

JOINT-UA-EMPLOY

Joint innovative employment support for displaced people from Ukraine

Analysis of integration of displaced persons from Ukraine in Slovenia and in Lithuania

WP 7, Activity A007.001

Prepared by ZRC SAZU

Authors: Jure Gombač, Asja Pehar Senekovič, Ivana Azhievskaja, Jošt Žagar,
Špela Kastelic

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ZRC SAZU



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Summary

The present document was made as a part of the activities of the Joint Innovative Employment Support for Displaced People from Ukraine (JOINT-UA EMPLOY) project, which is co-funded by the Social Innovation+ initiative of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). The main purpose of the project is to promote the integration of displaced persons from Ukraine into the labour markets in Slovenia and Lithuania by combining employer involvement, the provision of tailored services, and the creation of opportunities for cross-border learning. The project is based on cooperation between public employment services, research and professional organisations, and employer associations. As part of the project activities (WP7, A007.001), the analysis was prepared by the Slovenian Migration Institute, ZRC SAZU. The analysis builds on the previous ZRC SAZU research on the 2023 multi-sectoral needs and assessment of the Ukrainian refugee population in Slovenia¹ and incorporates new data collected through interviews and focus groups.

The aim of this analysis was to examine the employment situation of beneficiaries of temporary protection in Slovenia and Lithuania, and to assess the prospects for transitioning from temporary protection to work-related residence statuses. To this end, the document provides an overview of the EU and national legal frameworks governing temporary protection in Slovenia and Lithuania, a presentation of the available statistical data on beneficiaries, a comparative analysis of the employment and protection field between Slovenia and Lithuania, and a report on the findings of three focus groups conducted with Ukrainian respondents in Slovenia.

The policy recommendations are derived from the consolidated findings of the field research, including focus groups and collective interviews. These recommendations are structured around four key areas: language acquisition, employment, social inclusion, and the safe transition into employment. Overall, the findings suggest a clear willingness among beneficiaries to enter the labour market; however, structural barriers such as underemployment, low wages, and language requirements continue to impede their effective integration.

After four years, the general sentiment regarding the status of temporary protection for Ukrainian refugees in Europe appears to be gradually shifting, with Member States increasingly encouraging either return or transition from temporary protection to alternative residence

¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2024b

statuses. Based on the findings of this research, any policy changes that abruptly worsen the social conditions of an already vulnerable population, such as the withdrawal of social benefits or the termination of protection, would not only adversely affect the individuals concerned but also have negative consequences for the wider community. Accordingly, any transition measures must be gradual, clearly communicated, and supported by proactive cooperation between state institutions, beneficiaries, and civil society organisations.

1. Introduction: The European Context of the Temporary Protection Directive

As of February 2022, Europe remains the major host of the approximately 5.2 million² displaced persons from Ukraine. Since then, Ukrainian nationals have been granted various forms of protection: international protection, temporary protection, and other complementary forms of protection, such as subsidiary protection or specific visa schemes³. The predominant majority of protection beneficiaries (4.35 million⁴) from the Ukraine fall under the temporary protection scheme, making them the prevalent group of protection beneficiaries seeking employment in the host countries. Currently (as of February 2026), over 11,000 people hold Temporary Protection status in Slovenia, and over 51,000 in Lithuania, respectively⁵.

The European Union invoked the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) in response to the mass influx of refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine on March 3rd 2022. Although the Directive was adopted in the aftermath of the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s, this marked its first activation, aimed at addressing the protection needs of people displaced by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.⁶ The TPD, adopted in 2001, is intended to serve as a supplementary mechanism when, due to wars or natural disasters, the asylum systems of member states become overburdened by the number of people seeking protection. In such situations, the TPD provides an alternative, rapid form of protection compared to relatively lengthy asylum procedures. It is activated following a proposal by the European Commission, after which the Council of the European Union must approve the activation by a qualified majority vote. In March 2022, at the time the activation of the Directive was approved, more than 500,000 Ukrainians had already entered the European Union, with millions more expected to arrive. Following the activation of the TPD, Member States became obligated to issue residence permits to Ukrainian refugees and to grant access to the labour market, education, social assistance, housing, and various support programmes.⁷

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2026.

³ e. g. Ukraine Family Scheme visa granted by the Government of the United Kingdom.

⁴ Eurostat, 2026.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Barigazzi & Lynch, 2022.

⁷ Liboreiro & Murray, 2022.

According to Eurostat figures, as of 23 October 2023, approximately 4.3 million non-EU citizens who fled Ukraine were under temporary protection in the European Union, of whom 98.4% were Ukrainian nationals. Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic hosted the largest numbers of beneficiaries.⁸ The Directive establishes an obligation to grant temporary residence permits for an initial period of one year, with the possibility of extensions for up to a maximum total duration of three years. In March 2025, when this three-year period expired, the European Commission adopted a broader interpretative approach, allowing for an additional extension of temporary protection until March 2026 due to the continuing armed conflict in Ukraine. In parallel with this EU-wide approach to addressing longer-term displacement, Member States began introducing and promoting pathways for beneficiaries of temporary protection to transition to other residence statuses. These statuses are often, though not exclusively, linked to employment and are neither harmonised across the EU nor uniform in their conditions or duration.⁹ In June 2025, the Council of the European Union voted to extend temporary protection until March 2027.¹⁰ In October 2025, EU Member States issued 74,175 new decisions granting temporary protection.¹¹ Despite this, 2025 has seen a clear policy trend toward the gradual phasing out of temporary protection in favour of alternative national residence statuses. Poland has been at the forefront of this trend, opting not to apply the extension of the common European temporary protection after March 2026 and instead introducing a national protection status and encouraging beneficiaries to apply for residency based on employment.¹² This anticipated shift toward the gradual discontinuation of the temporary protection regime was also confirmed by the Council of the European Union in its September 2025 Recommendation on the transition away from temporary protection. As stated in the Recommendation:

“Residence permits issued for this purpose could be, for example, based on employment, self-employment, professional training or education and research, family

⁸ Eurostat, 2025.

⁹ Wagner, 2025.

¹⁰ Council of the European Union, 2025.

¹¹ Eurostat, 2025.

¹² Visit Ukraine, 2025. Additionally: The statement from the President of Poland: <https://x.com/prezydentpl/status/2024506104139382995/video/1> (23 February 2026)

or other grounds, or be dedicated residence permits, provided that those persons meet the conditions set out in national law.”¹³ (Council of the European Union, 2025)

European and national policy developments in 2025 concerning the temporary protection of Ukrainians indicate an increasing expectation that beneficiaries either transition to other national residence statuses or enter return programmes and depart for Ukraine. In light of these policy shifts, it remains uncertain whether temporary protection will be extended beyond March 2027. Consequently, for beneficiaries who intend to remain in the European Union rather than return to Ukraine, access to alternative residence statuses is becoming increasingly important.

In order to address these concerns at the national level in Slovenia and Lithuania, this analysis provides a detailed overview of the implementation of temporary protection in Slovenia, complemented by a comparative examination of relevant policy measures in Lithuania. The study further includes a statistical analysis comparing the number of Ukrainian refugees registered with the Employment Service of Slovenia with the total number of beneficiaries of temporary protection.

In addition, the research incorporates findings derived from three focus groups composed of beneficiaries of temporary protection in Slovenia. Two of these focus groups were organised in cooperation between ZRC SAZU and Zavod Dress for Success Maribor, an organisation that has played a significant role as a local intermediary between newly arrived Ukrainians, prospective employers, and the Employment Service. One focus group was organised by DRPD Volunteering Association in Novo mesto. In total, the focus groups comprised 30 participants.

During the discussions, participants responded to a structured set of questions concerning their employment or unemployment status, job satisfaction, experiences of underemployment, cooperation with the Employment Service, and the reasons for registering or not registering with it. Although the findings cannot be considered statistically representative of the full diversity of circumstances among beneficiaries of temporary protection, the synthesis of participants’ contributions offers valuable qualitative insights into the principal challenges and dynamics shaping their labour market integration. The study concludes with a set of national

¹³ Council of the European Union, 2025.



policy recommendations aimed at facilitating the employment of beneficiaries of temporary protection, grounded in evidence from the focus group discussions.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to examine the implementation of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine in Slovenia and in Lithuania, with a particular focus on labour market integration. The analysis combines a desk review of relevant EU and national legal and policy documents, secondary quantitative analysis of administrative and official statistics, and primary qualitative research based on focus groups and interviews.

The desk review maps the legal framework governing temporary protection and related rights in Slovenia and in Lithuania. For the case of Slovenia it is complemented by evidence from a Multi-Sector Needs Assessment conducted by UNHCR in cooperation with the Slovenian Migration Institute of ZRC SAZU. The data from this survey were collected between 7 December 2023 and 26 January 2024 using a structured household questionnaire covering displacement history, legal status, household composition, health, education, employment, housing, access to services, and protection concerns. The survey relied on non-probability sampling, combining availability and purposive sampling to reach refugees residing in Slovenia across multiple locations. Findings from this assessment are used to contextualise labour market outcomes and access to services rather than to produce population-level estimates. The complementary data to the temporary protection framework in Lithuania comes from the UNHCR Lithuania Protection Brief (October 2024), which was a protection monitoring survey jointly conducted by UNHCR in Lithuania and the Lithuanian Red Cross. The data was gathered between August 2023 and March 2024. These assessments constitute the latest available, systematically collected evidence on the needs, vulnerabilities, and inclusion challenges of refugees from Ukraine in the two countries and form the core empirical basis for the comparative discussion.

Furthermore, in the case of Slovenia, the quantitative component draws on secondary data from the Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS) and the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SURS). It compares the number of displaced persons from Ukraine registered with the Employment Service to the total number of beneficiaries of temporary protection and examines descriptive trends where the data permit. The qualitative component consists of three focus groups with beneficiaries of temporary protection in Slovenia and semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders involved in labour market integration and service provision. The focus groups were organised in cooperation between ZRC SAZU and Dress for

Success in Maribor, as well as DRPD Volunteering Association in Novo mesto, and addressed employment status, underemployment, job satisfaction, experiences with the Employment Service, and reasons for registration or non-registration at the Employment Service.

3. Legal Framework and Rights of Temporary Protection Beneficiaries in Slovenia and in Lithuania

3.1 Legal framework of the Republic of Slovenia

Slovenia's legal protection framework for persons fleeing armed conflict, persecution, or other forms of serious harm operates within a layered system of international, EU, and national norms. It differentiates between (i) international protection, grounded in individualised status determination and aligned with the EU asylum acquis, and (ii) temporary protection, a contingency instrument designed for situations of mass displacement where rapid, collective protection is required.

International protection (*mednarodna zaščita*) is the standard asylum pathway in Slovenia and comprises refugee status and subsidiary protection as the two legally recognised forms of protection. The International Protection Act (ZMZ-1) of the Republic of Slovenia (2016) defines international protection precisely in these terms, establishing that protection may take the form of refugee status or subsidiary protection status.¹⁴ In substantive terms, this regime is characterised by individualised adjudication: a person's legal status is determined through an assessment of their personal circumstances and the risk that would materialise upon return. The Slovenian government's guidance reflects this structure, in that subsidiary protection may be granted where refugee criteria are not met but credible reasons demonstrate a risk of "serious harm," including the death penalty/execution, torture or inhuman/degrading treatment, or serious and individual threat arising from indiscriminate violence in armed conflict. This is consistent with the EU-wide standards set by the Qualification Directive (recast) 2011/95/EU, which harmonises both the qualification criteria and the core content of protection across Member States (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2011).¹⁵

On the other hand, temporary protection (*začasna zaščita*), is structurally distinct. It is an EU emergency mechanism established by Directive 2001/55/EC to respond to a *mass influx* (or imminent mass influx) of displaced persons. Its purpose is explicitly twofold: (a) to ensure swift access to protection and minimum rights for displaced persons in urgent need, and (b) to

¹⁴ Republic of Slovenia, International Protection Act (ZMZ-1), 2016.

¹⁵ European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2011.

prevent national asylum systems from being overwhelmed by requiring full individual status determination for very large groups arriving in a short period (Council of the European Union, 2001).¹⁶ Unlike international protection, temporary protection is not premised on proving an individual persecution narrative or meeting an individualised risk threshold. Rather, it is category-based, triggered by an EU Council decision identifying the displaced group(s) covered and implemented through national measures. In legal effect, it provides a time-limited residence status accompanied by a harmonised baseline of rights, typically including lawful stay, access to employment, education for minors, and healthcare at least at an essential/emergency level, alongside reception-related support as regulated nationally.

Both regimes share a protective minimum: the prohibition of *refoulement* (return to a place where life or freedom would be threatened), a cornerstone of international refugee law expressed in Article 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention (United Nations, 1951).¹⁷ However, they operationalise protection through different institutional logics. International protection prioritises individualised justice and legal durability through full examination and status determination, while temporary protection prioritises speed, scalability, and administrative feasibility in emergency conditions.

3.1.1 Slovenia's application of temporary protection for persons displaced from Ukraine

The dual protection structure became operationally salient in Slovenia immediately after the escalation of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, when displacement occurred at a scale that the EU legal order explicitly anticipates as a “mass influx”. In this context, Slovenia’s protection response did not primarily proceed through the ordinary international protection route. Instead, it was channelled through temporary protection, precisely because the EU framework is designed to deliver lawful stay and core entitlements rapidly, without requiring each displaced person to undergo a full individualised asylum determination as a precondition for protection. At an EU level, temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine was activated by Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 (4 March 2022), which established the existence of a mass influx within the meaning of the Temporary

¹⁶ Council of the European Union, 2001.

