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Short Analysis

The Russian Invasion of Ukraine: Scope, Patterns and Future Development of Displacement

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In June 2021, President Putin declared that Ukraine was fundamentally part of Russia's sphere of influence and consequently demanded that it not be integrated into Western alliances, especially NATO. In October 2021, the Russian army amassed on the Ukrainian border, finally, in November, the head of the Russian Security Council threatened the EU with millions of refugees and finally, on 24 February 2022 Putin gave orders to invade Ukraine. The attack is not simply an attack of one country but must be understood as a wider Russian attack on Europe and the West. This paper follows from a [short analysis of four scenarios of war and displacement](#) we wrote in December 2021 but which was rejected by most outlets. In the meantime, our worst case scenario has become reality, a full invasion of Ukraine from north, east and south. This paper updates the first paper and examines the potential scale of displacement due to the invasion and some air raids even in the west. The paper is based on an analysis of patterns of displacement in the wake of Russia's first intervention in eastern Ukraine in 2014, the application of these patterns to two possible scenarios of the invasion and accordingly displacement in 2022 and observations made on the ground.

Pretext

Already in 2013/2014, in response to a [revolution](#), the toppling of the pro-Russian president Yanukovich and Ukraine's subsequent rapprochement with the West [Russia intervened militarily](#). It supported separatists in Eastern Ukraine and invaded and annexed Crimea in violation of international law. This affected two other provinces, Luhansk and Donetsk, which are heavily industrialized and urbanized and were home to some 6.7 million people. [Fierce fighting ensued](#), which continued in a weaker form until the Russian attack. Much of the industry, the airport and other infrastructure, and many homes were destroyed, also [costing more than 14,000 lives](#) until January 2022.

About one third of the two provinces, including the two provincial capitals, and 60% of the population have since been under the control of pro-Russian and Russian-backed [separatists](#). The conflict directly affected about [59% of the population](#) in the occupied parts and the combat zone and indirectly others living close to the conflict zone. Of the total population of about 6.7 million about 4 million people in the occupied territories and combat zones were affected. Of these about [1.6 million people were displaced internally](#), of whom about 200,000 have since returned, leaving [about 1.45 million internally displaced persons](#). Another [550,000 have fled or migrated to Russia](#), some even speak of up to [one million](#); how many of them fled in direct response to the fighting and occupation and how many are more likely to be labour migrants is disputed. To sum up, 2.15 million people in the directly or indirectly affected areas in the two provinces, up to 54% to 59% of the population, i.e. more than half, have been displaced or have left the area. Crimea, with its 2 million inhabitants, was

also affected by the conflict and first occupied and later [annexed](#) by Russia. In this case, however, there was no heavy or protracted fighting, and [only about 50,000](#) of the predominantly Russian population fled the peninsula, a much smaller proportion than in the other two affected provinces, although other sources indicate a larger number. Most of those who fled are those who are negatively affected with the new situation, notably Tatars and Ukrainians, who are [now persecuted by Russia](#). However, only a few of the displaced persons have fled to the EU ([34,400 in 2014/2015](#), the refugee recognition rate was only 13.4%), although the migration of workers, students and others has since reached a peak of several million (see below). In any case, these numbers are rather indicative, because the issue is so emotional that numbers can be tendentious.

Russia is pursuing [three interrelated strategic goals](#): regaining control over Ukraine, pushing back Western alliances, especially NATO and generally expanding its influence in Eastern Europe, some analysts also say [restoring the Russian Empire](#), notably bringing Russia, Belarus and Ukraine under one roof. In July 2021, [Putin published an article](#) in which he specifically questions the legitimacy of Ukraine's borders and government and justifies the Russian claim. In October 2021, Russia began deploying its [armies on Ukraine's borders, in neighbouring Belarus](#) to the north, at Black Sea and [a small force](#) in [Transnistria](#) to the southwest, a separatist region of Moldova also supported by Russia.

