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**The Application of the
Temporary Protection
Directive: Challenges
and Good Practices
in 2023**

2023/1

EMN STUDY

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SUMMARY

No major challenges in identifying vulnerable persons and providing them with support were recorded during the research period in Lithuania. The situation remains the same as in 2023 and NGOs continue playing an enormous role in this area. Lithuanian institutions made concerted efforts to prevent both minor and adult beneficiaries of temporary protection from trafficking in human beings.

While the movements of the beneficiaries of temporary protection in Lithuania are not tracked, temporary residence extension numbers and survey information show that their population has stabilized in 2023. Indeed, the number of beneficiaries who intend to stay and work in Lithuania even after the war in Ukraine has doubled in 2023 in comparison to the previous year. Persons fleeing the war in Ukraine can apply for a residence permit in Lithuania on various grounds, including humanitarian protection; however, the absolute majority have applied on the grounds of temporary protection.

During the research period (from 1st January 2023 to 1st July 2023), there have been very few major legal, policy or practical changes in either the registration procedures or in the access to rights provided by the Temporary Protection Directive. In 2023, as in the previous year, various state and municipal institutions and agencies were involved in ensuring access to rights and services on issues within their purview: e.g., the Migration Department was responsible for residence permits, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour was responsible for social benefits, the Employment Service – for employment, and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports – for education, etc. The lack of interinstitutional cooperation mechanism or a coordinating institution was noted as a source of challenges in many areas. Key changes in ensuring access to accommodation included the extension of the payment of compensations to private property owners hosting Ukrainians till the end of 2023 and concerted efforts to increase state and municipal real estate property that could be used to accommodate the beneficiaries. Notable progress was made in improving the beneficiaries' access to employment who were exempted from the work permit procedure and were offered the full range of active labour market policy measures, including subsidized wages and occupational training. However, the language barrier, differences in education systems, and difficulties in getting their professional qualifications recognized remained significant obstacles in 2023. To facilitate the beneficiaries' access to healthcare, including the coverage of children, people with disability and pensioners by state-funded health insurance, the expansion of categories of beneficiaries who can get a reimbursement of prescription medication was introduced. However, surveys showed that, in 2023, about 40% of respondents still did not know what health services they could receive free of charge and that they could get their medications reimbursed. In the area of mental health services for both adults and schoolchildren, the situation is dire due to the lack of specialists. In the area of education, two significant developments were the decision to not allow remote education for longer than a year and the opening of Ukrainian schools in large cities.

Most of the challenges that arose during the research period in providing access to accommodation, employment, healthcare, education, and social assistance were the same as in 2022 and many were of structural nature. A key challenge that is mentioned in all categories is the language barrier. While many Lithuanians and Ukrainians can communicate in the Russian language, the language barrier nevertheless poses substantial difficulties to the beneficiaries of temporary protection in obtaining information from state and municipal institutions about their rights, benefits, and available services; in renting apartments on the open market; in gaining employment; in receiving healthcare services or psychological support; and in fully participating in the country's education system. The provision of language courses is neither managed nor coordinated and, while both state and municipal institutions fund language courses, a number of obstacles to language acquisition remain, including the lack of Lithuanian language teachers and specially tailored language programmes.

1.

Legal status

Question 1. Is it possible for beneficiaries of temporary protection residing in Lithuania to apply for other types of residence permits/visas/authorization of stay? If yes, please specify if this is in addition or as an alternative to temporary protection?

Yes, as an alternative.

All the grounds for issuing temporary residence permits are listed in Article 40 of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners and, in principle, Ukrainian war refugees can apply for a residence permit on grounds other than the temporary protection. In 2022, the Migration Department made 68,352 decisions to issue temporary residence permits to Ukrainian war refugees, of which 66,027 were issued on the grounds of temporary protection, and 2,325 were issued on humanitarian grounds. Another popular alternative grounds for issuing a temporary residence permit to Ukrainians in 2022 and 2023 was employment. In 2022, there were only 9 applications for asylum submitted by Ukrainian nationals.

Question 2. If yes to Question 1, are there any special procedures, lowered requirements, dedicated programmes or similar practices in place to assist in obtaining those residence permits/visas/authorization of stay?

There are no special procedures, the requirements are the same as for other applicants. However, Ukrainian citizens currently do not require the Employment Service's assessment of compliance with the needs of the Lithuanian labour market (i.e., they do not need to pass the labour market test), which makes it easier to apply for a temporary residence permit on the grounds of employment.

Question 3. If yes to Question 1, in the event of granting of such residence permits/visas/authorization, what happens with temporary protection and/or the access to rights/facilities/benefits provided under temporary protection?

The legal status of temporary protection is replaced by another legal status for staying in the country. The rights, facilities, and/or benefits depend on the legal status.

Question 4. What is the procedure followed by Lithuania when a person to whom temporary protection is applied submits an application for international protection?

(a) If they already have been registered as a beneficiary of temporary protection.

(b) If they have not (yet) been registered as a beneficiary temporary protection.

When a beneficiary of temporary protection submits an application for international protection, the same procedure is followed as in the case of other applicants for international protection. The procedure is described in detail in Order No. 1V-131 of 24 February 2016 of the Minister of the Interior Regarding the Approval of the Description of the Procedure for Granting and Withdrawing Asylum in the Republic of Lithuania.

Question 5. Has Lithuania encountered any challenges with persons claiming to be fleeing the war in Ukraine who do not fall under the scope of temporary protection established by the Council Implementing Decision?

No, in 2022, there were only 39 instances (or 0.057%) where the Migration Department decided not to issue a temporary residence permit to persons claiming to be fleeing the war in Ukraine, as compared to 68,352 positive decisions.

Question 6. If yes to Question 5, please explain how such challenges were addressed and/or what are the legal remedies available for such persons.

In general, persons fleeing the war in Ukraine or unable to return to Ukraine but not falling under the scope of temporary protection established by the Council Implementing Decision would likely be able to apply for a temporary residence permit under Article 130¹ of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners. Following the provisions of part 1 of this article, foreigners who may not leave the Republic of Lithuania for humanitarian reasons can be issued a temporary residence permit valid for one year, during the validity of which they have the right to work. However, all such cases would be examined on an individual basis.

Question 7. What, if any, is the mechanism in Lithuania to track the movement of the beneficiaries of temporary protection who are travelling to (i) other Member States and (ii) outside the EU?

There is no mechanism to track the movement of the beneficiaries of temporary protection. When needed, the records in the Temporary Registration Platform may be checked.

When an accompanied child leaves for another foreign state (not Ukraine) or when a child and his/her guardian return to Ukraine after a report was received about potential violations of the child's rights, the Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service relays this information to the Ukrainian authorities and/or the responsible institution of the country to which the child departed. The Service inquires whether the child returned to Ukraine safely and, when necessary, requests to undertake measures to protect the child's rights and best interest.

Question 8. What happens to temporary protection and the related benefits provided when the person travels outside Lithuania to (i) another Member State and (ii) outside the EU, including to Ukraine?

As per Article 96.1.1 of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners, if the foreigner takes up residence in a foreign state (either within or outside the EU), the Migration Department terminates temporary protection. Foreigners have an obligation to declare if they are leaving Lithuania for longer than 6 months.

Question 9. Do national authorities in Lithuania have knowledge of any challenges encountered by beneficiaries of temporary protection in re-entering the EU or your Member State specifically when coming back from Ukraine or other Member States?

Yes, in 2023, Lithuania started issuing digital temporary residence permits to beneficiaries of temporary protection. The Migration Department received information that some beneficiaries of temporary protection encountered difficulties trying to cross borders with digital permits because not all border guards of foreign states had been acquainted with this new form of permits. However, to the best of our knowledge, this issue has now been resolved.

Question 10. How and to what extent has Lithuania made use of the Temporary Protection Registration Platform during the research period?

Yes, the Migration Department uses the Temporary Protection Registration Platform. While exact numbers are not available, data about persons registered in Lithuania is entered on a weekly basis. The platform is also checked for matches whenever this is required.

Question 11. Has Lithuania encountered any (i) challenges and (ii) good practices in the use of the Temporary Protection Registration Platform?

According to national authorities, Lithuania has not encountered significant challenges. The Migration Department did not identify any good practices.

Question 12. Does Lithuania upload in the Temporary Protection Registration Platform the identity of the adult persons accompanying "separated" children arriving from Ukraine, and respectively, of guardians appointed in Ukraine before departure?

No.

Question 13. Does Lithuania provide support for the beneficiaries of temporary protection who wish to go home (back) to Ukraine?

No, such support is currently not provided.

Question 14. Has Lithuania observed any trends in terms of outflows of beneficiaries of temporary protection?

No, given that there is no systematic tracking of the movement of the beneficiaries of temporary protection who are travelling to other Member States and outside the EU, precise **statistics on the outflows are not available**.