¹⁷ United Nations, 1951, art. 33.

Protection Directive and identified the main categories of persons entitled to benefit.¹⁸ The temporal dimension is equally important for legal certainty. In June 2025, EU Member States agreed to extend temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine until March 2027, without changing the core categories or baseline rights established by the 2022 decision. In Slovenia, temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine was introduced through a Government decision adopted in March 2022 and published in the Official Gazette¹⁹ A notable feature of Slovenia's implementation is that the Government decision included a slightly broader personal scope than the minimum EU categories by additionally covering certain third-country nationals and stateless persons who held permanent residence in Ukraine and cannot safely and durably return to their country or region of origin. Notably, as the EU-level regime evolved, Slovenia updated its national legal instruments accordingly. In January 2024, Slovenia amended the original Government decision to clarify that extension occurs in line with the Temporary Protection Directive framework.²⁰

Operationally, Slovenia's public guidance on the procedure indicates that temporary protection applies to persons displaced on or after 24 February 2022 and then specifies the eligible categories (Ukrainian nationals resident in Ukraine before that date, persons who had protection in Ukraine, and family members). Conversely, the Slovenian approach is designed to produce rapid legal regularisation. Rather than entering a full asylum procedure as the default, eligible displaced persons may apply for temporary protection, and the competent authorities issue individual decisions and documentation that evidences the status and lawful stay. Slovenia's official guidance and practice materials indicate that administrative units have been issuing individual decisions since the introduction of the regime in March 2022.

Under the Temporary Protection Directive, Member States must issue a residence permit (or equivalent documentation) to persons enjoying temporary protection, thereby regularising stay without requiring full individual asylum status determination. In Slovenia, the Temporary Protection of Displaced Persons Act (ZZZRO-1) explicitly governs the recognition and cessation of temporary protection status and the rights and obligations attached to that status. A key legal-operational effect is that access to rights is status-based: once the status is granted, a person does not have to separately "re-prove" their need for protection to access the core

¹⁸ Council of the European Union, 2022.

¹⁹ Republic of Slovenia, Decision on temporary protection, 2022.

²⁰ Republic of Slovenia, Amending Decision on temporary protection, 2022.

entitlements; the entitlements flow from the recognised status. Under ZZZRO-1, the rights of a person with temporary protection include (among others): temporary residence, accommodation and food or support for private accommodation, healthcare, access to work, education, financial assistance and pocket money, family unity and family reunification-related protections, information on rights and obligations, and assistance in exercising rights and integrating into society. Slovenia further specifies the *modalities* of claiming and delivering these rights through government regulations (implementing decrees), including the 2022 decree on methods and conditions for ensuring rights for persons with temporary protection.²¹

In specific:

- 1) Right to lawful residence. Persons granted temporary protection are entitled to lawful temporary residence in the Republic of Slovenia for as long as temporary protection remains in force. The competent administrative unit (*upravna enota*) decides on eligibility in a shortened declaratory procedure and issues an identity card/certificate of temporary protection (*izkaznica*). Under Slovenian law, this document also serves as a permit for temporary residence in Slovenia and remains valid for the duration of temporary protection. Residence registration obligations form part of the legal framework. The person must register their residence and report any change of residence to the competent authority within the prescribed deadline; where residence is in private accommodation, registration requires proof of the legal basis for occupancy (e.g., a lease agreement or the property owner's consent), as governed by the residence registration legislation and administrative practice guidance.
- 2) Right to accommodation and subsistence. Temporary protection includes the right to accommodation and food in designated accommodation facilities or, alternatively, financial support for private accommodation, subject to conditions set out in national implementing acts. Slovenian regulations specify the forms of accommodation assistance, eligibility criteria, and procedures for accessing financial support where beneficiaries reside outside state-arranged accommodation. Where a person with temporary protection resides outside reception facilities (including where reception facilities close, or where a person transitions to private accommodation), the framework

²¹ Republic of Slovenia, Regulation on rights of persons with temporary protection, 2022.

provides for financial support for private accommodation (*denarna pomoč za zasebno nastanitev*), subject to statutory and regulatory conditions.

- 3) Right to healthcare. Beneficiaries of temporary protection are entitled to healthcare in accordance with the scope defined by Slovenian law and implementing regulations. This entitlement reflects the minimum standards required by EU law and includes access to necessary medical services, with particular provisions applicable to vulnerable persons as defined in the regulatory framework.
- 4) Right to work. Temporary protection confers the right to access the labour market in Slovenia. This right allows beneficiaries to take up employment or self-employment under the conditions applicable to the status, without the need for an additional work permit. The modalities of labour market access are governed by national legislation regulating employment and social insurance.
- 5) Right to education. Children and minors under temporary protection are entitled to access education under the same conditions as nationals, in line with EU minimum standards. In the specific context of displaced persons from Ukraine, inclusion in education encompasses early childhood education (*predšolska vzgoja*) and schooling and related entitlements can include subsidised school meals and transport, as regulated by the applicable education and public-funds legislation.
- 6) Right to financial assistance and pocket money. Slovenian legislation expressly provides for financial assistance and, where applicable, pocket money (*žepnina*) for persons with temporary protection. Under the statutory framework ZZZRO-1, financial assistance may be granted to persons with temporary protection who are outside reception centres and meet the prescribed conditions, with the amount determined according to the statutory formula that takes into account income and comparable resources (including rules on how relevant incomes are considered). The statute also regulates duration and payment mechanics: financial assistance is granted for a defined period (six months) and is paid monthly, with payment commencing in accordance with the statutory timeline linked to the submission of a complete request. For persons accommodated within reception/accommodation facilities, Slovenian law provides for pocket money as part of the temporary protection rights framework, subject to conditions (typically linked to income/resources and the accommodation context), with procedural details regulated through implementation.

- 7) Right to information and assistance in exercising rights. Temporary protection in Slovenia includes the right to be informed of rights and obligations and to receive assistance in exercising rights within the temporary protection framework. This element appears both as a general legal entitlement in the rights package presented in official government guidance and as an operational requirement within the implementing rules that structure how temporary protection entitlements are accessed. A particularly important point from a legal-administrative perspective is that Slovenia regulates “*informiranje*” (being informed) as an explicit component of the implementation framework. A recent Official Gazette publication on the regulation governing the manner of claiming and ensuring rights for applicants and persons with temporary protection includes dedicated provisions on informing, indicating that information duties are treated as part of the formal architecture of rights delivery rather than an informal support measure.²²

3.1.2 Duration, extension, and cessation of temporary protection in Slovenia

The temporal design of temporary protection is legally structured at two levels: first, as a collective protection regime that begins, may be prolonged, and can be terminated at the EU level; second, as an individual legal status that can cease for a defined list of grounds even while the collective regime remains in force. Under the Temporary Protection Directive, the default duration of temporary protection is one year, with automatic six-month extensions (subject to the Directive’s termination clause) and an overall structure that allows continuation only within the Directive’s time-limits. In the Ukraine activation instrument adopted in the EU Official Journal in March 2022, the Council explicitly reiterates this Directive-based mechanism: an initial one-year period, followed by automatic six-month extensions unless early termination is triggered under the Directive. ZZZRO-1 provides that temporary protection is introduced on the date the relevant EU Council act takes effect and lasts for one year from that date, with any prolongation to occur “in accordance with” the Directive.

There are two legally distinct forms of cessation: end of the regime vs. end of the individual status. ZZZRO-1 draws a clear legal distinction between: i) cessation of temporary protection

²² Republic of Slovenia, Regulation on exercising and ensuring rights, 2025.

as a regime (*prenehanje začasne zaščite*), and ii) cessation of an individual's temporary protection status (*prenehanje statusa začasne zaščite*).

At the *regime* level, Slovenian law provides that temporary protection ends (i) if it is not extended under the Directive, (ii) when the maximum duration under the Directive is reached, or (iii) earlier if the EU Council adopts a decision on early termination under the Directive. Importantly for legal certainty, ZZZRO-1 also imposes an information duty: the competent authority must inform persons with temporary protection about the impending cessation and the legally available options for residence after temporary protection ends, as soon as it becomes aware that the period will expire. At the *individual* level, ZZZRO-1 enumerates grounds on which an individual's status ceases, including acquisition of Slovenian citizenship; acquisition of international protection, a residence permit, or temporary protection in another state; certain family-status changes for family members who derived status; expiry by operation of law at the end of the temporary protection period; and cessation following withdrawal of the status where legally prescribed.

Furthermore, ZZZRO-1 contains a specific rule on residence after expiry, where the status ends due to the lapse of the temporary protection period. A person may remain in Slovenia for up to 30 days after the end date, unless a competent authority decision requires departure earlier; after that period, they are treated under the general law governing entry, exit, and stay of foreigners. In addition, ZZZRO-1 creates a narrowly defined procedural window for transitioning to another lawful basis of stay: a person whose temporary protection status ceased for specified reasons (including expiry by time lapse and certain other grounds) may apply, within ten days, for a temporary residence permit for any purpose recognised under the Foreigners Act framework. Where the person is employed or working at the time of application, the law further provides that they may continue to reside and work in Slovenia until a final decision on the application, provided proof of the application's lodgement is submitted.

3.2 Legal framework of temporary protection in Lithuania

Lithuania regulates temporary protection primarily through the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners (Law No. IX-2206), which sets out the national rules on entry, stay and residence, asylum, and temporary protection. Temporary protection is defined as immediate and temporary protection granted in the event of a mass influx (or imminent mass influx) of third-

country nationals who are unable to return to their country of origin. The granting of temporary protection at the national level is operationalised through a Government resolution adopted following an EU-level determination of mass influx, and the Law specifies the basic duration and extension logic in line with EU decision-making.²³ Following the war in Ukraine, Lithuania implemented the EU Council's activation of temporary protection through Government Resolution No. 224 on the provision of temporary protection to foreigners, adopted in March 2022 and explicitly linked to Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382.²⁴ In the Lithuanian framework, the Migration Department issues temporary residence documentation to persons granted temporary protection, thereby formalising the right of residence during the temporary protection period.

The principal statutory basis for the rights, services, and duties attached to temporary protection in Lithuania is the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners (No. IX-2206), in particular Article 94, which regulates both (i) persons *entitled* to temporary protection pending a decision and (ii) persons *granted* temporary protection during the protection period. With respect to the main obligations, Article 94(9) establishes that persons entitled to or granted temporary protection must comply with the Constitution, laws, and other legal acts of Lithuania, must allow medical screening when required, and must provide available documents and truthful information regarding their identity and circumstances. The same provision also imposes a duty to disclose information on available funds and assets held in Lithuania when the Migration Department performs actions related to granting temporary protection. In addition, the Law provides that temporary protection is withdrawn if the person leaves to reside in a foreign state, meaning that relocation abroad has direct legal consequences for status continuity, even where a separate “notification duty” is not framed as a standalone obligation in Article 94.

Regarding services accessible under temporary protection, Article 94(1) sets out core entitlements pending a decision (and not longer than the protection period), including access to accommodation in state or municipal facilities, access to state-guaranteed healthcare (with the possibility of prescription medicines under conditions set by the Minister of Health), access to social services (under rules set by the Minister of Social Security and Labour), and access to labour market services and employment support measures under the Law on Employment. It

²³ Republic of Lithuania, 2023.

²⁴ Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2022.

also confirms the right to work without a work permit and to engage in self-employment, and requires that the necessary information about legal status be provided in a language the beneficiary understands. For minors, Article 94(2) guarantees access to general education and formal vocational education and training, under procedures established by the competent ministry.

Beyond these general service entitlements, Lithuanian law also provides specific measures for persons granted temporary protection, as listed in Article 94(3). These include eligibility for several forms of cash support and benefits (explicitly including cash social assistance for low-income residents, child benefits, burial allowance, and reimbursements linked to nursing/assistance needs), as well as access to support for housing acquisition or rent under the Law on Support for Housing Acquisition or Rental, with stated derogations from certain standard requirements for rental reimbursement in the temporary protection context. Article 94(3) further provides a mechanism for including in records persons who have not declared their place of residence where such declaration is objectively impossible, which serves as an administrative facilitation measure linked to access to rights and services.

In relation to housing and accommodation, Article 94 provides several distinct support routes for displaced persons from Ukraine in the temporary protection context. Pending a decision (and not longer than during the temporary protection period), persons entitled to temporary protection have the right to free accommodation in accommodation facilities of state and municipal agencies, and the provision also covers accommodation facilities voluntarily offered by natural or legal persons (other than state or municipal institutions). During the period of temporary protection, persons granted temporary protection additionally have the right to support for housing acquisition or rent under the Law on Support for Housing Acquisition or Rental. For reimbursement of part of housing rent, the Law explicitly disappplies certain standard requirements, including requirements related to the rental agreement term, and sets out a temporary protection-specific calculation method linked to the number of protected persons residing together. Article 94(5) further establishes that expenses related to free accommodation provided through state or municipal facilities are reimbursed from the state budget, and it authorises the Government (or an authorised institution) to set conditions and procedures for reimbursement. The same paragraph explicitly allows reimbursement of accommodation costs when accommodation is voluntarily provided by private persons or

entities, thereby providing a legal basis for compensating voluntary hosting arrangements in the context of temporary protection.

