Eastern Europe since 1992. While we continue to support other vulnerable groups and communities in securing decent shelter, we have begun working with local and national governments to help refugees from Ukraine obtain mid- to long-term housing. As of May 29, the fighting has displaced more than 14 million people, including over 6.8 million who have fled Ukraine. While much work lies ahead, below is a snapshot of where Habitat's response stands more than three months into the crisis.

## BY THE NUMBERS

# 2,600 emergency travel kits

were distributed to refugees in Romania at the main borders in Isaccea and Siret and at the Bucharest North Railway Station, where many refugees are transiting to other parts of Europe. The kits include backpacks with power banks and multifunctional smartphone cables that people can use to store items distributed by other nongovernmental organizations.

# 25,000 people

were supported through the donations of furnishings, food and household items from Habitat Poland's ReStore in Warsaw and through electric heaters and air-conditioning units that Habitat provided to transit centers in Romania.

# 300 refugees

from Ukraine are living in spaces refurbished by Habitat Romania that are provided by civil society partners and state institutions as interim shelter solutions of up to six months.

# 2,750 refugees

have been provided with short-term accommodations in Romania, Poland and Hungary.

# 1,255 refugees

have been provided with mid- and long-term accommodations across Poland, Romania and Hungary.

# 1 new law

is being leveraged to support refugees from Ukraine. The law, originally passed in 2021 through Habitat Poland's advocacy, is crucial for helping cities and municipalities scale up social rental housing programs, thus increasing access to housing for the people most in need.



## OUR RESPONSE

ON  
THE MOVE

up to 2 weeks

Emergency  
accommodation

We are working with our partners to ensure refugees have a place to stay during their first days outside of Ukraine. We also meet emergency needs by providing travel backpacks, hygiene items and other essentials that help

refugees on the move. In Poland, Habitat's housing kiosk at one of Warsaw's main transit stations helps refugees find accommodation in hostels and hotels, and with host families in cooperation with the government of Warsaw city. Habitat also supports refugees in Romania through stays in hotel rooms and serviced or furnished apartments. Habitat also provided 120 electric heaters in mobile camps at two of the main borders of Romania in Isaccea and Siret.

BUILDING  
STABILITY

up to 6 months

Interim shelter  
solutions

We provide refugees with accommodation for an average of two months with host families who have opened up their homes. With our support, refugees also can secure longer-term accommodation in subsidized rental apartments

or upgraded dormitories. Through our Habitat ReStore in Poland and generous donors in Hungary, we supply donated furniture, bedding and household items. These are sent to refugee families supported by Habitat, available to host families at reduced prices, and distributed to multiple partner organizations, most of whom are operating dormitories or collective centers.\*

*\*Collective centers are pre-existing buildings or structures such as community centers, town halls, hotels, gymnasiums, warehouses, unfinished buildings and disused factories that are used as temporary accommodation for large groups of people displaced by conflicts or disasters until durable shelter solutions are found.*



We are also lending our housing and construction expertise to increase the habitability of collective centers. In Romania's capital, Bucharest, more than 200 refugees can cook and dine in dormitory rooms that Habitat has refurbished in the Technical University of Civil Engineering.

In Poland, Habitat is expanding a "social rental program" that we have run in Warsaw over the past four years. We are planning to start a similar program in the southern city of Gliwice. The rental program acts as a mediating agent, leasing units and then renting them at affordable rates to tenants who can't afford the free-market rates. Habitat ensures that rents are paid and that units are returned in a condition no worse than at the beginning of the lease. Now we are tailoring the program for refugees, who will need a larger subsidy at the outset as they look for jobs and integrate into communities. In Romania, more than 80 refugees from Ukraine were able to stay in rental apartments for three to six months with Habitat's support. Meanwhile, Habitat Germany has helped 26 refugee households sign rental agreements in a pilot project in the municipality of Overath that matches available housing units with the refugees' needs.

## LONG-TERM SHELTER

6 months +

Housing solutions

Habitat Poland is offering housing and construction expertise to local governments and other partners through demonstration projects that refurbish empty spaces that can serve as housing for refugees and increase

housing stock. Habitat aims to play a catalytic role in working with governments and the private sector to facilitate and advocate for mid- and long-term housing solutions that meet the refugees' shelter needs. We also influence housing policies to eliminate barriers to increasing interim shelter solutions. For example, Habitat-commissioned research was cited by a group of over 150 people from the world of art and politics who petitioned the local government in Warsaw in March 2022 to convert empty spaces into accommodation for refugees from Ukraine. In Poland, Habitat successfully advocated for legislative changes to increase access to housing for people most in need, with a focus on social rental housing. The new legislation passed in 2021 will be applied to support refugees from Ukraine.



## LOOKING AHEAD: OUR APPROACH

Habitat helps refugees along a path to permanent, durable shelter, in keeping with our Pathways to Permanence approach and through the principle of meeting people where their needs are. Despite current efforts, there are not enough physical housing units to accommodate all the arriving refugees. This means refugees may have to stay longer in collective centers or seek accommodation in other locations. Habitat alone will not be able to provide all of the needed durable shelter, nor will any single organization or government. But there are opportunities to collaborate and create an impact by catalyzing public-private-people partnerships.

## TECHNICAL SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY

- Habitat Poland will work with local governments that want to set up their own social rental programs by providing legal advice, technical support, consulting and sharing of know-how.
- In partnership with the U.N. Refugee Agency, Habitat Poland is coordinating shelter sector actors to support refugees from Ukraine. Priority topics for a coordinated approach include a common needs assessment, research on feasibility of extending solidarity housing, a longer-term housing strategy aligned with government plans, and a unified referral pathway for refugees in greater need of accommodation.
- Habitat Poland continues to advocate for sustainable refugee housing options through local government roundtables and engagement with news media.
- Habitat also provides technical support in Poland through the Housing Information Line. Our trained staff, who speak Polish and Ukrainian, respond to housing-related inquiries from both refugees and apartment owners while referring other matters to the appropriate partners.
- In Romania, we are mainstreaming refugees from Ukraine in regular programs to build new homes.