However, it may be noted that, while over 81,000 persons fleeing the war in Ukraine registered with the Migration Department since March 2022, on March 6, 2023, there were only 41,933 persons who had a valid temporary residence permit issued on the grounds of temporary protection. Even taking into consideration that some of the beneficiaries of temporary protection applied a residence permit on different grounds, this would nevertheless suggest a **relatively high outflow during the first year** of the application of temporary protection in Lithuania. On the other hand, IOM Lithuania conducted surveys with refugees from Ukraine regarding their needs, intentions, and integration challenges and found that, in June 2023, 96% of respondents (N=567) intended to stay in Lithuania (compared to 92% in March 2023 (N=376)). This would indicate that the number of beneficiaries of temporary protection currently staying in Lithuania is **likely to remain stable in 2023**.

A survey of the Ukrainian war refugees conducted by the Employment Service in May 2023 found that about 34% of respondents planned to stay and work in Lithuania after the war (as compared to 17% in the previous year). This too would indicate a trend of settling down and reduced outflows.

Question 15. Have there been any major legal, policy or practical changes regarding registration of beneficiaries of temporary protection during the research period?

No, during the research period there have been no major legal, policy or practical changes regarding the registration of beneficiaries of temporary protection.

However, there is a related issue of the collection and analysis of data related to the registered beneficiaries. In its June 2023 study, the National Audit Service found that:

- The Migration Department does not have data on how many individuals who have been granted temporary protection are living in Lithuania. To verify if all temporary protection recipients who actually reside in Lithuania would require checking their declared addresses, but such a process might be an excessive administrative burden with questionable utility.
- Municipalities lack the ability to access data on foreigners residing or relocating within their jurisdictions and suffer from fragmented data collection and analysis processes. This is exacerbated by a lack of collaboration with state entities like the Migration Department and insufficient data coordination within the municipalities.

Question 16. What procedure was used to extend the validity of documentation based on temporary protection after the first year?

Most beneficiaries of temporary protection were issued temporary residence permits valid until 4 March 2023. Some beneficiaries, who applied for their residence permit after September 2022, received permits that were valid for two years (i.e., until 2024). To extend the validity of temporary residence permits, the Migration Department introduced digital temporary residence permits and began issuing them as of 18 January 2023, in accordance with Order No. 1V-799 of the Minister of the Interior of 23 December 2022 Regarding the Approval of the Description of the Procedure for the Issue of Digital Temporary Residence Permit.

A simplified procedure was used to extend the temporary residence permits that were set to expire on 4 March 2023. A beneficiary of temporary protection who already had a temporary residence permit had to create an account in MIGRIS and submit the required personal information online. The employees of the Migration Department then checked the veracity of this information, compared it to the data available to them, and issued a digital temporary residence permit valid until 4 March 2024.

The procedure was slightly different for newly arrived Ukrainian refugees. In contrast to persons with residence permits who could complete the entire procedure online, the newly arrived Ukrainian refugees could submit an application online but had to visit a customer service section of the Migration Department in person, present the originals of their identity documents, and submit their biometric data (facial image and fingerprints). The information was then checked, and the applicant was informed about the decision remotely.

The digital temporary residence permit is issued in PDF format and is delivered via the Lithuanian migration information system (MIGRIS). The permit can be printed out or saved to a phone. The digital temporary residence permit is issued in the Lithuanian and English languages. It indicates the following data: name(s) and surname(s); date of birth; place of birth; facial image; personal number in Lithuania; citizenship; sex; date and place of the permit's issue; date of the permit's expiration; the number of the temporary residence permit; the type of residence permit (temporary residence); grounds for the issue of the permit; a QR code with an encoded information of the temporary residence permit. The veracity of the data and the validity of the temporary residence permits can be checked on the website of the Migration Department by scanning the QR code on the permit.

Temporary residence permits were issued and extended to beneficiaries of temporary protection free of charge.

Question 17. What challenges did Lithuania encounter in the registration process and how were these addressed/planned to be addressed during the research period? Were there any good practices?

The Lithuanian migration information system MIGRIS is available in the Lithuanian and English languages only. Besides posing a language barrier to some of the users from Ukraine, this also meant that mandatory information had to be entered in Latin alphabet and Ukrainian and Russian sentences, as well as names, had to be **transliterated**, which can be done in different ways. Moreover, the customary way of writing names differs in Lithuania and Ukraine – in Lithuania, the given name comes first, and the family name comes second. These issues created difficulties in the registration process, which were addressed by raising the awareness of all participants.

2.

Access to rights provided by the Temporary Protection Directive

Question 18. Have there been any major legal, policy or practical changes regarding access to accommodation for beneficiaries of temporary protection during the research period?

There were no major changes regarding access to accommodation for beneficiaries of temporary protection during the research period. No changes are foreseen.

The government **extended the payment of compensations** to private property owners and business representatives who provided housing to people fleeing the war in Ukraine to December 31, 2023. A wider range of entities, including non-profit and religious groups, can avail themselves of these compensations, not just individuals and businesses. Moreover, compensation can be received by those who have temporarily housed Ukrainians free of charge not only in residences, hotels, recreational, medical or holiday properties, but also in adapted administrative, auxiliary agricultural buildings, or other non-residential spaces. A representative survey of homeowners who accepted Ukrainian refugees, which was carried out by IOM Lithuania in June 2023, revealed that **66% of respondents made use of the state support for homeowners hosting the Ukrainian refugees**. In 2022, 10.2 million EUR were paid from the state budget to natural and legal persons who hosted the Ukrainians.

In the context of high energy prices, in order to reduce the cost of hosting the Ukrainians to private individuals, an opportunity has been provided for them and the Ukrainians themselves to agree on the payment of housing maintenance costs. Ukrainians who have declared their residency in the provided housing and are covering its maintenance costs have the possibility to receive financial aid for some of the housing-related utilities (heating, as well as hot and cold water expenses).

Question 19. What were the key challenges in Lithuania in providing access to suitable accommodation or the means to obtaining housing to beneficiaries during the research period? How were these challenges addressed/planned to be addressed and are there any good practices?

There were no new major challenges in providing accommodation or the means of obtaining housing during the research period.

The main challenges related to accommodation continue from 2022. As pointed out by the National Audit Office in its February 2023 study, Lithuania **lacks a dedicated institution to coordinate the settlement** of refugees in municipalities, propose measures that would address the housing needs of refugees, and ensure an environment conducive to their integration. National entities, except for the Refugees' Reception Center, are not actively involved in securing housing for these refugees, deferring the task to NGOs or the refugees themselves.

A related challenge noted by the National Audit Office is that the state does not have any strategy for the distribution of refugees, and they are allowed to settle where they want, which tends to be in the largest cities. In the absence of a dedicated institution, the **risks of uneven concentration of refugees** (e.g., their impact on the rental market or the job market, the increased workload on the education, healthcare, and social security systems, potential segregation, etc.) have not been assessed.

One example of minor challenges faced by state and municipal authorities could be the increased frequency of cases when the beneficiaries of temporary protection refused housing offered to them by municipalities free of charge for some reason (e.g., due to location, the condition or equipment of premises, etc.). In such cases, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour recommended drafting a housing refusal document, in which the beneficiary would confirm responsibility for finding alternative housing on their own. Municipalities were to clearly communicate that, despite limited availability, all housing meets the requirements for living and by refusing the housing offered to them for free use, they forgot their right to live in state or municipal housing provided without charge.

Another example of minor challenges for private individuals hosting persons fleeing the war in Ukraine free of charge could be situations where these persons **left the housing** provided to them **without informing** the owners. To deal with such and similar issues (e.g., what to do with the personal property of tenants left behind, whether and in what way the premises can be inspected by the owner, who is responsible for covering the costs of laundry services or cleaning, etc.), Vilnius municipality recommended fixing a maximum period of absence of 2 weeks and detailing all the conditions in a usage agreement and/or the internal rules of a facility, which the tenants have to sign before or during accommodation.

A representative survey of homeowners who accepted Ukrainian refugees was carried out by IOM Lithuania in June 2023. In the survey, 20% of all respondents (N=245) claimed that they would not host Ukrainians again; 40% said they would, and 40% were undecided. Among the 20% who had terminated hosting agreements at their own initiative, the main reasons for terminating the agreement included the following: 31% disagreements with the hosted Ukrainians; 29% got tired of participating in the programme; 18% due to property damage; 15% could not afford renting for free anymore; 13% stated increased utility costs, and 13% claimed they needed their property for themselves.

A representative survey of Ukrainians in Lithuania carried out by IOM Lithuania in June 2023 revealed some of the challenges related to access to suitable accommodation faced by the Ukrainian war refugees. The survey found that upon arrival to Lithuania 34% Ukrainian war refugees rented an apartment, 27% found accommodation with Lithuanian hosts via the non-governmental "Stiprūs kartu" initiative, 18% settled in the premises provided by the state or municipality, while 4% lived in other premises (hostels, etc.). Only about 30% still live in the same premises that they lived upon arrival, while about half of the respondents changed their place of residence more than once.