3.3 Access to labour market for temporary protection beneficiaries: cases of Slovenia and Lithuania

3.3.1 Legal framework governing access to the labour market in Slovenia for people with temporary protection

Access to the labour market in Slovenia is regulated through a combination of migration law, labour law, and employment policy legislation, with specific derogations and adaptations for persons granted temporary protection. For displaced persons from Ukraine, labour market participation is not governed by the general regime applicable to third-country nationals but by a special legal status that modifies standard entry and work authorisation requirements. Under Slovenian law, persons granted temporary protection are legally equated with refugees with regard to the right to work, as explicitly provided by ZZZRO-1. This means that beneficiaries of temporary protection enjoy free access to the labour market, without the requirement to obtain a work permit or a combined residence and work permit prior to employment. This special rule constitutes a derogation from the general employment regime for third-country nationals, which otherwise requires prior authorisation under the Foreigners Act (ZTuj-2). Temporary protection, therefore, operates as a *lex specialis* in relation to labour market access, suspending the standard permit-based model for the duration of the protection status. The right to work under temporary protection covers both employment under an employment contract and self-employment, subject to compliance with sector-specific and general regulatory requirements. In both cases, labour market access is status-based: the right arises directly from the recognition of temporary protection and does not depend on labour market tests, quotas, or employer-sponsorship procedures that would otherwise apply to third-country nationals.

Persons with temporary protection may register with the Employment Service of Slovenia (*Zavod RS za zaposlovanje*) as unemployed persons. Registration enables access to public employment services governed by employment legislation, including job-matching and mediation services, counselling and guidance services, and inclusion in active employment policy measures, where legally applicable. Once employed or self-employed, persons with

temporary protection are subject to the same legal obligations as other workers in Slovenia, including: i) compliance with labour law governing employment contracts, working time, health and safety at work, and termination of employment; ii) inclusion in mandatory social insurance schemes, in accordance with legislation governing pension, disability, health, and unemployment insurance and iii) compliance with tax and contribution obligations arising from employment or economic activity. Labour law therefore applies without distinction once employment is established, notwithstanding the special migration status of the worker.

While temporary protection provides immediate access to the labour market, Slovenian law draws a clear distinction between temporary protection status and work-based residence permits under the Foreigners Act. Time spent working in Slovenia under temporary protection does not count toward eligibility periods for permanent residence and does not create an automatic pathway to a work-based residence permit. Transition to a work-based residence status is governed exclusively by the Foreigners Act and is subject to its procedural and territorial requirements. As a result, labour market participation under temporary protection remains legally decoupled from long-term residence security, notwithstanding continuous employment.

3.3.2 Access to the labour market for temporary protection beneficiaries in Lithuania

Regarding labour market access, Lithuanian law provides broad access linked to temporary protection status and does not indicate sectoral or occupational restrictions in Article 94. Persons entitled to temporary protection may take up employment without a work permit and may engage in self-employment. The same article extends access even at early procedural stages: persons may work after lodging an application for a temporary residence permit on specified grounds and are exempt from the work-permit requirement, and asylum applicants may work from the date of registration of the asylum application in the Lithuanian Migration Information System. In the Ukraine context, these provisions operate alongside the Government's temporary protection resolution adopted to implement EU Decision (EU) 2022/382 for displaced persons from Ukraine, meaning that Ukrainian beneficiaries granted temporary protection gain immediate labour market access as part of the protection package. Access to the labour market for Ukrainians under temporary protection in Lithuania is legally framed as an inclusion pathway rather than a restricted regime. In addition to the general right

to be employed that is reflected in the statutory framework on temporary protection, the Employment Law (XII-2470) defines the core bundle of labour market services (including information, counselling, assessment of employment opportunities, placement intermediation, individual planning, and supported employment).²⁵

Registration with the Employment Service does not, by itself, create an automatic entitlement to a separate cash payment administered by the Employment Service. Instead, financial entitlements typically fall under either the social assistance system or the social insurance system, each administered by different institutions. Unemployment social insurance benefits are governed and explained through the Ministry of Social Security and Labour's framework and are administered through the State Social Insurance Fund Board (SoDra).²⁶ By contrast, cash social assistance for persons in financial difficulty is organised through social support channels outside the Employment Service; at an informational level, Lithuanian public guidance distinguishes these streams by directing users to SoDra for social insurance and to the social protection administration for cash social assistance.

The State Data Agency's operational statistics dashboard on war refugees from Ukraine is the principal national public-facing source for regularly updated aggregate estimates, including headline totals and basic demographic structure.²⁷

²⁵ Republic of Lithuania, 2016.

²⁶ Ministry of Social Security and Labour of Lithuania, 2024.

²⁷ Official Statistics Portal of the Republic of Lithuania, n.d.

Table 1: Age and gender distribution of unemployed Ukrainian citizens registered with the Employment Service of Lithuania.

Ukrainian nationals registered with the Employment Service as unemployed*	2026-01-01
Total, No.	3 047
By gender	
Female	2 448
Male	599
By age	
under 29 m.	741
30-49 m.	1 609
50 m. ir vyresni	697

* Ukrainians assigned the attribute "Ukrainian who fled to the Republic of Lithuania due to military operations in Ukraine".

Based on administrative data,²⁸ the scale of labour market participation among Ukrainian nationals in Lithuania as of 2 January 2026 is substantial and reflects a high level of formal employment integration. A total of 41,740 Ukrainian nationals who arrived after 24 February 2022 were employed in Lithuania under standard employment contracts. This figure refers exclusively to persons engaged in formal employment relationships and therefore does not capture self-employment or other non-standard forms of economic activity.

In terms of gender distribution, employment is predominantly male, with 24,786 men employed compared to 16,751 women, while gender data were unavailable for 203 individuals. The age structure of employed Ukrainian nationals indicates a strong concentration in the core working-age population. The largest group consists of persons aged 30–49 years, numbering 23,274, followed by those aged 50 years and older (10,285) and persons under 29 years of age (8,181).

Administrative records supplied by the Lithuanian Employment Service show that, among the 3,047 Ukrainian nationals registered as unemployed as of early January 2026, educational attainment is distributed across multiple levels. The largest group among registered jobseekers holds a general secondary education (1,342), followed by those with higher university education (804) and individuals with secondary education with a vocational qualification (522). Smaller cohorts include persons with lower secondary education (105), higher non-university education (92), and post-secondary education (72). Those with primary education only number

²⁸ Administrative information was provided by the Lithuanian Employment Service (Email correspondence is held by authors of the report).

64, with smaller counts for lower secondary with vocational qualification (34) and primary with vocational qualification (6). Education data were unavailable for six individuals in the register.

4. Review of employment statistics and indicators regarding the beneficiaries of temporary protection in Slovenia

4.1 Statistics on beneficiaries of Temporary Protection and data provided by the Employment Service of Slovenia

As of 1 February 2026, a total of 11,325 persons from Ukraine had been granted temporary protection, according to data provided by the Ministry of the Interior. Of these, 8,344 held temporary residence in Slovenia at that time. In terms of age distribution, 2,998 beneficiaries were under the age of 18, 7,106 were between 18 and 64 years of age, and 1,221 were over 65. Within the 18–64 age group, 4,640 were female and 2,466 were male.²⁹ The Government Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants (UOIM), which is responsible for integration programmes for persons granted temporary, international, or subsidiary protection, reported that, as of 24 October 2025, financial assistance was being provided to 3,248 Ukrainian citizens. In addition, rent subsidies were regularly granted to 3,062 beneficiaries.³⁰

According to data from the Employment Service registry dated 31 October 2025, 2,157 persons from Ukraine were registered, of whom 1,449 were women and 708 were men. Of the total number registered, 2,036 were beneficiaries of temporary protection in Slovenia. Among all registered individuals, 1,660 were recorded as unemployed. A further 472 persons were removed from the unemployment register for various reasons, most commonly due to the commencement of employment, which accounted for 268 cases. The largest age cohorts among those registered with the Employment Service were individuals born between 1980 and 1989

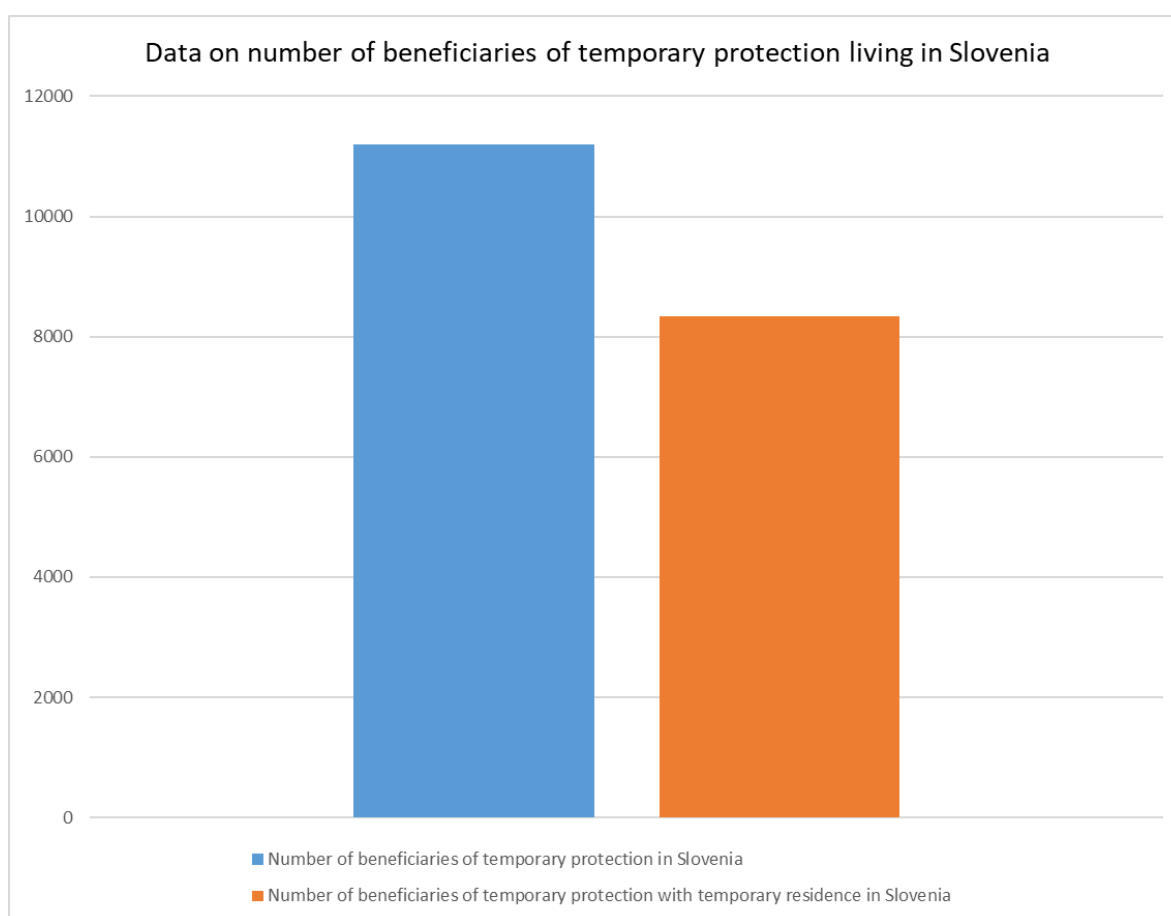
²⁹ Information was provided by the Ministry of Interior. (Email correspondence is held by authors of the report)

³⁰ Upon inquiry the UOIM provided information that until 24 October 10,935 persons fleeing war in Ukraine received temporary protection status, 6 persons refugee status, and 261 persons subsidiary protection status. (Email correspondence is held by authors of the report)

(807 persons), between 1970 and 1979 (498 persons), and between 1990 and 1999 (338 persons). The majority of registrations were recorded in the regional units located in Slovenia's largest urban centres, namely Ljubljana, Maribor, and Koper.³¹

In 2025, registration with the Employment Service became a prerequisite for beneficiaries of temporary protection who lacked alternative sources of income and were reliant on state financial assistance. Amendments to the Temporary Protection of Displaced Persons Act introduced a requirement that unemployed beneficiaries of temporary protection must be registered in order to receive financial assistance and rent subsidies in cases of private accommodation.³²

Chart 1: Total number of beneficiaries of Temporary Protection compared to number of beneficiaries with temporary residency in Slovenia.



³¹ Statistical information was provided by the Employment Service of Slovenia (Email correspondence is held by authors of the report).

³² Republic of Slovenia, Temporary Protection of Displaced Persons Act (ZZRO-1), 2025.

Chart 2: Age of beneficiaries of temporary protection.