In November 2021, [Russian Security Council Director and former SFB Director Nikolai Patrushev](#) in one of his rare interviews suggested that "Ukraine can go up in flames at any time, so millions of Ukrainians will seek shelter elsewhere." The covert message to the U.S. and EU has been: give up on Ukraine or else another major 'refugee crisis' will occur. President Putin is well aware of the destabilising effect of large-scale refugee movements on the EU. It can be assumed that he carefully analysed the impact the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis had on the EU. Already in 2015/2016, Russia played this card when [allowing 40,000 refugees from Russia to enter Norway and Finland](#) to exert political pressure on both countries. And in 2021, Russia tolerated [the policy of Belarus to put pressure on the EU by means of transit migration of 8,000 migrants](#) and refugees from Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and other countries.

Four Scenarios of the Ongoing Invasion

Based on various reports, four rough scenarios can be identified suggesting [possible phases or elements](#) of one and the same attack.

(1a) One goal is the occupation of [a land corridor between Russia and Crimea](#), i.e., the area between separatist Donetsk and Crimea. This involves three provinces, the still government-controlled half of Donetsk with the industrial centre of Mariupol, and the provinces of Zaporizhzhya and Kherson. (1b) Another goal is the occupation of Kiev affecting also parts of Zhytomyr and the invasion of the entire area along both sides of the Dnieper River and thus the entire Eastern and Central Ukraine, an option that, according to [Stratfor \(2014\)](#), was already a strategic objective in 2014 and that was still considered a [Russian military target](#) in 2021. An additional [scenario](#) (1c) encompasses the entire southern coast, including the major city and port of Odessa, all the way to Transnistria. This would bring Russia in direct contact with a NATO member, Romania. On Thursday, 24 February Russia attacked Kharkiv, Kiev, Sumy, Chernigiv and Mariupol to the north and east, took Kherson on 2 March, and aims at some territory west of the Dnepr river. Around that time a major attack on Mykolaiv began and an attack of [Odessa is imminent](#) (17/3/22). Russia could thus be cutting Ukraine in two halves, a smaller western part and a larger eastern and southern part with most major cities, industrial areas and all ports.

(2) Whether Russia will then continue invading the western half of Ukraine possibly involving an invasion by the Belarusian army from the north into the Volyn and Rivne provinces is a possibility but yet unclear.