Significantly, **73% of respondents (N=870) stated that they encountered difficulties trying to rent an apartment**. The following key difficulties were mentioned: high rental prices (65%); owners did not want to rent to families with minor children (53%); owners requested high security deposit (43%); owners refused to allow declaring the place of residence in their apartment (36%); high utility payments (20%); owners refused to accept tenants with pets (17%). The language barrier, the low supply of apartments for rent on the market, and the unwillingness of landlords to rent to the Ukrainians were also mentioned.

Almost half of the respondents (42%) knew about the state support for the Ukrainian refugees in securing accommodation **but did not make use of it; 33% did not know about it**, while only 25% both knew and made use of state support. Among the latter (N=297), 54% received a compensation of a part of the rent, 21% got a lump-sum payment for settling in, while 19% received a compensation of heating costs.

Question 20. Have these challenges changed since the initial arrival of beneficiaries of temporary protection in 2022?

No, the basic challenges remained largely the same, although there were both positive and negative developments.

Among positive developments was the fact that state and municipal institutions had time to increase the availability of places of accommodation, in part in preparation for a further influx of refugees, which did not take place. On 10 February 2023, the Minister of Social Security and Labour issued order No. A1-101, which detailed the procedure for drawing up, managing and administering **the list of real estate property that state and municipal institutions made available for accommodating foreigners free of charge**. The list provides a detailed overview of available places of accommodation, their condition (e.g., if repair is required, installed utilities, etc.) and needs (e.g., what furniture and appliances are required), which enables and facilitates analysis and planning.

The responsible institutions also had **time to better prepare to provide access to accommodation**. For example, by the start of 2023, the Refugees' Reception Centre already had 19 cooperation agreements with municipal administrations regarding the use of public infrastructure (mostly, old school buildings) on their territory for accommodating foreigners. Typically, such agreements would specify that the Refugees' Reception Centre would provide furniture, equipment, and other materials, while municipal administrations would connect the facilities to networks and cover minimal utility costs. Each facility is also assigned a coordinating non-governmental organization, which evaluates how services, meals or food packages and hygiene products would be provided when needed.

It should be noted that, while the number of available places of state- or municipality-funded accommodation was increased, they **remained limited in the large cities** that, for various reasons (mostly, the beneficiaries' expectations regarding a lower language barrier, the availability of schools and jobs, etc.), attracted the majority of the war refugees from Ukraine, who often opted to rent apartments on the open market.

In this context, **the energy crisis** and the subsequent spikes in inflation, utility prices, and rental costs in the winter of 2022 had a negative impact on the accessibility of accommodation to Ukrainian refugees. Besides the immediate shock of inflation, the energy crisis led to a rise in interest rates, prompting more people to opt for renting, rather than buying apartments. This surge in demand diminished the already low availability of apartments on the open market, consequently driving up rental costs. A representative survey of Ukrainians in Lithuania carried out by IOM Lithuania in June 2023 showed that high rental prices, high utility costs, and the pickiness of landlords were among the greatest difficulties encountered in trying to rent an apartment.

Question 21. Have there been any major legal, policy or practical changes regarding access to the labour market for beneficiaries of temporary protection during the research period?

The following key changes regarding access to the labour market of beneficiaries of temporary protection took place during the research period:

- To reduce the bureaucratic burden and to speed up the employment of the beneficiaries of temporary protection, they have been **exempted from the work permit procedure**.
- The Employment Service **applied active labour market policy measures** that encourage the integration of the beneficiaries of temporary protection into the labour market, including the following:
 - **Subsidizing wages** – employers who employ beneficiaries of temporary protection and who meet the criteria listed in Article 35.4 of the Law on Employment can apply for a wage subsidy of up to 1.5 of the minimum monthly wage for up to 24 months.
 - **Mobility support** – compensation of travel expenses to reach a further-away job or internship for up to four months or attend up to 5 job interviews or consultation sessions.
 - **Occupational training** – persons who are employed can apply to the Employment Service to obtain funding in order to change their profession or acquire new qualification. If they meet the criteria, the beneficiaries of temporary protection can get a stipend for training (EUR 365), reimbursement of travel expenses to and from the nearest training provider, and a reimbursement of accommodation costs if their place of residence is different than the location of the training provider.
- Article 39² of the Law on Employment was amended and now beneficiaries of temporary protection are not required to have a residence permit in order to attend **the Lithuanian language courses funded by the Employment Service**.

Question 22. What were the key challenges that Lithuania encountered in (i) providing access to (self-)employment during the research period (e.g., in connection with the issuance of work permits, access to regulated professions and/or other conditions) and (ii) providing measures facilitating employment and labour market activation, such as vocational training, language courses, training or integration assistance for adult beneficiaries of temporary protection?

Two groups of challenges can be distinguished: 1) those arising in relation to ensuring the possibility to work under contract or independently (e.g., work permit issues, employment in regulated occupations, other terms and conditions); 2) those arising in relation to the application of measures facilitating entry into the labour market and employment (e.g., occupational training, language courses, integration support for adult beneficiaries of temporary protection, etc.).

- 1) Beneficiaries of temporary protection often face the challenge of quickly finding work to establish themselves in the country, integrating into society, and secure favourable living conditions. However, while there was an increased employer interest in hiring temporary protection recipients in Lithuania, which ensured a fast-paced job placement process, the individuals' swift entry into the job market was hindered when they **often couldn't open a bank account** or couldn't open it fast enough because the current wage payment rules and requirements require having a bank account. Thus, for example, a person who had lost their documents could start working with an ILTU code, but they couldn't open a bank account. This created a situation where the potential employees depended on the goodwill of the employer to wait until the bank account was opened.

Regarding the opportunity to work in self-employed or contractual positions, Lithuania encountered a problem when **individuals had disabilities or limited employability** in Ukraine but could not get an assessment of and certificate for their condition in Lithuania in time before starting a job search. Such persons would apply to the Employment Service without any documentation of their condition or limitations on the kinds of work they can perform. In such cases, it was difficult for the Employment Service to search for job offers because it was unclear what type of work the individual could perform.

In order to comprehensively provide services to individuals, it was important to understand the true level of education an individual had; however, this often proved difficult due to **differences in education systems** between countries. For example, in Lithuania, persons with BA degree are considered to have higher education, while in Ukraine only those with MA are. Also, primary education in Lithuania is grades 1-4, while in Ukraine it is grades 1-6, etc.

The possibility of working in regulated or in-demand professions was also a challenge. Individuals, who had previously worked in high-skilled professions in their home countries (such as engineers, programmers, doctors, pilots, project managers, pharmacists, teachers, architects), were in demand in the Lithuanian job market. However, they encountered difficulties due to the recognition of their diplomas. The **diploma recognition process** in Lithuania is often very lengthy, limiting their ability to work in their respective fields of education.

To expedite the employment process for Ukrainian nationals fleeing the war, special procedures were put in place to shorten the professional qualification recognition process for medical professionals, architects, and construction engineers. However, **individuals often chose less qualified or sometimes unqualified work simply for quicker employment and higher pay.** Convincing them to return to work in their specialized field later on was difficult. They lacked trust in the process, were unwilling to take risks, and once they started working elsewhere, they would no longer make use of the services of the Employment Service, and their motivation dwindled.

- 2) Vocational training **institutions were not interested in providing training for individuals with temporary protection status.** The development of training programmes, accreditation, preparation of learning materials, and finding Russian- or English-speaking lecturers are costly and institutions are unwilling to invest money in creating opportunities to train newcomers, who make up a small portion and do not cover all the costs of the training programme. Currently, the situation is changing, but the required actions are delayed and lagging behind market needs.

For some time, the limited **date of validity of the temporary residence permit** granted to beneficiaries of temporary protection was also a challenge. Residence permits for Ukrainian refugees were issued until 4 March 2024, regardless of when they arrived to Lithuania. For a while, the Employment Law stipulated that a person wishing to apply for support for training had to have a residence permit in Lithuania for at least 1 month, which meant that not all interested persons could be sent to training. However, changes in legislation have addressed these concerns.

A cluster of challenges in this category is related to **difficulties in and obstacles to language acquisition** by the beneficiaries of temporary protection. First, it is difficult to find Lithuanian language teachers who would speak the same language as the beneficiaries of recipients of temporary protection and could train them. Second, new, specially tailored language teaching programmes need to be designed. The language courses funded by the Employment Service consist of one module only (e.g., A2, or A1, or B2). Upon completing a course module, a person is currently not allowed to continue language learning at a higher level because the current legislation requires a one-year gap between the completion of one informal adult education programme and the enrollment in another (Article 39² of the Law on Employment). Third, attending language courses is especially challenging for those who do not speak English, Russian, or Lithuanian, as well as women who have 4-6 children to care off.