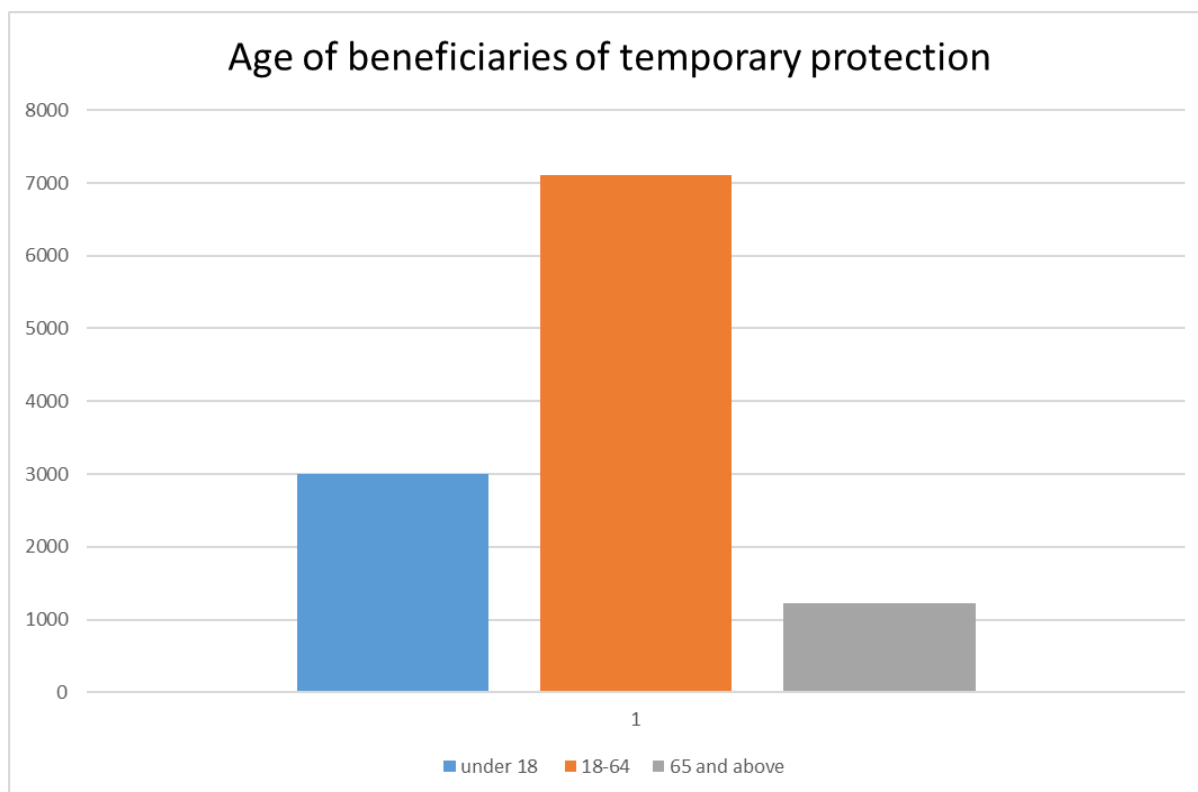


Chart 3: Gender of beneficiaries of temporary protection aged 18-64.

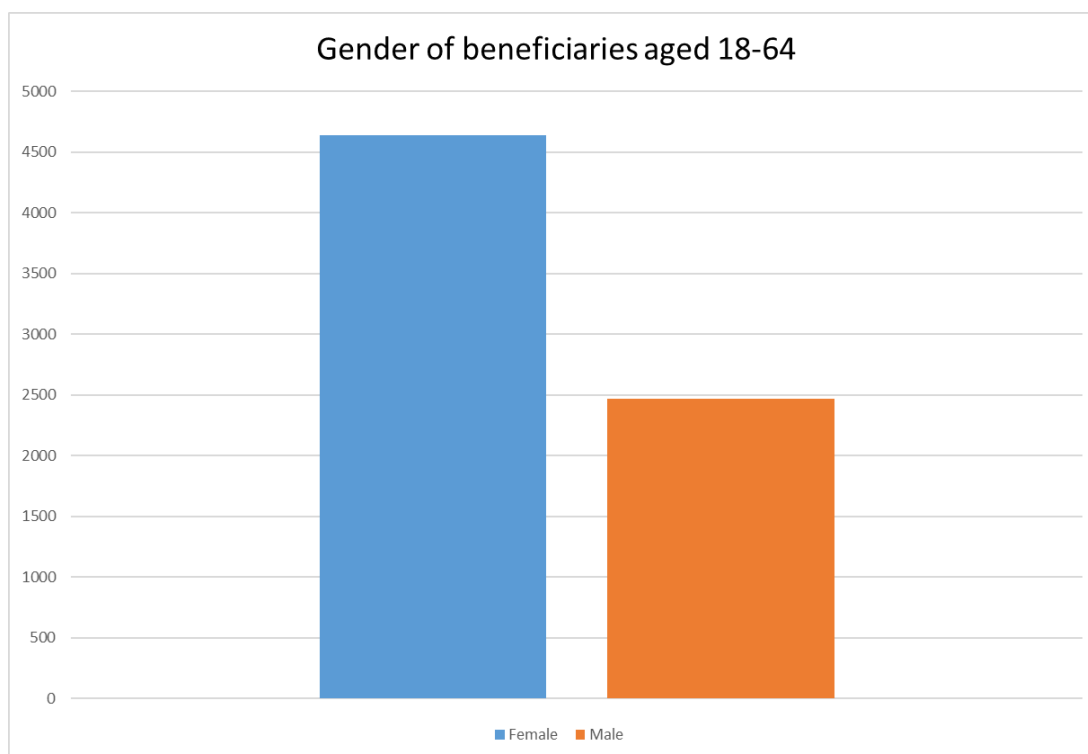


Chart 4: Gender of Ukrainians registered with the Employment Service of Slovenia.

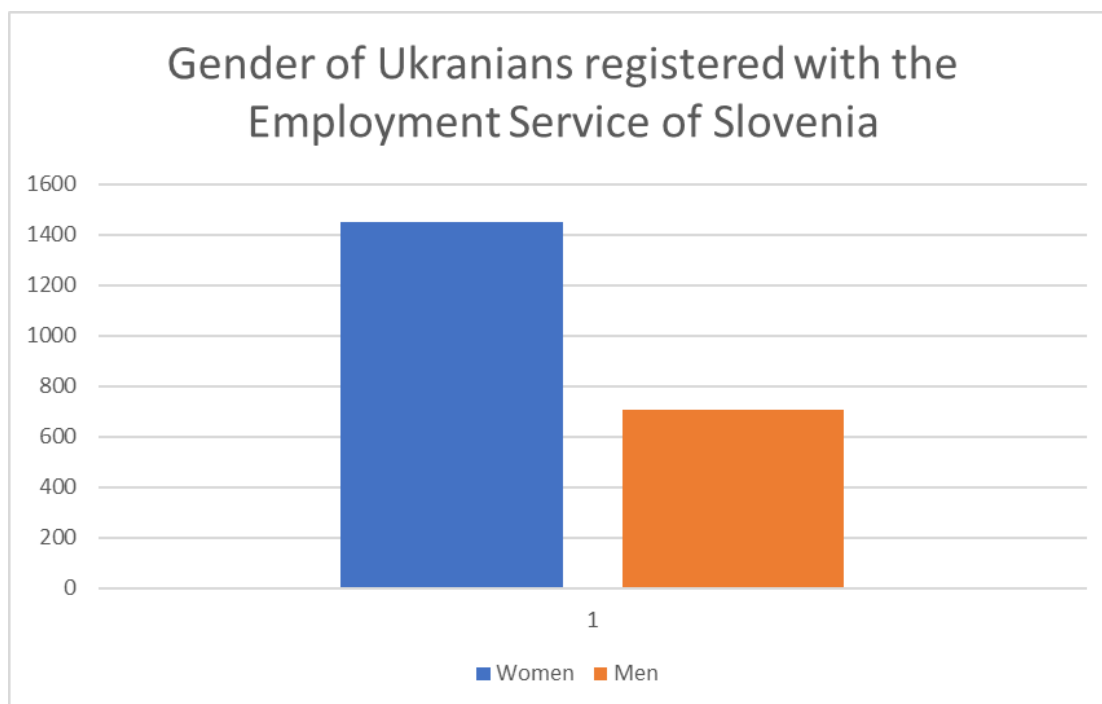


Chart 5: Age of Ukrainians registered with the Employment Service of Slovenia by year of birth.

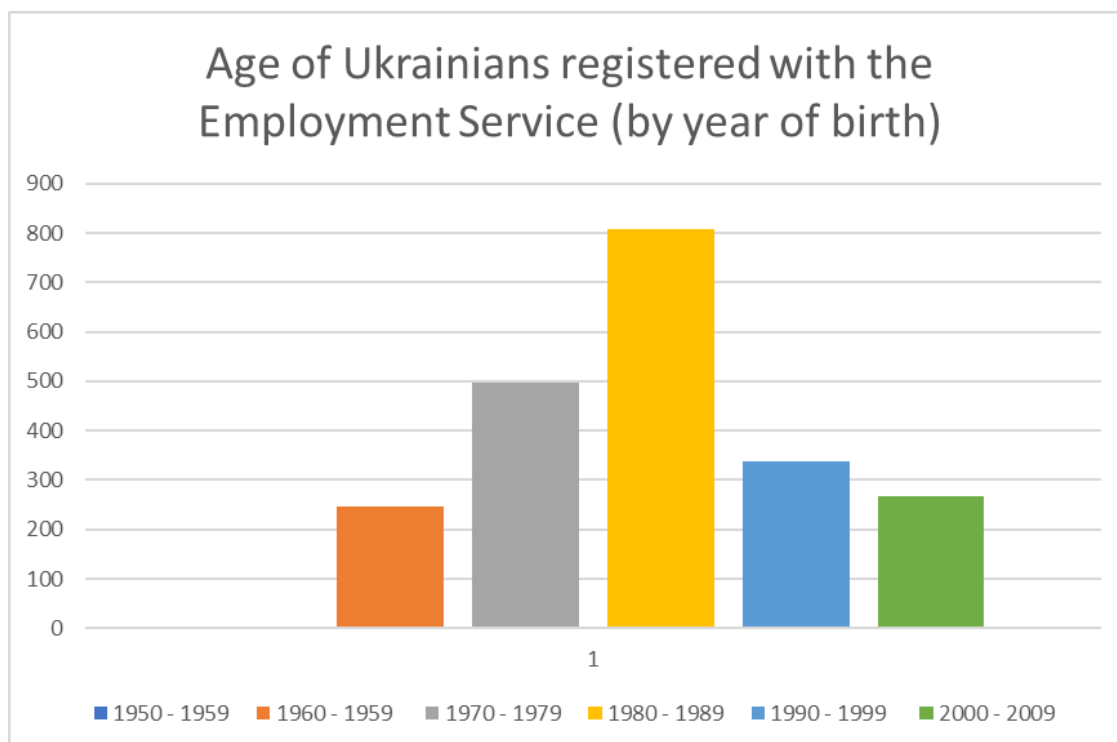


Table 2: Distribution of Ukrainian citizens registered in regional units of the Employment Service of Slovenia.

Regional unit	Number of registered Ukrainian citizens
Celje	118
Koper	206
Kranj	67
Ljubljana	545
Maribor	378
Murska Sobota	27
Nova Gorica	62
Novo mesto	86
Ptuj	22
Sevnica	19
Trbovlje	16
Velenje	67

4.2 MSNA survey's findings on the employment status of beneficiaries of temporary protection

In June 2024, UNHCR published a *Multi-Sector Needs Assessment* report for Slovenia. For the purposes of that report, ZRC SAZU conducted a survey in December 2023 involving 193 adult refugee respondents from Ukraine, representing a total of 391 household members. The survey

examined issues relating to social inclusion, education, housing, economic inclusion, and health.

Women constituted 50 per cent of the surveyed population, while girls accounted for a further 17 per cent. Children of both genders represented 37 per cent of the total population, and persons over the age of 60 comprised 10 per cent. The average household size was two members. A majority of households were female-led (68 per cent), most commonly single caregivers with children (42 per cent), while 26 per cent were female-led households without children. Only 14 per cent of households consisted of two caregivers with children present.³³ A substantial proportion of respondents reported feeling safe in their residential areas (93 per cent) and did not identify perceived protection risks (86 per cent). Similarly, a large majority expressed satisfaction with the assistance received, as well as with the conduct and attitudes of aid providers and their staff (92 per cent).³⁴

Among the adult population included in the survey, 76 per cent of working-age respondents had attained at least a bachelor's degree, and 82 per cent had been employed in Ukraine prior to their displacement. The majority had worked in sectors such as information and communication (13 per cent), transportation and warehousing (8 per cent), education (5 per cent), and manufacturing (5 per cent). A smaller proportion were self-employed or engaged in family businesses or agricultural activities. Forced displacement due to the armed conflict significantly altered their employment trajectories. At the time of the survey, only 25 per cent of working-age respondents were employed in Slovenia. Compared with employment rates among Ukrainian refugees in other European countries in 2023, this rate appears relatively low. According to MSNA research, the regional average employment rate among beneficiaries of temporary protection stood at 56 per cent.³⁵ Those who were employed in Slovenia were primarily engaged in manufacturing, followed by information and communication, as well as a range of other sectors, including e-commerce, human resources, and seasonal work.