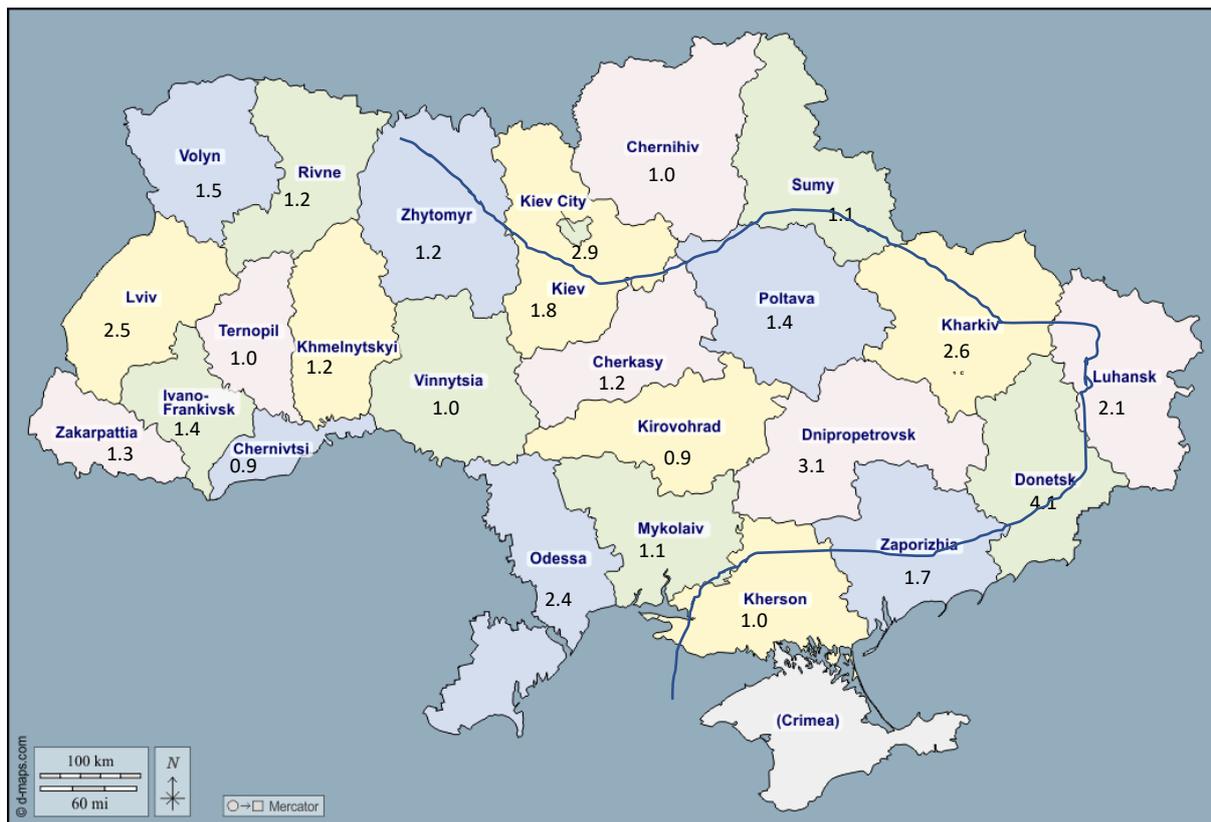
(3) A third scenario could be that the Ukrainian army and territorial forces and volunteers collapse and that all men currently mobilised into the armed forces surrender or flee.

(4) An additional [target could be Moldova](#), a former Soviet republic and now independent country of a remaining population of just under 3 million. Moldova is already divided into a free and a Russian-occupied part, with a mostly pro-Russian population.

Scenarios and Patterns of Displacement

This chapter addresses the question how these different scenarios of military confrontation affect the population. Ukraine still has [a population of 37 million](#) without the occupied and annexed territories, and [up to 43 million](#) including the occupied and annexed territories. As has become apparent, Russia aims at cutting through the country from Kiev to Kherson. Therefore, we concentrate on scenario 1a, b and c and for the time being neglect scenarios 2, 3 and 4.

Map: Ukraine, oblasts and population in million, rounded (mio.), oblasts affected by invasion by 8 March 2022.



Sources: [Dmaps](#), [UKrstat 2021](#)

- Scenario 1a affects the remaining populations of Donetsk and Luhansk still controlled by the government, [about 2.6 million people](#), including the 450,000 inhabitants of Mariupol, as well as the inhabitants of Zaporizhzhya, 1.7 million and Kherson, 1 million people totalling 5.3 million people. Scenario 1b affects the provinces of Kiev, Chernihiv, Sumi, Kharkiv, Dnipro, Poltava and most parts of Cherkassy and Kirovograd with total of 16 million people. The area includes three of the country's largest cities, the financial metropolis of Dnipro with 3.1 million people,

the industrial centre of Kharkiv and some small parts of Zhytomyr. Under scenario 1c, the remaining populations of Mykolaiv with its 1.1 million people and Odessa with population 2.4 million would be attacked affecting another 3.5 million or so people. The total affected population of scenarios 1a, b and c would be 24.8 million people, including a possible 200,000 in Zhytomyr. This includes [up to 1.25 million](#) people who were already displaced by the previous Russian intervention in 2014 and who would be affected once again.

- Scenario 2 would affect the remainder of the Ukrainian population or approximately 13 million people. This is a scenario even harder to imagine.
- Scenario 3 would mainly affect 12 million men, those who survive the war would either be captured or flee.
- Scenario 4 would affect the 2.9 million citizens of Moldova. Though there are few signs yet that this is a realistic option.