Since there is **no single institution coordinating the integration of foreigners**, various support measures may be accessible through different institutions and project activities. For example, it has not been decided who is supposed to be in charge of organizing the language courses, or how these courses should be organized. As a result, it is often unclear or not fully known which services temporary protection recipients can use. For informal adult education, when referring to language courses, there was a requirement until 2023 that the residence permit be valid for no less than a year. For this reason, there was also a period when beneficiaries of temporary protection who were interested in language courses could not be directed to state language courses. According to the data of the National Audit Office, although 22% of Ukrainians claimed that they did not have the opportunity to attend language courses, in 2022, municipalities actually did not manage to spend some 311,000 EUR (out of 790,000 EUR) of assignments for organizing language courses for the Ukrainians.

Question 23. How were these challenges addressed/planned to be addressed and are there any good practices in responding to the challenges?

One of the best practices that proved to be very useful was when the **Employment Service employed Ukrainian nationals**, beneficiaries of temporary protection, as consultants to work with other beneficiaries. Some of those employed had similar experience working in the area of employment policy in Ukraine. The Ukrainian consultants also helped other employees of the Employment Service to better understand and assess the information provided by the beneficiaries of temporary protection regarding their education, work experience, etc.

One of the best examples of **successful language training** was enrolling the employees of the International School of Ukraine in Klaipėda in courses funded by the Employment Service. 25 employees of this school have already signed agreements and start their training on 20 September 2023. In all, 40 employees of the school will attend the Lithuanian language courses.

The application of a combination of **active labour market policy measures** has shown promise in achieving a more successful and sustainable employment (e.g., subsidizing wage after providing support for training).

Another example of a good practice is to get **employers involved in ensuring the successful integration** of the beneficiaries of temporary protection at their places of employment by taking into account their skills and qualification, providing training the workplace, and introducing with workplace rules and work principles that meet the EU requirements.

The Employment Service organized **many different types of events** and seminars for the beneficiaries of temporary protection in their native language on the social security, healthcare, and tax system in Lithuania. The participants of these seminars improved their knowledge of the existing services and procedures, which contributed to their sustainable long-term integration into the labour market in Lithuania.

Question 24. Have there been any major legal, policy or practical changes regarding access to healthcare (including mental health support) for beneficiaries of temporary protection during the research period?

Initially, the beneficiaries' access to healthcare was regulated by Government Resolution No. 224 of 16 March 2022 on Granting Temporary Protection to Foreigners in Lithuania. One significant change was the amendment of the Law on Health Insurance to include the more vulnerable beneficiaries of temporary protection. Thus, according to Article 6.1.7 of the Law on Health Insurance, the **state budget now covers the compulsory health insurance of the following categories of beneficiaries of temporary protection:**

- individuals under the age of 18;
- individuals receiving a pension (old-age pension, pension due to loss of working capacity, or disability pension) under the laws of Lithuania;
- individuals receiving disability compensation, upon reaching the age specified in the Law on Social Insurance Pensions for old-age pension eligibility or upon being recognized as having lost 60 percent or more of their working capacity;
- individuals receiving a pension (old-age or disability pension) under the laws of Ukraine;
- individuals who are recognized as disabled persons under the laws of Lithuania or Ukraine.

Having compulsory health insurance entitles them to the full range of healthcare services. The change is also significant in that these persons have the right to receive healthcare services and compensation for medicaments and medical aids according to the conditions and regulations set forth in the law, rather than specific temporary protection measures or government decisions. In this way, healthcare access was significantly improved for children, pensioners, and persons with disability.

Other beneficiaries of temporary protection not falling under the categories listed above or third-country nationals with a right to temporary protection are entitled to receive emergency medical assistance and other essential healthcare services (i.e., services, without which their health could deteriorate to the point where they would need emergency medical assistance). Moreover, they can get pregnancy monitoring, assistance during childbirth.

On March 1, 2023, the Government also passed amendments related to the reimbursement of prescription medication expenses for beneficiaries of temporary protection. The amended Government Resolution No. 224 now stipulates that the beneficiaries who have duly registered with the Migration Department (both those covered by compulsory health insurance and uninsured adults) can receive reimbursement for prescription medicines not only in emergency situations but in all cases. Additionally, these expenses may be covered not only from the state budget but also from other sources, such as funds from a specific project. For example, from September 1, 2022, to March 4, 2024, these expenses are covered as part of the project "Acceptance and Early Integration of Refugees from Ukraine" No. HOME/2022/AMIF/AG/EMAS/TF1/LT/0013, financed from the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund under the "Emergency Assistance" measure).

On 25 January 2023, the Minister of Health issued Order No. V-109, which established the **procedure for the reimbursement of prescription medications** for foreigners who do not have compulsory health insurance but are entitled to temporary protection or have been granted temporary protection. The order specified that the expenses for obtaining prescription medications needed for certain medical conditions and health disorders, for which essential personal healthcare services are provided, are covered either from the state budget or other sources for these foreigners. It also outlined the process for prescribing and dispensing prescription medications.

Question 25. What were the key challenges in Lithuania in providing access to medical care to beneficiaries of temporary protection during the research period?

In 2022, when the Law on Health Insurance and the Law on the Healthcare System were amended to regulate the provision of health services to beneficiaries of temporary protection, a new concept was introduced: **"other essential health services"**, without the provision of which the patient's health could deteriorate to such an extent that the patient would require emergency medical assistance. For healthcare institutions, this raised a lot of questions and **caused confusion** when providing services to beneficiaries of temporary protection. There were instances where the registration personnel in healthcare institutions refused to register beneficiaries of temporary protection for a doctor's visit or when they were requested to pay for the healthcare services. However, in 2023, confusion regarding the scope of healthcare services for the uninsured beneficiaries became much less frequent.

In March 2023, the Red Cross conducted an anonymous survey of Ukrainian refugees (3,862 respondents) about healthcare services in Lithuania. **Only about 60% of respondents knew that they had the right to receive essential health services for free.** Moreover, about a third of respondents who visited a healthcare institution claimed that their needs were not met or were met only partially. The language barrier, rude behaviour of the medical staff, refusal to continue treatment and demands to pay for services were indicated as the main reasons for unmet needs. 40% of the respondents indicated that they constantly take prescribed medications, but almost 90% of them either did not have their medications compensated or had them compensated only partially. About 60% of them would benefit from additional support related to medication reimbursement.

In its 2023 study, the National Audit Office noted that the **linguistic accessibility of medical services** needs to be improved: out of the 18 healthcare institutions the Office audited, 39% did not have instructions on the actions that need to be taken so that persons who do not speak Lithuanian are directed to specialists who can provide services in other languages. Only 1 institution of 18 provided an opportunity to get translation services, while 3 did not provide services in any other language than the Lithuanian.

Question 26. How were these challenges addressed/planned to be addressed and are there any good practices in responding to the challenges?

In order to dispel misunderstandings about the provision and payment of healthcare services to beneficiaries of temporary protection, the **procedure has been presented several times** during the regional cooperation platform meetings of healthcare institutions. These platform meetings are held monthly, and representatives from all healthcare institutions in Lithuania are invited to participate.

Additionally, to facilitate the dissemination of information, the Ministry of Health and the State Health Insurance Fund have prepared and distributed **informational leaflets to healthcare institutions**. They have also designated individuals who provide consultations to healthcare institutions and patients via phone and email regarding the provision of temporary protection for healthcare services.

Information about the provision of healthcare services for beneficiaries of temporary protection is also available on the Government's website at <https://lrv.lt/lt/informacija-apie-kara-ukrainoje/informatsija-dlia-gromadian-ukrayini-information-about-support-for-ukraine-informacija-apie-pagalba-ukrainai/informacija-apie-parama-ukrainieciams>.

To expedite the resolution of specific issues in individual instances, close collaboration has been established with non-governmental organizations that assign case managers. **Case managers directly communicate with patients**, healthcare institutions, and the Ministry of Health, addressing local issues and misunderstandings as they arise.

Regarding increasing linguistic accessibility to medical services for beneficiaries of temporary protection, the Ministry of Health had issued recommendations already in 2020 on how healthcare institutions should serve persons who do not speak Lithuanian. Among the recommended actions were the following: drawing up a list of doctors who can provide services in English and other foreign languages (e.g., Russian, Polish, German, French) and making this list available to registration staff as well as on the institution's webpage; drawing up a list of registration staff members who can service clients in English (and other foreign languages) and posting this list on information stands in reception rooms; creating an English menu on the registration line; publishing key information about the institution's services, contact numbers; providing a description of registration procedures, etc. in English; preparing consent forms in English.

Question 27. Have there been any major legal, policy or practical changes regarding access to education for beneficiaries of temporary protection during the research period?

There have been no major changes regarding access to education for beneficiaries of temporary protection during the research period.