The employment gap was particularly pronounced among women. Only 24 per cent of women who had previously been employed in Ukraine were employed in Slovenia at the time of the survey, compared with 41 per cent of men. Notably, 75 per cent of those who were unemployed

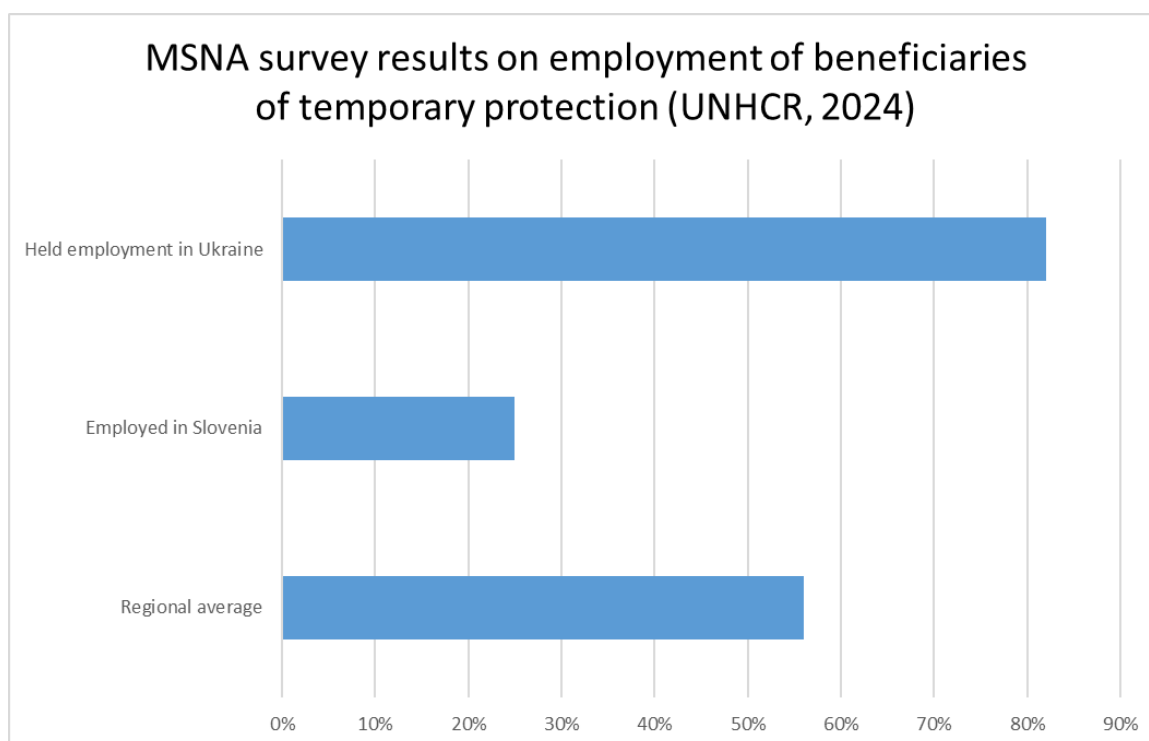
³³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2024b.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 7-9.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 11.

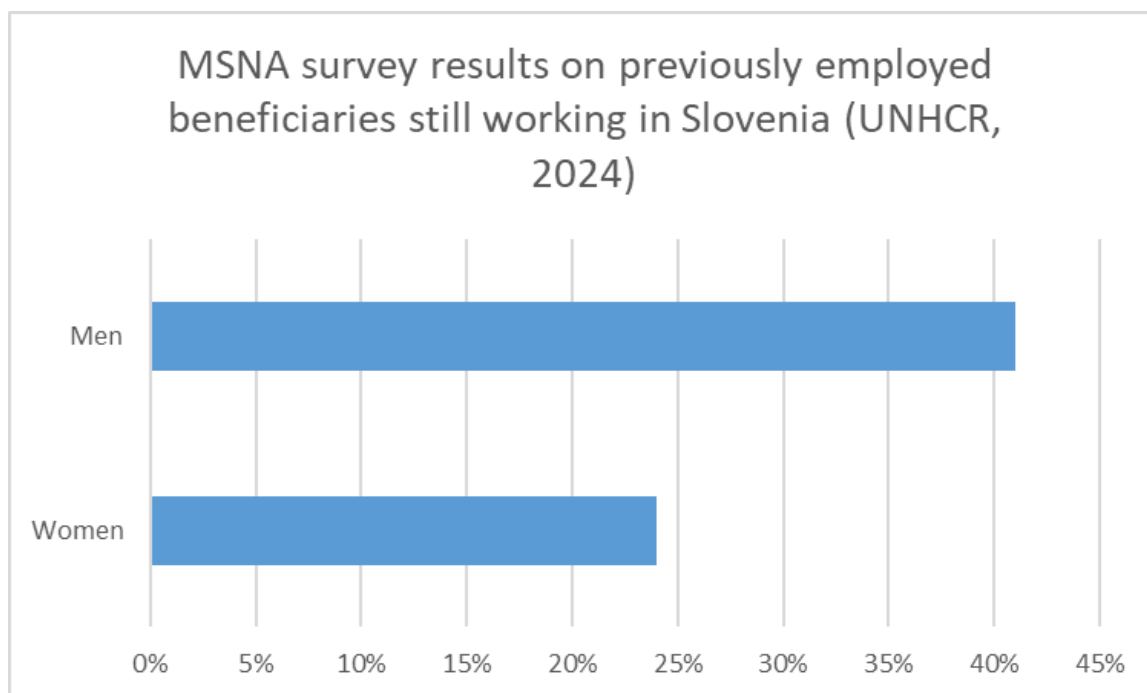
or actively seeking work held at least a bachelor's degree, indicating a significant level of underutilised human capital. The survey identified several key barriers to labour market participation, most prominently insufficient proficiency in the local language (55 per cent), a lack of positions commensurate with respondents' qualifications (37 per cent), and limited access to decent work opportunities, characterised by low wages, long working hours, or informal arrangements (17 per cent). In addition, 21 per cent of working-age respondents were classified as economically inactive, meaning they were either unable or unwilling to enter employment even if work were available. This status was frequently linked to reliance on savings or alternative forms of support. Given the high proportion of single-parent households, childcare responsibilities also appear to constitute a structural constraint on labour market participation.³⁶

Chart 6: MSNA Survey results on Employment rates of beneficiaries of temporary protection before and after fleeing Ukraine.



³⁶ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

Chart 7: MSNA survey results on previously employed beneficiaries still working in Slovenia.



4.3 Review of the correlation between rates of employment and indicators regarding the composition of beneficiaries of temporary protection

Research conducted by the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) of the German Federal Employment Agency indicates that, in the fourth quarter of 2022, the highest employment rates among Ukrainian refugees in Europe were recorded in the United Kingdom (56 per cent), Lithuania (48 per cent), and the Netherlands (46 per cent). By contrast, the lowest employment rates were reported in Croatia (8 per cent), Romania (9 per cent), and Slovenia (10 per cent).³⁷ It should be noted that the employment data presented in the study were compiled from a range of national and international institutional sources. As such, the methodologies used to measure employment rates were not standardised across countries, which may affect the comparability of the reported figures.

³⁷ Kosyakova, Gatskova, Koch, et.al., 2024.

In examining the variation in employment rates across European states, the researchers also analysed their correlation with a range of structural indicators. To better understand the comparatively low employment rate of Ukrainian refugees in Slovenia, it is instructive to consider these observed correlations. One of the most significant macro-level indicators associated with higher employment rates was the existence and scale of a Ukrainian diaspora prior to 2022. A larger proportion of Ukrainian nationals residing in a host country in 2021 was positively correlated with higher subsequent employment rates among newly arrived refugees. Poland provides a particularly illustrative example. Following the outbreak of the war, Poland received close to one million refugees from Ukraine. The presence of a substantial pre-existing diaspora facilitated more rapid economic integration of newly arrived beneficiaries of protection. In the final quarter of 2022, Poland recorded an employment rate of 38 per cent among Ukrainian refugees, a figure that has continued to rise steadily. In Slovenia, although a Ukrainian diaspora existed prior to 2022, it was considerably smaller than in countries such as Poland or Lithuania. This structural difference may partially account for the comparatively lower employment rate observed in Slovenia.

In 2025, fewer than 3,000 Ukrainian citizens held permanent or temporary residence in Slovenia on grounds other than refugee protection.³⁸ This indicates a comparatively limited Ukrainian presence in Slovenia prior to the Russian aggression against Ukraine, and thus a relatively small pre-existing diaspora network.

The research further identifies household composition as a significant explanatory factor in employment outcomes. Specifically, a lower number of children per woman of working age, as well as a smaller proportion of older persons within the refugee population, was found to correlate with higher employment rates. The United Kingdom provides an illustrative example: it records a comparatively low number of children per working-age woman (0.6) and a relatively small share of individuals of retirement age (3.6 per cent), alongside one of the highest employment rates among Ukrainian refugees. By contrast, Slovenia records both a higher number of children per working-age women (0.8) and a substantially larger share of older persons (14.7 per cent). These demographic characteristics may constitute structural constraints on labour market participation. Poland presents a more complex case, as it combines an above-average employment rate with the highest number of children per working-age

³⁸ Information was provided by the Ministry of Interior. (Email correspondence is held by authors of the report)

woman (1.1), meaning that additional factors, such as labour market demand or diaspora networks, also play a significant role in shaping employment outcomes.³⁹

Regarding linguistic proximity, the research indicates that similarities between Ukrainian and the host country's dominant language show only a weak positive correlation with higher employment rates. In other words, countries with Slavic languages did not consistently demonstrate significantly better labour market outcomes for Ukrainian refugees compared to countries with non-Slavic language groups. The study also identified the general level of English language proficiency within the host population as a relevant factor. Countries with a high score on the English Proficiency Index (EPI), such as the United Kingdom and Ireland, tended to record higher employment rates among Ukrainian refugees. Conversely, countries with lower EPI scores, including France and Spain, exhibited comparatively lower employment rates.⁴⁰ The IAB research shows that simple language proximity does not strictly correlate with higher employment rates, but other factors, such as the integration of English into the national labour market, also play a role.

When examining employment rates alongside broader structural indicators, it is also necessary to consider the role of social transfers and the comprehensiveness of national integration policies for beneficiaries of temporary protection. The research identifies a weak correlation between higher public expenditure, measured as a share of GDP per capita allocated to support Ukrainian refugees, and lower employment rates. The proposition that reducing or withdrawing social benefits may strengthen work incentives frequently arises in both academic and political debates. However, empirical evidence and prior research suggest that, although such measures may generate limited short-term increases in employment rates, these effects are unlikely to be sustained over the medium to long term. Moreover, restrictive approaches risk producing adverse long-term consequences, including reduced educational participation among children and a potential increase in social marginalisation and related social risks, including crime.⁴¹ Slovenia is among the countries with the highest per capita expenditure relative to GDP on supporting Ukrainian refugees, while simultaneously recording one of the lowest employment rates among beneficiaries of temporary protection. However, a closer examination of the level of social assistance suggests a more nuanced picture. When considering the monthly financial

³⁹ Kosyakova, Gatskova, Koch, et.al., 2024.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 41-43.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 37.

assistance and rent subsidy available to a single-parent household with one child, a profile characteristic of many Ukrainian families in Slovenia, the total support places such a household only marginally above the national at-risk-of-poverty threshold. In 2025, a single parent with one child residing in private accommodation was entitled to €725 per month in financial assistance and €642 per month in rent subsidy, amounting to a total of €1,367 in monthly support.⁴² Additional transfers, such as child benefits, may increase the total by a marginal amount. This comes below the average wage in Slovenia, which was €1.573 in 2025.⁴³ The amount of assistance provided is also slightly above the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, which was in 2025 for one-parent families with a child under 14 was 1.275.⁴⁴ Considering the amount of assistance provided, some might conclude that relatively high assistance compared to available wages discourages employment efforts, especially given that foreigners without proper language skills often face underemployment and must take up low-paying positions.

With regard to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), the research indicates that countries with more comprehensive integration frameworks, which seek to ensure equal rights, opportunities, and long-term security, tend to record comparatively lower employment rates among beneficiaries of temporary protection. Conversely, countries with less comprehensive integration regimes often demonstrate higher employment rates, particularly in the short term. Approaches described as “equality on paper”, which formally guarantee equal rights without fully securing equal opportunities in practice, as well as models of “temporary integration”, which provide basic entitlements without long-term security, show a positive correlation with higher employment rates. These findings suggest the existence of a policy trade-off: measures that accelerate labour market entry may do so at the expense of long-term integration sustainability and socio-economic stability. Slovenia, although categorised within the “equality on paper” model, nonetheless records relatively low employment rates, indicating that additional structural or contextual factors may be influencing labour market outcomes beyond the design of integration policy alone.⁴⁵ The analysis further demonstrates that one of the most significant indicators associated with higher employment rates in certain countries is the presence of active labour market policies. In particular, targeted support for Ukrainian refugees

⁴² Government of Slovenia, 2025.

⁴³ Češek Vozel, Perše & Vrh, 2025.

⁴⁴ Statistical Office of Republic of Slovenia, 2025.

⁴⁵ Kosyakova, Gatskova, Koch, et.al., 2024.

in their job search, alongside measures designed to reduce financial and administrative costs for both employees and employers, appears to correlate positively with improved employment outcomes.⁴⁶

The demographic composition of beneficiaries of temporary protection varies significantly across European countries, as do national approaches to integration. While some states prioritise long-term integration through comprehensive policy frameworks and sustained language learning support, others adopt shorter-term approaches characterised by “equality on paper”, which formally guarantees rights but offers limited structural support. Although such models may correspond with higher short-term employment rates, they may also contribute to increased precarity and vulnerability among refugee households. In Slovenia, which records comparatively lower employment rates among beneficiaries of temporary protection, demographic factors warrant particular attention. The refugee population includes a relatively high proportion of children and persons of retirement age, both of which are indicators associated with lower overall employment levels. Furthermore, Slovenia did not host a substantial Ukrainian diaspora prior to 2022, and the absence of well-established migrant networks may have limited opportunities for faster economic integration. With regard to social transfers, Slovenia allocates a comparatively high share of resources to supporting Ukrainian refugees. While higher levels of public expenditure display a weak negative correlation with employment rates in comparative research, the relationship should be interpreted with caution. Evidence suggests that the apparent employment gains associated with lower levels of social transfers are typically short-term. Reductions in support may increase the risk of poverty and associated social vulnerabilities among Ukrainian households.

