



SLOVENIA

Summary of a qualitative study among Ukrainian refugees

# Limited access to routine care increases use of emergency services

Behavioural insights on health service needs and access  
September 2022-January 2023



World Health  
Organization

European Region

# Key findings



~8 200

persons from Ukraine registered for Temporary Protection in Slovenia as of November 2022

87%

are women and children



||

Here, it is a GP who makes all decisions. In Ukraine, with my family doctor, I can...insist that I need a specialist. Here you can insist on nothing...

Man, age 69

## EMERGING ISSUES

Challenges accessing **routine healthcare services**

Lack of **health insurance**

**Language barrier** for older people

Out-of-pocket **payments**

**Dental** services



## DRIVERS TO ACCESS SERVICES

**Positive individual experiences**

Personal experiences with high quality services, positive doctor attitudes, printed summaries of appointments and cleanliness of premises increase trust in the system.

**Support from civil society**

Organizations like Slovenian Philanthropy, Red Cross and the Pro Bono centre provide strong support for accessing health services; individual citizens help by scheduling appointments, driving to the hospital and translating.



## BARRIERS TO ACCESS SERVICES

**Pathways to routine care**

Emergency services are the most common entry point but do not easily link people to referrals for routine care.



**Language**

Language is a barrier for many when scheduling appointments and seeing a doctor, especially for those 50+ and who don't speak English or Slovenian.



**Dentistry**

Dental services in particular are considered too expensive for Ukrainians in Slovenia.



**Temporary status**

Some doctors provide only temporary solutions, suggesting people should finish the issue in Ukraine with their doctor.



## BEHAVIOURS & ATTITUDES

**Basic access**

Citizens of Ukraine are entitled to emergency health care as refugees and it is not always clear what this includes or how to access health insurance to receive more services.

**Informal communication**

Communication with relatives, friends and local people is the main source of information about medical services in Slovenia.

**Travel to Ukraine**

Some consult Ukrainian doctors online or return to Ukraine to purchase medicines.

**Mental health**

Many are unaware of mental health services and others choose not to use them, often saying that recent arrivals need it more; group sessions are less attractive and young people find few services.

# Background and next steps

## BACKGROUND



### Ongoing war drives people away

War in Ukraine has resulted in the largest movement of people across Europe since WW2. Neighbouring countries opened borders and offered services, but refugee perspectives are essential for planning appropriate interventions and policies.

## METHOD

**Qualitative study** on perceived health service needs as well as drivers and barriers to accessing these services, conducted in September-October 2022

### 21 in-depth online interviews::

- 18 were women, and 3 were men
- 16 between ages 18-49, 5 over 50
- 15 people taking care of others;
- 6 people are not caretakers

**Recruitment** via social media channels and personal networks.

**Follow up interviews** with 15 refugees in January 2023 to understand how their situation had changed.



## PROPOSED ACTION

1

### Increase appropriate use of health services

Clarify the strategy for accessing routine and preventative care to ensure appropriate use of the system and support health workers who provide service to refugees; link people from Ukraine with translation services.



2

### Praise and support citizens and civil society organizations

Acknowledge the important role of the host community, volunteers, healthcare workers and civil society organizations through media stories, joint social and cultural events.



3

### Provide clear and targeted information

Use study findings to tailor information about health services, insurance, vaccination and referrals, with a focus on the informal networks most use for communicating.



4

### Tailor mental health services and ensure people are aware of them.

Consider offering mental health services in new ways to address barriers, such as sites exclusively for Ukrainian refugees, engaging Ukrainian mental health professionals and tailoring services for older people and teenagers.



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Well, I say [psychological assistance] is always needed because of the constant stress... If you left, then you physically somehow survived, but psychologically, you are still under stress.

Woman, age 50

## Learn more

This briefing note is part of a qualitative study among Ukrainian refugees in Slovenia. For more information, contact:

**[euinsights@who.int](mailto:euinsights@who.int)**

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### Photo on the cover:

Olga, a 20-year-old medical student who fled Ukraine due to the war, was photographed near the Romanian border.

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