However, one potentially significant change is related to the possibility to follow the online Ukrainian curricula and study in the Ukrainian language. According to Article 24(1) of the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania, Lithuanian citizens and foreigners with the right to reside in Lithuania, whether permanently or temporarily, have equal rights to education. This means that, as of September 1, 2023, education must be provided to underage individuals from Ukraine in accordance with pre-school, general education programmes, or vocational training programmes in Lithuanian educational institutions. The Education Law does not provide for any exceptions or concessions related to individuals with temporary protection status, including concessions related to learning based on Ukrainian educational programmes online. As per Circular of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports No. SR-2180 on the Education of Ukrainian Children for the 2023-2024 school year, dated June 5, 2023, it is stipulated that an individual can engage in remote education in the Ukrainian language according to general education programmes of Ukraine in schools recognized by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education for up to one year from the moment of arrival to Lithuania (<https://smsg.lrv.lt/lt/informacija-del-karopabegeliu-is-ukrainos/naudingos-nuorodos-lietuvos-mokykloms>). This means that those children who studied remotely at remote education schools approved by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education in the 2022-2023 school year, must in the 2023-2024 school year switch to regular education in groups at schools in Lithuania. In other words, in the 2023-2024 school year, most beneficiaries of temporary protection will study in classrooms, alongside other students.

Question 28. What are the key challenges and barriers in Lithuania during the research period in providing access to primary and secondary education to persons under 18 years old (including measures facilitating the possibility to follow the online Ukrainian curricula)?

One of the key barriers in providing access to education remains **the language barrier**. As those beneficiaries of temporary protection who were learning remotely move to regular modes of education in classrooms, overcoming the language barrier is likely to become the greatest challenge in the 2023-2024 school year.

According to Circular of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports No. SR-2180 on the Education of Ukrainian Children for the 2023-2024 school year, dated June 5, 2023, regardless of the chosen form and method of education or the language of education, all schoolchildren who arrived from Ukraine and enrolled in Lithuanian schools must learn the Lithuanian language (at different levels, intensity, and speed). Schools must ensure that all children can communicate with their peers, that they can participate in extracurricular activities, and that they receive the required educational and learning support. **The need for so many teachers to undergo trainings** and make the necessary adjustments to teach foreigners poses a challenge.

The lack of knowledge of the Lithuanian language is not in itself an obstacle to enrolling in general public schools. Schools may place students with insufficient language skills in intensive study classes and may focus on teaching the language exclusively for up to a year. Students may also be placed in general classes by adjusting their learning goals and creating individual assignments. Moreover, there is a general adaptation period, which is different for each individual and the length of which depends on their progress. During the adaptation period, students are assigned teacher assistants, their progress is also monitored by the school psychologist, if such is available. However, while theoretically the educational system should be able to cope with the integration of migrant children, in practice the resources are limited. For example, an inspection of schools carried out by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports in 2022 found a **lack of Lithuanian language teachers, and especially, supporting educational specialists**, such as speech therapists, psychologists, teacher assistants, and special pedagogues.

Relatedly, it should be noted that students in their final year of high school, who aim to graduate in Lithuania in 2024, must have satisfactory average yearly grades and pass the mandatory **Lithuanian language and literature matriculation exam** (school or national) and at least one other matriculation exam in a subject of their choice. In order to be allowed to take the Lithuanian language exam, students must also have a satisfactory average yearly grade in the subject of the Lithuanian language and literature. Both getting the required average grade and then passing the exam may prove to be exceedingly challenging for students who have not gone through the educational system in Lithuania. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports noted that, in terms of matriculation exams, the achievements of students from Ukraine were statistically comparable to average results of the whole student population in 2022.

Besides the language barrier and related challenges, interviews with schools that enrolled Ukrainian children revealed the following challenges:

- **Cultural differences:** the behaviour of children arriving from Ukraine often differs from that of the Lithuanian children, including the way they express themselves, interact, and resolve conflicts with peers.
- **Tensions with the local Russian-speaking students:** since Ukrainian students often prefer Russian-speaking schools to overcome the language barrier, there have been some reports about tensions between the war refugees and local Russian speakers.
- **Student motivation:** some students lack the motivation to study the Lithuanian language and participate in school life, either they do not plan to live in Lithuania or for other reasons.
- **Differences in curricula:** due to differences in school curricula, some students from Ukraine have not studied the subjects that students in Lithuania start earlier (e.g., physics).
- **Lack of extracurricular activities:** while schools make efforts to engage students from Ukraine in afterschool activities and additional funding has been assigned for that by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, not all Ukrainian students could take advantage of these opportunities.

A particular challenge that should be singled out is the **need for psychological support** for some of the students who have experienced war. It should be noted that the lack of psychological support at schools and for children is a general issue in the country. A typical school would have about 700 students but only one psychologist; moreover, more than a third of schools do not have psychologists at all due to non-competitive wages. As the demand for mental health services increased during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a general shortage of children's psychologists and psychiatrists during the past few years. The situation may be even worse for students from Ukraine. A 2023 survey by the Lithuanian Red Cross conducted in Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Alytus and Vilkaviškis found the following obstacles for students from Ukraine to receive psychological services: the language barrier (not all children's psychologists can communicate in Russian or English); lack of children's psychologists; lack of funding for private psychologists; lack of continuous support; long waiting lines to register for a consultation with a psychologist. These problems are compounded by the lack of information about available services, as well as a certain stigma attached to seeking mental health services.

Finally, one other issue that had to be addressed was the recognition of education in Lithuania upon return to Ukraine. In Lithuania, children attend school for 12 years and are assessed on a ten-point grading scale, while in Ukraine school education last 11 years and a twelve-point grading school is used. There are differences in the content of the educational programmes as well, which makes automatic recognition difficult.

Question 29. What steps have been taken to address these challenges, and are there any good practices in responding to the challenges?

As was mentioned in the answer to Q27, under current regulation, the maximum length of **remote education individually is limited to one year**. This means that those children who were studying remotely last year will start the new school year in Lithuanian schools, where their Lithuanian language learning can be monitored and assisted appropriately. The Ministry's decision to not ask for an exception and to not initiate changes in the regulation is likely to have profound consequences in overcoming the language barrier and facilitating access to education in the longer term.

In the short term, schools resorted to a wide range of solutions aimed at helping the children from Ukraine overcome the language barrier. Some hired additional teacher assistants who are from Ukraine or who speak Russian, while others searched for textbooks or computer applications in the Ukrainian language so that children can participate. Some schools equipped students with tablets and encouraged both students and teachers to use automated translation applications, such as Google Lens, in order to translate classroom assignments into a language they can understand. Among examples of a good practice at school level, teachers mentioned the use of Lions Quest programmes in facilitating social and emotional integration of the Ukrainian children.

Vilniaus Lietuvių Namai Gymnasium (a specialized school for educating children who do not speak the Lithuanian language) prepared a 20-hour-long training programme for teachers "The First Ten Steps in Teaching Foreigners the Lithuanian Language". The experts of the gymnasium organized four training courses attended by approximately 100 teachers, during which they shared practical examples and personal experience on how to work with children arriving from war zones. The gymnasium plans to resume and continue online consultations of teachers from October to December, covering various topics, such as teaching and assessment methods, learning aids, children's integration, etc.

Psychologists of the non-governmental organization Children Support Centre prepared [recommendations on how to talk to children and adolescents](#) about the war in Ukraine, how to help them overcome anxiety, and how to integrate Ukrainians into an existing school community, etc. These recommendations are available online on various websites, including the website of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports.

An example of a good practice in ensuring access to education was the foundation of classes and schools that [provide education in the Ukrainian language](#). For example, the International School of Ukraine was opened in Vilnius and Klaipėda already in 2022 and enrolled about 1,200 students. In 2022, 120 students graduated and received Ukrainian matriculation certificates. All subjects are taught in the Ukrainian language by teachers from Ukraine. The schools are funded from the state budget, while maintenance costs, including rent and utilities, are covered by a charity foundation. In Vilnius, the Government allowed the International School of Ukraine to use suitable premises for three years free of charge. In September 2023, the International School of Ukraine also opened new branches in Kaunas and Šiauliai, providing access to education for more than 850 children. Having schools that follow the Ukrainian curricula and teach in the Ukrainian language helps addressing a wide range of problems, some of which were mentioned in the answer to Q28, including the language barrier, matriculation exams, the recognition of education back in Ukraine, cultural differences, etc.

Question 30. Have there been any major legal, policy or practical changes regarding access to social assistance for beneficiaries of temporary protection during the research period?

There have been [no major legal](#), policy or practical changes regarding access to social assistance for beneficiaries of temporary protection during the research period.