Approaches that seek to stimulate employment primarily by reducing social transfers or adopting less comprehensive integration policies risk oversimplifying a complex socio-economic reality. Economic integration is not solely determined by individual necessity to secure employment. Rather, it is a reciprocal process requiring active, inclusive state-sponsored labour market policies that respond to both the skills and needs of beneficiaries and the demands and capacities of host communities.

⁴⁶ Kosyakova, Gatskova, Koch, et.al., 2024.

5. Field research results for Slovenia

One of the two primary methods of data collection employed in this research was the organisation of focus group discussions with beneficiaries of temporary protection residing in Slovenia. Overall, ZRC SAZU conducted three focus groups. Two in cooperation with Zavod Dress for Success Maribor (December 9 and 11, 2025), and an *ad hoc* focus group in Novo mesto, hosted by the DRPD Volunteering Association on January 29, 2026. Both hosting organisations have played a significant role as local intermediaries connecting newly arrived Ukrainians with prospective employers and the Employment Service of Slovenia. Given that the focus group in Novo mesto was conducted on a much smaller scale, this chapter will predominately contain data gathered from the two focus groups in Maribor. The findings from Novo mesto, however, confirms the data collected in Maribor, as well as findings gathered through the Slovenian MSNA survey. Nevertheless, we still considered all information from the field, collected between December 2023 and January 2024, which are further reflected in policy recommendations at the end of the Analysis.

A total of 30 participants attended the discussions in both cities. During the sessions, participants responded to a structured set of questions addressing their employment or unemployment status, satisfaction with the job-seeking process, experiences of underemployment, cooperation with the Employment Service of Slovenia, and the reasons for registering or not registering with it. Although the findings cannot be regarded as statistically representative of the full diversity of experiences among beneficiaries of temporary protection, the synthesis of participants' contributions provides valuable qualitative insight into the principal challenges and dynamics shaping their labour market integration.

As noted above, the three focus groups comprised a total of 30 participants, of whom 22 were women and 8 were men. This gender distribution reflects a clear predominance of female participants.

In terms of age structure, the majority of participants fell within the core working-age population. Most were between 30 and 39 years of age, and a slightly smaller number of participants between 40 and 50 years of age. An even lesser number of participants were aged 20-29 (3 participants). This age profile suggests that most participants had already established professional trajectories and accumulated substantial work experience prior to displacement.

This is a significant consideration when assessing both their integration potential and the long-term consequences of prolonged labour-market exclusion.

Data on household composition indicate that the majority of participants reside in family settings. In Maribor, nineteen participants reported living with family members, six were single parents living with children, and only two participants lived alone. The comparatively high proportion of single-parent households suggests heightened structural vulnerability, as childcare responsibilities may substantially constrain availability for full-time employment and participation in language courses.

Regarding place of residence, the vast majority of participants resided in urban environments. Twenty-two participants lived in the urban area of Maribor, while five resided in surrounding suburban areas. Urban residence typically facilitates greater access to public services, education, and employment opportunities; however, it may also entail increased labour market competition and higher living costs. Notwithstanding these potential constraints, participants demonstrated a strong orientation towards long-term settlement. Twenty-four expressed a desire to remain in their current place of residence, while only three indicated an intention to relocate or return elsewhere. This stated intention to stay reinforces the importance of developing sustained integration measures, rather than relying primarily on short-term or emergency-based support frameworks.

At the time of data collection, only one participant was employed, while 26 were unemployed. The educational profile of the group was notably high: 24 participants held tertiary-level qualifications (sixth level or above), and only three had completed secondary education as their highest level of attainment. As participants emphasised, their unemployment cannot be attributed to a lack of qualifications. Rather, it reflects structural barriers, including the non-recognition of foreign credentials, limited access to professional networks, regulatory restrictions in certain professions, and insufficient proficiency in the host-country language.

Language competence emerged as a central factor shaping integration outcomes. All participants reported fluency in Ukrainian and Russian, reflecting a shared linguistic background. Seven participants indicated knowledge of English. Regarding Slovenian language proficiency, 21 participants assessed their skills at the beginner level (A1–A2), while 6 reported intermediate proficiency (B1–B2). Participants consistently noted that limited

command of Slovenian significantly restricts access to employment commensurate with their qualifications and contributes to prolonged labour market inactivity.

Participants' professional backgrounds prior to displacement were diverse and predominantly high-skilled. Reported previous occupations included law, engineering, banking, information technology, education, healthcare, logistics, and various technical professions. The presence of regulated professions, such as law, dentistry, nursing, and teaching, is particularly significant, as access to these fields is contingent upon often lengthy and complex procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications.

Consequently, individuals with backgrounds in regulated professions face an elevated risk of skills depreciation, occupational downgrading, or prolonged exclusion from their original fields of expertise. The principal challenges encountered by Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection in their integration into the Slovenian labour market may be summarised across several key areas:

- language requirements that are difficult to meet, especially for jobs matching their qualifications;
- non-recognition or slow recognition of education and professional qualifications;
- lack of clear information about available activities, training programmes, and language courses;
- ineffective functioning of support systems, particularly the Employment Service of Slovenia;
- insufficient information among employers about the legal status and employment eligibility of Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection in Slovenia.

Many participants identified insufficient knowledge of the Slovenian language as one of the principal barriers to employment. Employers frequently require a high level of fluency, which is difficult for newly arrived migrants to attain quickly. This challenge is closely linked to limitations in the existing language-learning system for immigrants.

The Employment Service of Slovenia primarily offers basic language courses (A1–A2), whereas access to professional training programmes typically requires intermediate proficiency (B1 or B2). This creates a structural impasse: without sufficient language skills, individuals

cannot access training; without training, they cannot obtain recognition of their qualifications; and without recognition, access to appropriate employment remains limited.

The recognition of educational qualifications constitutes an additional barrier. Ukrainian university degrees are often not recognised or are assessed inconsistently. As a result, candidates may be regarded as either overqualified or underqualified for available positions. Recognition procedures are frequently lengthy and require certified translations and supplementary documentation, which some applicants are unable to obtain due to the war or financial constraints.

For many regulated professions, including law, medicine, pharmacy, and nursing, there are no clear or standardised guidelines outlining the steps required to practise and secure employment in Slovenia. In the absence of accessible, authoritative information, migrants often rely on informal channels, such as social networks and non-governmental organisations, to navigate the process. This reliance can significantly delay labour market entry, sometimes for months or even years. The situation is particularly acute in the healthcare sector. Despite existing workforce shortages, highly qualified Ukrainian professionals face substantial obstacles in accessing employment within the Slovenian system.

The temporary nature of protection status constitutes an additional structural constraint. The uncertainty associated with this status may discourage employers from investing in training, while beneficiaries are frequently channelled into low-skilled positions that do not align with their qualifications or professional aspirations. Such occupational downgrading can undermine motivation and generate concerns about losing entitlements if employment offers are declined.

Financial and housing conditions further complicate labour market participation. The statutory minimum wage is often insufficient to sustain a family, particularly when social transfers are withdrawn immediately upon entering employment. This creates a disincentive effect, leading to the perception that postponing employment may be a rational economic decision. At the same time, access to the housing market remains limited, and the absence of stable accommodation poses a significant obstacle to long-term socio-economic integration.

Structural and administrative barriers were also frequently highlighted. Participants reported that waiting times for individual counselling at the Employment Service can range from three to six months. The number of available appointments is limited, and communication is often

hindered by the absence of interpreters or by counsellors' limited English proficiency. In addition, information about available programmes is not always communicated consistently, and employers frequently lack awareness of the legal status and employment rights of persons granted temporary protection.

During the discussions, participants repeatedly emphasised the complementary role of non-governmental organisations. Through online workshops, legal counselling, and social support, these organisations facilitate access to information, clarify complex legislative requirements, and support labour market integration. In particular, the association Dress for Success was described as performing functions that might otherwise be expected of public institutions, including providing guidance, counselling, and connections with potential employers. At the same time, participants noted a lack of systematic coordination among relevant institutions, which further complicates the integration process.

State financial assistance plays a significant role in shaping labour market integration. Cash transfers provide a basic level of economic security and enable beneficiaries to focus on language acquisition and gradual integration into the host society. However, delays in processing applications and a lack of clear information about entitlements create uncertainty and may lead to additional psychological stress.

At the level of social integration, participants highlighted stereotypes and limited public awareness of Ukraine in Slovenian society, which contributed to feelings of marginalisation. Integration was widely perceived as a long-term process, typically lasting 3 to 5 years. Participants also emphasised that younger beneficiaries would benefit from targeted programmes designed to facilitate a more rapid transition into the labour market.

Overall, focus group participants expressed the view that a comprehensive, coordinated integration framework encompassing language learning, employment support, legal status, social security, and broader social inclusion measures would significantly accelerate the integration of Ukrainian beneficiaries. Such an approach was perceived not only as beneficial for refugees themselves, but also as advantageous for the Slovenian labour market and society more broadly.

Thus, the findings from the focus groups has led to the following recommendations for easier labour market integration:

- improving access to higher-level language courses (B1–B2 and above);
 - shortening waiting times for enrolment in language programmes;
 - increasing employers' awareness of the legal status and employment eligibility of Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection;
 - expanding training programmes that combine theoretical instruction with practical work experience;
- strengthening cooperation between the Employment Service of Slovenia, employers, and non-governmental organisations in order to support faster and more effective labour market integration of Ukrainian migrants.

Taken together, the descriptive and analytical findings indicate that the focus group participants represent a population with considerable human capital, diverse professional experience, and a strong intention to remain in the host country. Despite this high integration potential, they face substantial structural barriers to both labour market and broader social integration.

The findings point to a clear need for targeted and coordinated interventions, particularly in accelerated language acquisition, recognition of qualifications, childcare support, and tailored employment pathways. In the absence of such measures, there is a significant risk of long-term underutilisation of skills and progressive socio-economic marginalisation. In essence, the core conclusion of the focus group discussions is that, notwithstanding their high levels of education and motivation, Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection encounter systemic obstacles that considerably delay their effective integration into the labour market and Slovenian society.

6. A comparative analysis of the field between Slovenia and Lithuania

The comparative analysis presented in this section is based primarily on the most recent official UNHCR-led empirical assessments of the situation, needs, and access to services of refugees displaced from Ukraine in Lithuania and Slovenia. For Lithuania, the analysis draws on the UNHCR Lithuania Protection Brief (October 2024), which is based on protection monitoring conducted jointly by UNHCR and the Lithuanian Red Cross between August 2023 and March 2024. For Slovenia, the analysis relies on the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) conducted by UNHCR in partnership with the Slovenian Migration Institute of the Science and Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SMI ZRC SAZU) in December 2023.

As of 1 April 2024, Lithuania had registered approximately 85,000 refugees from Ukraine for temporary protection, representing around 3% of the national population. Although onward movement and returns reduced the number of active beneficiaries to approximately 41,000, Lithuania continues to host one of the largest per-capita Ukrainian refugee populations in the European Union.⁴⁷ The majority of arrivals occurred during the first half of 2022, when more than 50,000 temporary residence permits were issued within six months. While new registrations declined in 2023–2024, arrivals stabilised at approximately 200 new registrations per week, indicating a sustained, though lower-intensity, inflow.

By contrast, Slovenia has received a significantly smaller caseload. As of May 2024, approximately 10,000 individuals from Ukraine had been granted temporary protection, with an additional 227 persons granted subsidiary protection.⁴⁸ The difference in scale is critical for understanding systemic pressures: Lithuania's response has operated under conditions of mass influx affecting national administrative capacity, while Slovenia's response has been shaped by a comparatively limited, more dispersed refugee population.

In Lithuania, the initial response relied heavily on government-led registration centres functioning as one-stop shops, providing registration, counselling, information, and referrals in a single location. This model was effective during the acute emergency phase, ensuring swift access to rights and services. However, as arrivals declined and these centres were closed, the

⁴⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2024a.

⁴⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2024b.

protection monitoring exercise identified a structural gap: the decentralisation of reception was not accompanied by an equally robust, coordinated information architecture. As a result, access to information became fragmented, with 66% of surveyed refugees reporting at least one unmet information need, rising to 74% among new arrivals. Refugees increasingly relied on informal sources, such as social media platforms and peer networks, rather than official channels, which were perceived as difficult to navigate and insufficiently responsive. This fragmentation was explicitly linked to increased protection risks, as individuals lacking reliable information may resort to unsafe housing arrangements, exploitative employment, or unverified service providers.

In Slovenia, a large majority of respondents (88%) reported having access to the information they need regarding rights and services, yet a non-negligible proportion (22%) experienced challenges, primarily related to not knowing where to seek information, language barriers, and uncertainty regarding the reliability of sources. As in Lithuania, refugees in Slovenia demonstrated a strong preference for social media channels, particularly Facebook and Telegram, as their primary sources of information. While the overall information environment appears less fragmented than in Lithuania, the Slovenian data point to a “last-mile” problem in information access, particularly affecting older refugees, persons with limited digital skills, and those requiring specialised services.

Labour market access illustrates a comparable divergence between formal entitlement and practical inclusion in both countries. In Lithuania, beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine gain immediate access to employment upon registration, reflecting the national implementation of the EU Temporary Protection framework. Monitoring data indicate that among respondents who had resided in the country for more than six months, 53% were economically active, while 17% were unemployed. The principal barriers to employment were identified as language barriers, lack of childcare, and limited job opportunities. Importantly, Lithuania’s legal and policy framework frames labour market access as an inclusion pathway rather than a restricted regime, reinforced by public employment services offering counselling, job matching, and skills assessment. A temporary exemption from state language proficiency requirements for Ukrainian beneficiaries further facilitated early labour market entry, although the approaching expiry of this exemption has heightened concerns regarding access to quality language training and the sustainability of employment outcomes.

In Slovenia, only 25% of working-age household members were employed at the time of the survey, while 54% were unemployed, despite high pre-displacement employment rates and educational attainment. The unemployment rate was particularly pronounced among women, with 76% of working-age women previously employed in Ukraine remaining unemployed in Slovenia. Key barriers mirrored those identified in Lithuania but with greater intensity: lack of proficiency in Slovenian, limited availability of jobs matching qualifications, childcare responsibilities, and, in rural areas, restricted access to transportation. These findings suggest that while formal access to employment exists under the TP regime, effective labour market inclusion in Slovenia is constrained by structural and contextual factors that limit refugees' ability to translate legal rights into sustainable livelihoods.

Chart 8: Economic activity of beneficiaries of temporary protection in Lithuania.

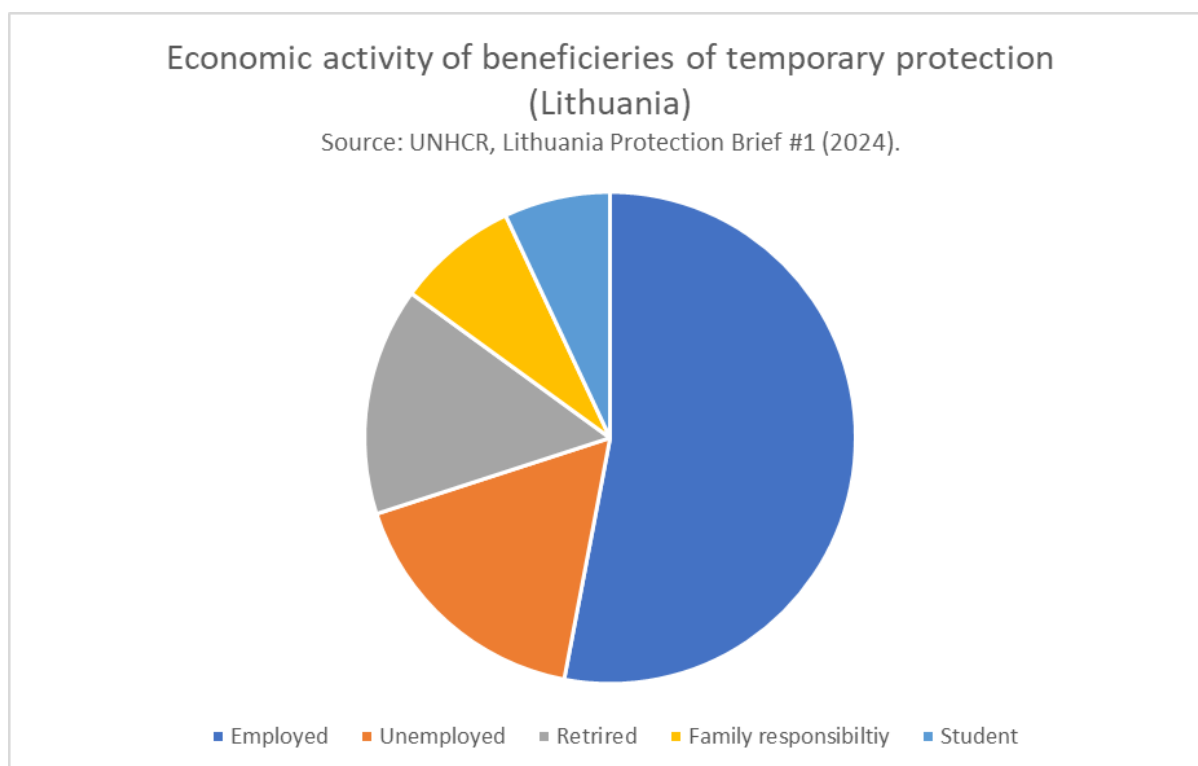


Chart 9: Economic activity of beneficiaries of temporary protection in Slovenia.

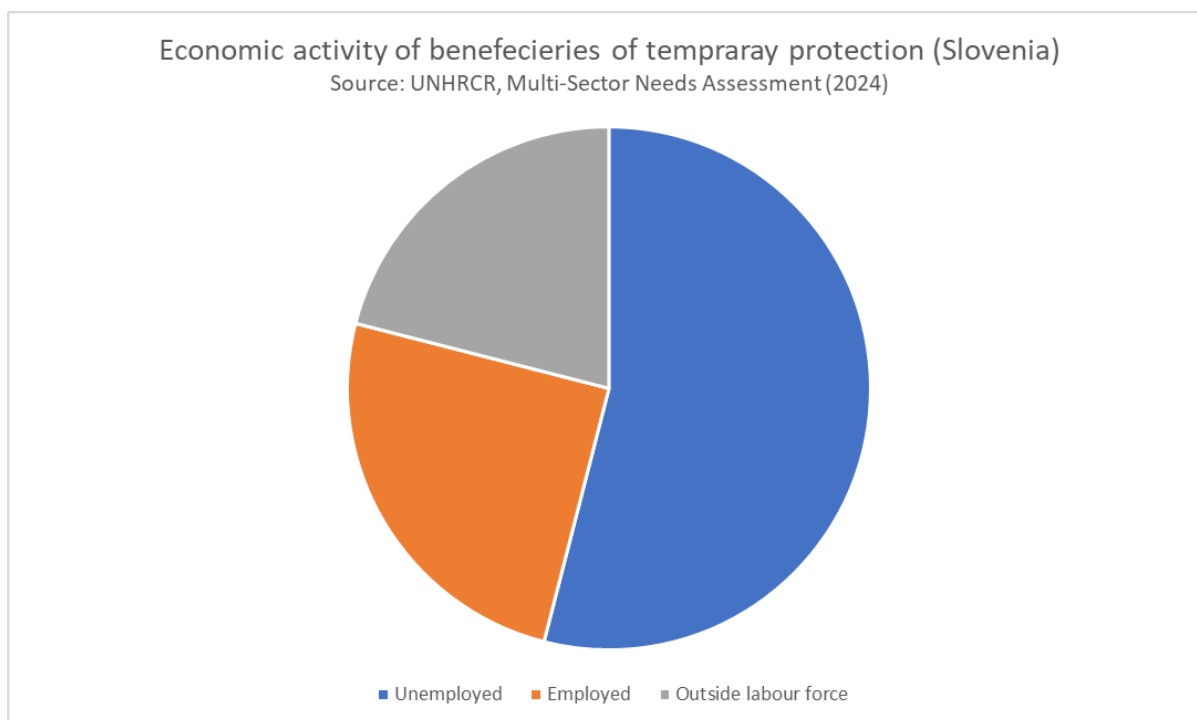


Chart 10: Barriers to accessing the labour market - Lithuania.

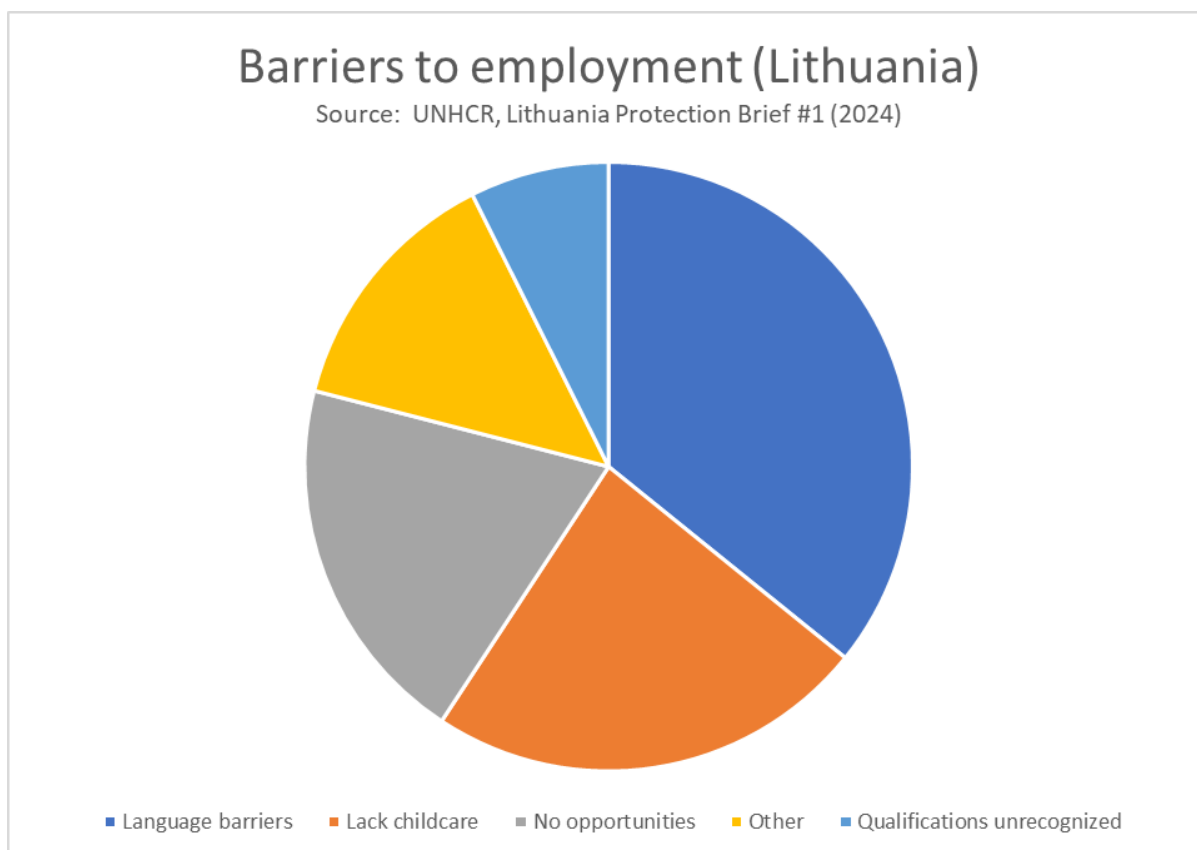
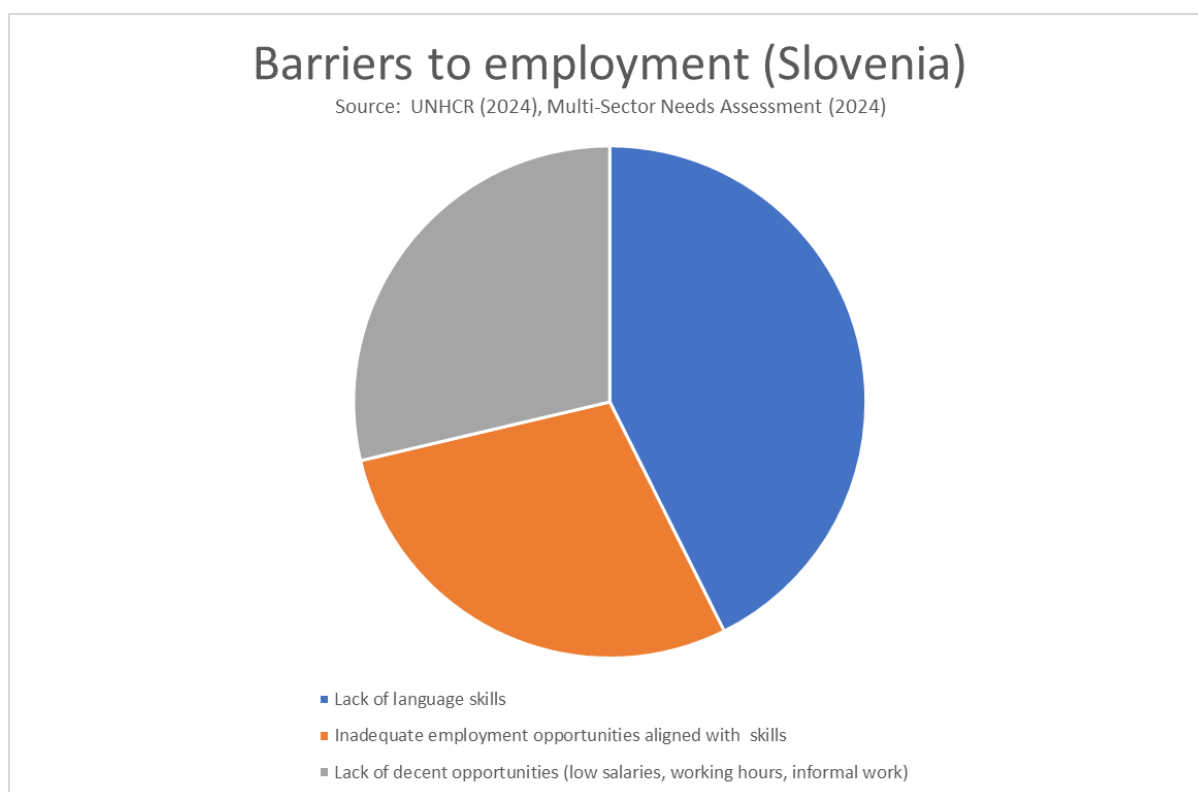


Chart 11: Barriers to accessing the labour market - Slovenia.