Currently, under the national law of the Republic of Lithuania, foreigners who have been granted temporary protection are entitled to receive **social assistance and benefits under the same conditions as citizens** of Lithuania (e.g., social allowance, compensation for housing heating costs, drinking water costs and hot water costs, children's allowances (lump-sum allowance for a child, child allowance for a child, child allowance, childcare allowance for children in education or training, lump-sum allowance for pregnant women, foster care allowance, targeted supplement to the foster care allowance, temporary child care allowance, one-off settlement allowance), burial allowance, and social support for schoolchildren (free meals and support for the purchase of school supplies), etc.).

One potentially significant change has been the **increase in the availability of funds for municipal authorities**. On 1 February 2023, Order No A1-64 of the Minister of Social Security and Labour approved the description of the procedure for the financing of the project "Reception and Early Integration of Refugees from Ukraine" (HOME/2022/AMIF/AG/EMAS/TF1/LT/0013), financed from the funds of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund under the measure "Assistance in case of emergency". It allows municipal administrations to apply for funding for integration activities.

In 2023, as in the previous year, **local NGOs and international organizations continued to play an important role** in providing social assistance for beneficiaries of temporary protection. For example, IOM Lithuania carried out a series of cash-based interventions to improve the welfare of the beneficiaries. At the end of 2022, considering the strain of inflation and increasing energy costs, IOM Lithuania provided one-time cash assistance to beneficiaries of temporary protection registered in Lithuania who met at least one vulnerability criteria (single parent with children; expecting mothers; elderly 60-65-year-olds that had pensioner status in Ukraine; victims of trafficking). Each person received 147 EUR, with a 50% increase in the amount for each additional member of the household. A total of 303,089 EUR was disbursed to 1,182 households with 2,782 beneficiaries. In September 2023, IOM Lithuania distributed 1,875 pharmacy cards to children and disabled and elderly persons from Ukraine, with a total value of more than 93,000 EUR. The latest cash-based intervention is to offer beneficiaries who are parents with one or more children, families with three or more children, pregnant women, people over 60 years of age and families with disabled persons a lump-sum payment partially cover the first and last month of rent.

Question 31. What are the key challenges and barriers in Lithuania in providing access to social assistance/welfare for beneficiaries of temporary protection during the research period?

The Ministry of Social Security and Labour did not identify any key challenges or obstacles in ensuring access to social assistance for beneficiaries of temporary protection during the research period. The beneficiaries of temporary protection have the same access to social assistance as the citizens.

Surveys carried out by NGOs and international organizations have shown that one of the main challenges for beneficiaries of temporary protection is the **lack of information about the available services**. For example, according to a survey (N=567) conducted by IOM Lithuania in June 2023, 9% of respondents did not know where to find assistance and wanted more information on health services, medicines, financial support, etc.

In its June 2023 study of support for refugees and their social integration, the National Audit Office (an institution which supervises the lawfulness of the use of public funds and assets) found that there is **no coordinated cooperation between regional and local government institutions and social protection agencies** on matters of social protection for beneficiaries of temporary protection. The National Audit Office recommended to create coordination mechanisms for all institutions involved in the reception and integration of refugees, which could be quickly activated to ensure that dialogue on integration issues takes place with local and regional government institutions. Moreover, it was recommended to **define service provision standards and norms**. In the absence of such standards and norms, the provision of services at the municipal level varies significantly, which may have negative impact on access. For example, many municipalities provide information and assistance to the beneficiaries of temporary protection and NGOs working with them by a general phone line. The National Audit Office gave Jonava municipality as an example of a good practice in this regard, where the Social Services Center has a dedicated Immigrant Information Center, which operates on a one-stop-shop principle, providing assistance to asylum seekers and Ukrainians on all matters. When needed, they mediate and cooperate with healthcare, education, and other institutions, as well as NGOs.

The National Audit Office's study also found that the websites of most municipalities were not accessible to non-Lithuanian speakers. Third-country nationals **lacked clear, streamlined information presented in understandable language** about the services they are entitled to, institutional contacts, and the operation of public transportation. According to the Assessment of the needs of refugees from Ukraine living in Lithuania carried out by the Red Cross in February 2023 (N=3,862), 37.36% of Ukrainian refugees claimed that the available information was not clear or only partially clear and, remarkably, 63.61% relied on information obtained through social media and community channels.

Question 32. How were these challenges addressed/planned to be addressed and are there any good practices in responding to the challenges?

The Ministry of Social Security and Labour highlighted as a good practice encouraging the **greater involvement of municipal authorities** in providing access to social assistance for beneficiaries of temporary protection. Existing municipal projects in Lithuania support information, counselling, mediation, representation activities, civic orientation training and/or courses, including e.g. on social awareness, history, introduction to the Lithuanian legal, social security, health, education, labour system. Municipal projects also include other education and training-oriented measures to facilitate access to the labour market (e.g., vocational guidance and counselling, personal competences development (motivation, communication skills, presentation to the employer, etc.), training, courses, legal advice, joint events with the local community), which contributes to the integration of third-country nationals into the local community.

The Ministry of Social Security and Labour also invited municipal administrations to prepare projects that would include activities to:

- (a) address the problems caused by the stress experienced by persons during migration, as well as other physical and psychological experiences (mutual assistance groups, provision of psychosocial services);
- (b) empower women and girls (e.g., educational seminars, promotion of entrepreneurship, working groups on women's rights to health, financial freedom, promotion of autonomy);
- (c) reduce the risks of illegal work, trafficking in human beings, addictions to psychotropic substances and to contribute to their prevention (dissemination of information, counselling, psychological and legal assistance, preventive measures, training for workers and professionals to identify and address the signs of trafficking in human beings, addictions, and other problems).

3.

Vulnerable groups

Question 33. What are the key challenges in Lithuania in (i) identifying vulnerable persons under the Temporary Protection Directive and (ii) providing them the necessary assistance and support during the research period?

During the research period, there were no major challenges in identifying vulnerable persons and providing them the necessary assistance and support.

The EMN definition of a vulnerable person includes minors, unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, victims of trafficking in human beings, persons with serious illnesses, persons with mental disorders and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as victims of female genital mutilation. It should be noted that, of the 81,202 Ukrainian war refugees registered in Lithuania, 26,425 were minors, 728 were unaccompanied minors, 4,339 were over the age of 65, many were single women with minor children. In other words, the majority of the beneficiaries of temporary protection in Lithuania fall under the category of vulnerable persons.

At the beginning of the influx of war refugees from Ukraine, one of the key issues for persons with disability was to **get their disability (or reduced working capacity, or special needs) recognized in Lithuania** too in order to gain access to the required healthcare services, medicines, and support. Order No. A1-537 of 18 August 2022 of the Minister of Social Security and Labour approved a procedure for equating the disability of a beneficiary of temporary protection that was recognized in the country of origin to the categories of disabilities under the Lithuanian laws. This order facilitated the situation for beneficiaries who had a document certifying disability. Those who did not have it had to apply for the assessment of disability, working capacity, or special needs in accordance with the Lithuanian law, which is a significantly longer process. In such cases, beneficiaries first needed to get a reference from their family doctor and apply to the Disability and Working Capacity Assessment Service and the assessment would take about a month.

The services provided to the beneficiaries of temporary protection with disabilities are the same as those provided to citizens. However, it should be noted that the **financial support available for such people and their families is insufficient**. Especially, mothers with children that have a disability or special needs find it very difficult to gain and maintain employment, which makes them extremely vulnerable and reliant on the support of NGOs.

According to a 2023 survey of the Red Cross (N=3862), about 20% of the beneficiaries of temporary protection in Lithuania **needed mental health services**. More than half of respondents (56.65%) claimed that their needs were not met or were only partially met, indicating the lack of continuity of services, the language barrier, and the quality of services as the main reasons for their dissatisfaction.

Question 34. How were these challenges addressed/planned to be addressed and are there any good practices in responding to the challenges?

Since the outbreak of the war on February 24, 2022, **a system was established to identify unaccompanied minors** from Ukraine: any institution that learns of an unaccompanied minor foreigner's arrival must notify the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service. In certain cases, these minors are identified by the territorial units of the Migration Department under the Ministry of Internal Affairs when applying for migration documents, less frequently by the State Border Protection Service, and sometimes by non-governmental organizations or structural units of municipal administrations (e.g., when seeking social assistance). Often, the unaccompanied minors or those accompanying them directly approach the territorial divisions of the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service. It's important to note that under Lithuanian law, any child arriving without statutory representatives is considered unaccompanied, even if accompanied by adult close relatives or persons with emotional ties (e.g., sisters/brothers, aunts, neighbours, godmothers, etc. – most unaccompanied minor foreigners from Ukraine arrive accompanied by women). Every time an unaccompanied minor foreigner is identified, they are engaged in a conversation to understand their perspective. It is evaluated whether the child is safe with the individuals who accompanied them, and various risk and protection factors are assessed before appointing a statutory representative.