Vulnerability identification and referral mechanisms further illustrate systemic differences. In Lithuania, protection monitoring identified a high prevalence of vulnerabilities, including households with members with serious medical conditions, disabilities, older persons, and single caregivers. However, the absence of a systematic vulnerability screening process at the registration stage limits the capacity of authorities to proactively identify and refer individuals with specific needs. Vulnerability disclosure during registration is not consistently linked to service referrals, leaving refugees and NGOs to navigate support pathways independently. This places a disproportionate burden on civil society actors and risks gaps in protection for those least able to self-advocate.

Housing outcomes further reflect the interaction between scale, policy design, and labour market inclusion. In Slovenia, the vast majority of refugee households live in private accommodation and depend heavily on state subsidies. Only a minority cover full housing costs independently, and housing stability is closely linked to continued public support. In Lithuania, housing arrangements are more varied, encompassing private rentals, hosting, and collective

accommodation. Market volatility, rising costs, and limited availability of affordable housing are identified as ongoing challenges, compounded by information gaps and uneven referral mechanisms shared by both countries.

Table 3: Comparison of data on Ukrainian refugees and employment rates in Lithuania and Slovenia.

	Lithuania	Slovenia
Population	2.885.972 ⁴⁹	2.133.852 ⁵⁰
Temporary protection status granted	97.127 ⁵¹	11.325 ⁵²
Beneficiaries with temporary protection status living in the country in 2025	47.666 ⁵³	8.344 ⁵⁴
Percentage of temporary protection beneficiaries residing in the country	48,9%	74,5%
Share of residing temporary protection beneficiaries within the general population	1,6%	0,4%
General unemployment rate	6.4% ⁵⁵	4.2% ⁵⁶
Employment rate of beneficiaries of temporary protection (UNHCR, 2024)	53% ⁵⁷	25% ⁵⁸
Employment rate of beneficiaries of temporary protection (IAB, 2024)	56.78% ⁵⁹	11.76% ⁶⁰

⁴⁹ Official Statistical Portal of Lithuania, 2026.

⁵⁰ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, 2026.

⁵¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2025.

⁵² The Information was collected on 1 February 2026 and it was provided by the Slovene Ministry of Interior. (Email correspondence is held by the authors of the report)

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Information was provided by the Slovene Ministry of Interior. (Email correspondence is held by the authors of the report)

⁵⁵ Official Statistical Portal of Lithuania, 2026.

⁵⁶ Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, 2026.)

⁵⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2024a.

⁵⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2024b.

⁵⁹ Kosyakova, Gatskova, Koch, et.al., 2024.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 65.

	Lithuania	Slovenia
Number of unemployed Ukrainian refugees registered with the Employment Service	3.047 ⁶¹	1.660 ⁶²
The number of children per woman of working age among Ukrainian refugees	0.8 ⁶³	0.8 ⁶⁴
Share of people in retirement age (65+ years) among Ukrainian refugees	8.1 % ⁶⁵	14.7 % ⁶⁶
Ukraine citizens holding residency permit at the end of 2021	32.884 ⁶⁷	2.655 ⁶⁸

Taken together, the comparison demonstrates that while Lithuania and Slovenia operate under the same EU temporary protection framework, protection and inclusion outcomes are strongly mediated by national context, scale of displacement, and institutional design. Lithuania's challenges are primarily systemic, reflecting the transition from emergency reception to longer-term inclusion without a fully consolidated coordination architecture. Slovenia's challenges are more structural and functional, in difficulties in labour market integration, childcare provision, and access to specialised services, despite relatively strong access to status, housing, and social benefits.

⁶¹ The data was collected on 1 January 2026 and it was provided by the Employment Service of Lithuania. (Email correspondence is held by the authors of the report).

⁶² The data was collected on 31 October 2025 and it was provided by the Employment Service of Slovenia. (Email correspondence is held by the authors of the report).

⁶³ Kosyakova, Gatskova, Koch, et.al., 2024.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 31.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 32

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 32

⁶⁷ Eurostat, 2022.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

7. Policy recommendations

Based on the responses gathered from focus group participants in Slovenia and the comparative data gathered from Lithuania, the findings have been organised into a set of policy recommendations aimed at informing the development of more effective integration models for Ukrainian refugees. The recommendations are structured around four key areas: Language, Employment, Inclusion, and Safe Transition to Employment. Any policy adjustments should be introduced gradually, clearly communicated, and supported through proactive inter-institutional cooperation. Abrupt changes to social or economic conditions, such as reductions in social transfers or the revocation of protection status, are not advisable, as they may adversely affect both the beneficiaries concerned and the wider community.

Language

- Increase the availability of accessible Slovenian language courses at B1 and B2 levels by ensuring affordability, flexible scheduling, and geographic accessibility. At the same time, strengthen coordination and information-sharing between Employment Service advisers, course providers, and non-governmental organisations in order to improve awareness of available courses, enrolment procedures, and capacity. This would enable more efficient referrals and higher participation rates.
- Increase the number of examination dates for the Slovenian language proficiency test in order to reduce waiting periods and ensure timely access, particularly for candidates who require certification for employment, further education, or residence-related procedures.
- Integrate bilingual elements into language, integration, and labour market programmes to facilitate active participation and informed decision-making. Providing key information in participants' native languages enhances comprehension and enables learners to engage more confidently with complex topics, such as labour law, contract types, and employment rights and obligations.
- Adopt an approach that combines theoretical instruction with interactive and practical components within integration and labour market programmes. Activities such as job interview simulations, CV and cover letter workshops, and guided searches for in-demand occupations should be systematically incorporated to ensure that acquired knowledge translates into concrete labour market outcomes.

Employment

- Strengthen targeted outreach and information campaigns aimed at employers to improve awareness of the legal status and employment rights of Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection, as well as available recruitment pathways and support measures. Clear and accessible information can promote lawful hiring practices and facilitate more inclusive labour market participation.
- Facilitate structured bridges to employment by combining employer field visits, bilingual mentoring, and practical job-search support, including CV preparation and mock interviews. This hands-on approach can reduce uncertainty when entering the labour market, build confidence, and equip participants with the practical skills necessary to obtain and sustain employment.
- Develop and expand integrated training programmes that combine skills development with supervised work placements. Such programmes enable migrants to acquire local work experience, strengthen employability, and ease their transition into the Slovenian labour market.
- Introduce more efficient mechanisms for the formal recognition of professional qualifications and simplify re-qualification procedures, particularly in regulated professions such as medicine and law. Accelerating these processes would support faster labour market entry, help address skills shortages, and reduce the risk of occupational downgrading and underemployment.
- Enhance cooperation between the Employment Service and non-governmental organisations in order to establish a centralised and accessible information system for refugees. This should provide clear guidance on available training, upskilling opportunities, and employment pathways, thereby improving referral systems and ensuring timely and accurate information.

Inclusion

- Ensure systematic engagement with Ukrainian migrants in their native language across integration initiatives, including retraining programmes, round tables, and informational seminars. Providing accurate and targeted information in a language fully understood by participants is essential for supporting informed decision-making and

facilitating the transition from reliance on assistance to active participation in the labour market and wider society.

- Introduce a coordinated and comprehensive integration model that combines language acquisition, cultural orientation, employment support, and broader social inclusion measures. Such a framework should also include tailored support for families in order to promote sustainable and long-term integration outcomes for migrants and refugees.
- Improve the accessibility and affordability of public transport and promote job creation in regions with higher concentrations of migrants. Reducing mobility constraints and expanding access to local employment opportunities can contribute to more balanced regional integration and strengthen overall economic participation.

Safe Transition from Protection to Employment

- Introduce a temporary retention of selected social benefits for individuals entering employment, particularly with regard to rent subsidies, for a defined transition period (for example, six to twelve months). Such a measure would reduce the immediate financial risk associated with labour market entry and facilitate a gradual move towards financial independence.
- Consider a phased reduction of financial assistance for persons capable of working who have held temporary protection status for an extended period (e.g. more than one year). Any adjustment of support should be accompanied by comprehensive employment assistance, including job-matching services, access to training, and efficient recognition of skills and qualifications. A reduction of assistance in the absence of such measures would risk deepening vulnerability rather than promoting employment.
- Establish safeguards to ensure that families transitioning from social assistance to employment do not experience a decline in their material well-being. Guaranteeing a minimum level of income during the transition period would address concerns about financial loss and create a stable foundation for sustainable labour market participation.
- Facilitate the transition by removing administrative barriers for employed beneficiaries of temporary protection to obtain residency through a single work and residence permit.

Conclusion

The present Analysis of displaced persons from Ukraine in Slovenia and in Lithuania has situated the labour market integration of beneficiaries of temporary protection within the evolving European policy framework shaped by the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive by the European Union in response to the war in Ukraine, and the subsequent policy turn toward transitioning beneficiaries into national residence regimes. The comparative analysis between the two respective countries aims to show their responses to the progression and changes in the mentioned Directive, the influx of refugees from Ukraine, while also highlighting the differences among EU Member States in their adoption of the varied approaches despite a common European framework for temporary protection.

Although the two countries, Slovenia and Lithuania, have comparable population sizes, certain indicators—such as geographical proximity and the pre-existing presence of a larger Ukrainian diaspora—suggest that Lithuania has been a more attractive destination for Ukrainians following the Russian aggression.

Since the beginning of 2022, Slovenia has issued 11,325 decisions on temporary protection, while the number in Lithuania has been significantly higher. In Lithuania, by September 2025, a total of 97,127 individuals had registered for temporary protection; however, the number of beneficiaries actually residing in the country was considerably lower (47,666). A similar pattern can be observed in Slovenia, where the number of beneficiaries residing in the country (8,344) is also substantially lower than the total number of registered beneficiaries of temporary protection.

Lithuania, which hosts one of the highest per-capita Ukrainian refugee populations in the EU, initially responded with centralised, government-led registration centres that ensured rapid access to protection and services. However, as the situation stabilised and reception structures became more decentralised, gaps emerged in information provision. A majority of refugees reported unmet information needs, increasing reliance on informal channels and heightening protection risks. Regarding employment, Lithuania's legal framework promotes labour market access as a pathway to inclusion, supported by public employment services that provide counselling, job matching, and skills assessment. Labour market access was further facilitated through a temporary exemption from state language requirements. One of the key indicators

that correlates with high employment rates is also the scale of the diaspora that allows for faster economic integration. The presence of Ukrainians before the war was much higher in Lithuania than in Slovenia.

Slovenia, managing a smaller number of beneficiaries, has faced fewer systemic pressures. Most refugees report adequate access to information, although gaps persist for specific groups, particularly those with limited digital or language skills. Despite formal access to employment, labour market integration remains a significant challenge. High unemployment rates—especially among women—reflect structural barriers such as insufficient language proficiency, skills mismatch, childcare constraints, and transportation limitations.

Although both countries implement the same EU temporary protection framework, outcomes are shaped by national context, the scale of displacement, and institutional design. Lithuania's challenges are primarily linked to the transition from emergency response to long-term inclusion, while Slovenia's challenges are more structural, particularly with regard to labour market integration, despite generally strong access to housing and social benefits.

By combining legal and policy analysis with comparative insights from Slovenia and Lithuania, statistical evidence on registration with the Employment Service of Slovenia, and qualitative findings from three focus groups with beneficiaries of temporary protection in Slovenia, this analysis demonstrates that access to stable employment is becoming the central pathway to durable legal status as temporary protection is gradually phased out. The evidence underscores persistent barriers – language acquisition, skills recognition, fragmented transition pathways, and uneven institutional support – that risk entrenching underemployment where policy expectations of self-sufficiency are intensifying.

In our efforts to provide some suggestions on how to address the present barriers and gaps in the integration process we developed a list of policy recommendations, derived from the summarized findings of the three focus groups. The main objective was to engage beneficiaries themselves as the primary source of insight into how integration strategies can be improved and how labour market integration can be facilitated, as this represents a key pathway toward residency transition. As the focus groups were conducted exclusively in Slovenia, the recommendations primarily target the Slovenian governance framework for beneficiaries of temporary protection.

The recommendations address four key areas: language, employment, inclusion, and safe transition. Among the key proposals, in the area of language, we recommend expanding the availability of accessible Slovenian language courses at intermediate and upper-intermediate levels (B1 and B2), as well as increasing the number of available examinations. In the area of employment, we suggest the development and expansion of integrated training programs that combine skills development with supervised work experience, alongside the implementation of mechanisms for faster formal recognition of professional qualifications and the simplification of requalification procedures.

To improve inclusion, we propose the introduction of a coordinated and holistic integration framework that brings together language acquisition, cultural orientation, employment support, and improved accessibility and affordability of public transport. Regarding safe transition, we recommend ensuring a guaranteed social minimum for families and individuals transitioning from assistance to employment, so that their material well-being does not decline upon entering the labour market.

These represent only a selection of the policy recommendations identified in the research aimed at improving the integration of beneficiaries of temporary protection. It is important to emphasize that abrupt policy changes that reduce the existing set of beneficiaries' rights are ill-advised, as they may lead to unforeseen consequences and harm not only the affected population but the wider community as well. Policy changes aimed at promoting transition should be introduced gradually, communicated clearly, and developed and implemented through proactive collaboration between the state, beneficiaries, and civil society organizations.

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