Considering that unaccompanied minors from Ukraine often arrive accompanied by adult close relatives or individuals with emotional ties (e.g., siblings, aunts, neighbours, godmothers, etc.), and after evaluating potential risks, these individuals, if they agree and considering the child's expressed opinion, are appointed as the child's legal representatives – guardians. Since the onset of the war, to ensure the best interests of children fleeing the conflict, a decision was made to provide support and ensure that **all fostered children receive equal rights and treatment**. The fostered children who had already arrived were granted the same financial assistance as the newly designated guardians for the incoming unaccompanied minors.

Question 35. What are the key challenges in Lithuania in providing assistance to unaccompanied minors, separated children, and children accompanied by a guardian appointed in Ukraine?

During the research period, there were no major challenges in providing assistance and services to unaccompanied minors, separated children, and children accompanied by a guardian appointed in Ukraine.

Based on the agreement between Ukraine's Ministry of Social Policy and Lithuania's Ministry of Social Security and Labour, dated 11 April 2022, unaccompanied minors from Ukraine cannot be given permanent guardianship or be adopted in Lithuania. Consequently, one of the challenges that the Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service encountered was the length of the temporary guardianship. According to Article 3.253 of the Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania, a child's temporary guardianship (care) may not last longer than twelve months. It can be extended up to 18 months in exceptional cases.

One of the challenges in providing assistance in 2023, as in 2022, was the observed **reluctance of the Ukrainian guardians to communicate and cooperate** with the social workers and the child rights protection specialists. Families are often suspicious of and refuse the support and services that are being offered.

Another issue that was mentioned by the Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service concerns Lithuania's "zero" tolerance for any form of violence against children. In Lithuania, physical, psychological, sexual violence, and neglect are prohibited. There were reports of **possible cases of violence against children in families of Ukrainians** who have fled the war. In such instances, the general principle enshrined in legislation was applied: the child's situation was assessed, communication was held with both the parents and the child (if they consented and could express their opinion), and assistance was initiated if needed. A case manager would then be appointed who devised a support plan and coordinated comprehensive services for the family. There were instances where families arriving from Ukraine refused to cooperate, declined the offered services, and either returned to Ukraine or moved to another European Union country.

In this regard, the information system of the Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service (Family Social Support Information System - SPIS) does not have the functionality to record or filter reports about potential violations. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the scale of the issue mentioned above.

Experts of the Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service also noted the negative trend of the **increasing lack of qualified psychologists** who could work with families and children experiencing social risk. This negative trend is exacerbated in the case of the Ukrainian refugees since there are even fewer specialists who could provide services in the Russian language.

Question 36. Does Lithuania host groups of children evacuated from Ukrainian institutions? If so, how many children were hosted during the research period?

Yes, Lithuania does host groups of children evacuated from Ukrainian institutions. All the children arrived in 2022; there were no new groups of children nor new children from Ukrainian foster homes or similar institutions in 2023. The children have successfully adapted to life in Lithuania, and their rights and interests are protected. Lithuania honours its agreement with Ukraine to not allow the adoption of Ukrainian children.

The children are accommodated on the principle of groups/family homes. The cooperation agreement between Lithuania and Ukraine established a principle to not divide groups arriving from a single institution, except when this is in their best interest. Therefore, all efforts are made to place the children who arrived together in the same facility in order to not separate them and preserve their initial bonds. In 2023, there were no instances when such groups would be separated or assigned different forms of care (in families, family homes, or a childcare facility).

When children who live in groups return to their country of origin, there is **close cooperation** between the Child Rights and Adoption Service, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, the Migration Department, the Ukrainian consul in Lithuania and other competent institutions of Ukraine. In cases when children who live in groups in Lithuania plan to return to Ukraine, the Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service contacts their partners in Ukraine and the military authorities in the territory to which the children are planning to return and obtains a confirmation that the territory is secure and that there is no threat to the children's safety and life.

Special measures were applied to ensure the safety of children arriving from Ukraine in Lithuania and reduce the possibility of trafficking in human beings. The safety of children living in groups is ensured by physical means. For instance, in one of the care homes housing a large group of young children from Ukraine, the facility's territory offers protection for children from outsiders who might harm them. Cameras have been installed, and there's ample space for games, sports, and other age-appropriate leisure activities. To ensure children's safety, individuals who aren't representatives of companies or institutions providing direct services to children are prohibited from visiting them. Another illustrative example is the securing of children's safety after working hours by locking the facility's gates. Access to the centre's premises is controlled by social work assistants on duty at that time. Visits and meetings are arranged and organized by submitting a request to the specific centre's manager, indicating the precise time, day, and (or) purpose of the meeting. Another example of a facility housing a group of children and the measures taken to ensure their safety is that the territory is fenced off, all building doors have entry codes, and individuals wishing to visit can only enter with permission. Those wanting to volunteer are accepted following the facility's approved volunteer activity description, after providing health and criminal record certificates, signing a contract, and obtaining a permit. Other individuals wishing to meet with children are accompanied by the facility's director or a person designated by the director. Outsiders have no opportunity to visit children independently. A group of employees are either informed about guests in advance or are aware of the volunteers' schedule.

Question 37. What particular steps were taken in Lithuania to protect people fleeing Ukraine and, especially, unaccompanied minors, from trafficking in human beings during the research period?

One of the main mechanisms for organizing the prevention of trafficking in human beings in Lithuania is the Countertrafficking Coordination Commission, which was established in 2016 and which includes representatives from various ministries, state institutions, NGOs, and other key stakeholders. The main task of the Commission is to coordinate the fight against human trafficking by carrying out analyses, making recommendations and planning. To protect people fleeing Ukraine from trafficking in human beings, the Commission had an extraordinary meeting, during which the arising threats and potential solutions were discussed. Preventive measures were planned according to the competence of different institutions and organizations, in cooperation with NGOs, and included the following:

- the Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with the Migration Department and NGOs were tasked with organizing the training of volunteers working in the registration centres so that they are able to recognize the signs of human trafficking and refer suspected victims for assistance;
- the Lithuanian Police was asked to ensure the security of registration centres, prevent potential human traffickers from entering the premises, as well as to guide the volunteers working the queues outside the registration centres;
- the State Border Guard Service was tasked with ensuring the flow control of transport carrying individuals fleeing from the military aggression in Ukraine at the Polish border based on risk analysis;
- the Employment Service under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour was asked to contribute, as possible, to the dissemination of information material about human trafficking.

In response to the influx of refugees fleeing from Ukraine, the Lithuanian Police formed a task force to combat human trafficking, appointed coordinators in registration centres, employed and trained 14 Ukrainians to register arriving refugees, and disseminated information about the most vulnerable refugees to relevant institutions.

Relatedly, the State Labour Inspectorate has improved the regulation of temporary employment agencies and **increased efforts to prevent human trafficking for forced labour**. The State Labour Inspectorate established 10 new inspector positions, trained inspectors about human trafficking for forced labour among foreign workers and set up a specialized group of inspectors in Kaunas, which will coordinate actions with the police and NGOs on human trafficking issues. In January-June 2023, 3,023 illegal employment inspections were carried out and 829 instances of foreigners working in violation of employment procedures were detected. Most violations were detected in the construction and the transport sectors. Moreover, the website of the State Labour Inspectorate contains essential up-to-date information in Russian and Ukrainian on the legal framework in Lithuania, including the obligations of employers and the rights of employees, as well on how to report labour exploitation and human trafficking.

Question 38. What are the key challenges in Lithuania in relation to trafficking in human beings?

There were several specific challenges and incidents involving Ukrainian refugees in relation to trafficking in human beings. For example:

- Some of the 43 children brought to Lithuania from a Ukrainian residential childcare centre "Perlinka" complained that they may be in danger of being put up for unwanted adoption outside the EU. The Prosecutor General's Office launched an investigation regarding possible trafficking in human beings and psychological violence.
- There were multiple reports in the media of Ukrainians being **underpaid or unpaid for work** or subjected to **labour exploitation** in Lithuania.
- In the registration centres, there were **attempts to lure and persuade young Ukrainian women** to engage in prostitution and illegal work.
- According to the National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking Issues, in one instance, a Lithuanian national attempted to **misappropriate support meant for refugees** by holding a family hostage.

One of the key general challenges in protecting the beneficiaries of temporary protection against trafficking in human beings was the distrust of the Ukrainian citizens towards law enforcement and other state institutions. This distrust often led to unwillingness to report exploitation, mistreatment and other violations of law to the authorities.

Question 39. How were these challenges addressed/planned to be addressed and are there any good practices in responding to the challenges?

The main approach to solving the issues mentioned in Q38 was to strengthen institutional cooperation:

- law enforcement institutions increased the protection of registration centres;
- border guards systematically checked vehicles with vulnerable persons, such as unaccompanied children;
- law enforcement institutions implemented preventive measures, including surveys of vulnerable persons selected on the basis of risk and the dissemination of information on the prevention of trafficking in human beings;
- NGOs provided consultations in registration centres regarding the dangers of trafficking in human beings;
- the Employment Service prepared information in Russian and Ukrainian languages about basic labour rights and disseminated it in registration centres;
- the Employment Service carried out the monitoring of Ukrainian refugees employed in Lithuania to ensure that they are not subjected to forced labour;
- the employees of registration centres received memo cards with key indicators for the initial identification of victims of trafficking in human beings;
- the Lithuanian police employed 13 Ukrainian citizens to carry out preventive activities and increase trust in law enforcement institutions.

To prevent trafficking in Ukrainian children, additional measures were implemented. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour created a special algorithm for the reception of children arriving to Lithuania from Ukraine, providing a guideline for the actions and cooperation of institutions. According to this algorithm, municipalities, NGOs and private individuals must report about groups of children arriving from Ukraine to the Minister of Social Security and Labour and about individual unaccompanied children to the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service. The Service periodically provides the Ministry of Social Security and Labour with updated figures on the situation of unaccompanied minors from Ukraine for the past period. In all cases, the child rights protection experts must talk to each child, record their data, and ensure that they have a legal guardian. Municipalities are then responsible for making sure that the children are taken care of – that they receive all the services, have proper accommodation, etc. In case of groups arriving from Ukraine, these children are accommodated together in order to ensure their best interests and reduce psychological trauma. The State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service collaborates with the International Relations Department of the Lithuanian Criminal Police Bureau, providing information about children arriving in Lithuania without statutory representatives, aiming to prevent potential human trafficking risks.

In addition to this, Lithuania chose not to allow adoption procedures or permanent guardianship for children from Ukraine and to coordinate issues concerning the Ukrainian children staying in Lithuania with Ukrainian institutions. Thus, for example, every month, the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service informs the Ukrainian consul in Lithuania about children who have left Lithuania, providing a list of children's names, their departure location, and the total count.

4.

Conclusions

Question 40. Please synthesize the main and most important findings of Lithuanian national report by drawing conclusions from your responses, emphasizing on how challenges were addressed and main lessons learnt during the research period in terms of the key research for this Study, including:

- Legal pathways beyond the Temporary Protection Directive and transition from temporary protection to other types and forms of residence
- Traveling of beneficiaries of temporary protection
- Assistance to people wishing to go home (back) to Ukraine
- Registration
- Access to rights provided under the Temporary Protection Directive, including accommodation, labour market, healthcare, education, social assistance and support for vulnerable groups

Lithuania did not appoint a coordinating institution responsible for ensuring the rights of the beneficiaries of temporary protection. Given that the Temporary Protection Directive guarantees rights in various areas, there was a plethora of institutions involved, each covering its own area of responsibility. In some areas, like education, social security and healthcare, the system is fragmented in Lithuania – decisions are made centrally, at the level of ministries, while the implementation and the financial burden is distributed across municipalities. Furthermore, ministries have services that are theoretically subordinate but exercise a degree discretion or exhibit qualitative variability in the implementation of their functions. Among the key actors in this regard the following can be mentioned: the Employment Service, the Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service, the Refugees' Reception Center - all under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour; the Migration Department, the State Border Guard Service, the Police Department – all under the Ministry of the Interior; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Health; municipal administrations and their internal departments. To this must be added a fairly large number of non-governmental actors, many of whom played an essential role in receiving and providing for the refugees in 2022 in areas where the state fell short or intentionally delegated, most notably in the provision of accommodation and support for the most vulnerable refugees.

A few observations may be made regarding the decentralized approach taken towards the provision of the rights of the beneficiaries of temporary protection. First, in **areas where there was a clear and unambiguous attribution of responsibility** – e.g., the registration of the beneficiaries, the application of employment measures, or the protection of unaccompanied minors, there were few legal, political or even policy changes or challenges in 2023, since most arising issues were swiftly taken care off already in 2022. Thus, the Migration Department introduced digital residence permits to deal with the potentially daunting task of extending, printing, and distributing tens of thousands of plastic cards to beneficiaries of temporary protection. The Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service created an algorithm for identifying and receiving minors, according to which municipalities, NGOs and private persons must report to the Service all children arriving to Lithuania from Ukraine in groups or individually. The Employment Service applied active market integration measures, creating strong incentives for employers to hire the beneficiaries of temporary protection. Meanwhile, in **areas that fell in between or outside the clearly demarcated institutional zones of responsibility**, less progress was made, problems persisted, and challenges went unaddressed or, conversely, there was a duplication of efforts. For example, while some information on the

beneficiaries of temporary protection was not collected at all, each institution ended up collecting limited data for its own uses, and ultimately there are gaps in available data, it is not easily accessible, shareable or usable, which hinders analysis and decision-making. Similarly, while all actors would agree that language acquisition is central to not only integration (employment, education) but also to facilitate access to all other rights and services (healthcare, information about available services), and while financial resources were made centrally available for language courses, the lack of coordinating and managing authority meant that these resources were not effectively used and that, consequently, little progress was made in this area and the language barrier remains one of the key challenges in 2023.

Second, the decentralized approach that was adopted highlighted the **importance of interinstitutional cooperation** between state and municipal institutions, as well as non-governmental actors. Where mechanisms for such cooperation already existed, as in the case of the prevention of trafficking in human beings or the provision of social services to vulnerable persons, challenges were addressed in time. In other areas, such as increasing the availability of state-funded accommodation, it took time and efforts to work out schemata, come up with procedures and funding sources, and sign agreements, as illustrated by the example of the Refugees' Reception Centres agreements with municipal administrations and NGOs or the preparation of the list of state and municipal real estate property available for accommodating foreigners. There are signs that such cooperation has become more frequent and effective during the research period.

Third, the decentralized approach highlighted the **need for service provision standards and norms**. This is particularly important in areas that exhibit high variance under normal circumstances, e.g., in education or healthcare. For example, while the Ministry of Health distributed information on the services available free of charge to all beneficiaries of temporary protection ("essential healthcare services"), not all healthcare institutions internalized it or further distributed it internally, such that, according to surveys, in many cases the Ukrainians were charged for services that should have been provided free of charge or refused services altogether. Similarly, the Ministry had recommendations on the provision of services to foreigners who do not speak the Lithuanian language already in 2020, yet many healthcare institutions have not implemented them even in 2023, thereby worsening the beneficiaries' access.

In housing, the **private sector played a pivotal role** in 2022 and continued to be significant during the research period. While no aggregate data is available on where the Ukrainian refugees live, a 2023 survey conducted by the IOM found that over 60% find accommodation privately (either by renting an apartment or by settling with the Lithuanian hosts). Surveys also find that accommodation remains one of the main sources of difficulties experienced by the beneficiaries of temporary protection, especially due to soaring rental costs in large cities.

In education, in 2023, there was **a turn towards the integration** of the beneficiaries of temporary protection. The Ministry of Education decided not to initiate changes in the existing legislation, according to which remote learning is allowed for the maximum period of 12 months. This means that the Ukrainian children are to join public or private schools in Lithuania study under approved programmes and learn the Lithuanian language. In this regard, a major development in 2023 was the expansion of the network of schools that provide education in the Ukrainian language (in addition to schools in Vilnius and Klaipėda that opened in 2022, new branches were opened in Kaunas and Šiauliai). However, due to the general lack of funding of the education sector, the integration of foreign children is likely to pose a challenge, particularly due to the shortages of language teachers and supporting educational specialists, including psychologists and special pedagogues.

In 2023, Lithuania **improved healthcare access** for beneficiaries of temporary protection. The Law on Health Insurance was revised to include vulnerable groups like children, pensioners, and

disabled persons, granting them compulsory health insurance for comprehensive healthcare services. Other, uninsured beneficiaries receive only essential healthcare services. In 2023, changes were made to reimburse prescription medication costs for all registered beneficiaries, funded not just by the state but also specific projects. An order in January 2023 detailed the reimbursement process for medicines to foreigners with temporary protection. However, surveys indicate that many beneficiaries remain unaware of their rights in this area.

The State Labour Inspectorate enhanced regulations for temporary employment agencies and **intensified efforts against forced labour human trafficking** by establishing a specialized team that collaborates with police and NGOs. Between January and June 2023, they conducted 3,023 employment inspections, identifying 829 procedural violations primarily in construction and transport. The inspectorate's website now offers vital information in Russian and Ukrainian about Lithuania's employment laws and reporting avenues for labour exploitation.

EMN is a Network composed of migration experts which aims to collect, analyse and provide up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum. By the decree of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania International Organization for Migration Vilnius Office acts as the national coordinator for the EMN activities in Lithuania.

The EMN National Contact Point (NCP) in Lithuania is composed of representatives from the Ministry of the Interior, the Migration Department, the State Border Guard Service as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Vilnius Office which acts as the national coordinator for the EMN activities in Lithuania. EMN NCP in Lithuania also collaborates with other entities from governmental as well as non-governmental institutions working in the area of migration.