In 2014, 54% and 59% (average 56.5%) of the population affected by fighting and occupation were displaced. However, at the current situation [migration is restricted for men aged 18 to 60](#), 29% of the total population, due to the general mobilisation. Accordingly, 17 million Ukrainians aged 18 to 60+ are women, and 7.4 million are minors; hence, 29.6 million or 71.5% of the population fall into the category of people permitted to migrate. Also, many of the 1.45 million IDPs from the previous intervention – most of whom have settled in eastern Ukraine – are likely to be displaced for a second time. It also now becomes apparent that only 5.74% fled to Russia and not 20% as in 2014.

Ukraine is a multi-ethnic country consisting of [130 minorities](#); apart from Ukrainians and Russians there are Hungarians, Belarusians, Romanians, Slovaks, Tatars, Moldovans, Poles, Roma, Gagauz, Hutsul, Bulgarians, Germans and many more. It is equally religiously diverse as there are Ukrainian, Greek, Russian and Armenian Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants, Jews and Muslims. One group that would be particularly affected by a Russian invasion and occupation are [refugees from other states](#). For example, since the 1980s, more than 20,000 [Afghan refugees](#) have been living in Ukraine, most of them have citizenship and are well integrated. There were also [a few hundred Afghan refugees](#) evacuated after the Taliban take-over. In addition, there are 2,500 to 5,000 [Chechens](#) who would have to fear the Russian state authorities, since 2021 also several thousand or even ten thousand [Belarusians](#) as well as several hundred refugees from the Central Asian republics, e.g. Uzbekistan, and since 2021 also more and more from Russia. Ukraine has been the last comparatively free and safe country for politically persecuted people from the post-Soviet space. A Russian occupation could mean either renewed persecution and [refoulement](#) or renewed flight.

In total, [285,000 foreigners](#) recently hold a residence permit in Ukraine plus a certain number of un-registered meaning irregular immigrants. This includes around 80,000 [international students](#) (Indians, Moroccan, Nigerians are among the largest groups). Another group are labour migrants, mostly highly skilled; 16,000 hold a work permit, the largest group are Turkish nationals. Many of these are also westerners from EU, U.S. and Canada such as business representatives, aid workers, embassy staff, language teachers and others. Finally, there are also traders and business men and women from many parts of the world, China, Vietnam, Nigeria and others.

Ultimately, however, the actual extent of displacement is determined by the intensity of the fighting, the duration of the conflict and extent of destruction, the nature and actions of the occupying power, and the impact on the economy and [resilience](#) of the population (see also [here](#)). The case of Donetsk and Luhansk used in developing these scenarios is characterized by a continuation of fighting, the installation of a puppet regime and a degree of [arbitrary rule](#) in the occupied territory, and extensive destruction of industry and infrastructure and thus of the economic base. But people's identity and sense of belonging to Russia or Ukraine also determine their flight behaviour. For example, the sense

of belonging to Russia was generally higher among the often Russian-speaking population in eastern Ukraine than in the west (in 2002, still, [only 17.3% of the population described themselves as Russian](#)). However, the recent Russian aggression has already led to [a shift in people's identities](#), who now tend to identify more strongly with Ukraine. The current attack is most likely to alienate even more people from Russia.

Methodological Note

The scenarios of further displacement take the population of the oblasts affected or potentially affected by the invasion based on the latest population statistics (calculated as the last census was in 2001). The scenarios are developed by applying the patterns of the 2014 displacement – 54% to 59% of the affected populations fled, 20% to Russia and 80% to other parts of the country – but corrected on the basis of migration restrictions, men are not currently allowed to leave the country, and current observations, only 5.7% flee to Russia. If observations show that a higher percentage flees or that more provinces are affected further corrections will be applied.

With regards to monitoring actual migration a typical challenge is to distinguish between the counting of events and the counting of people. Often, it is events which are counted like border crossings or registrations; however, sometimes, one and the same person crosses several borders or is registered at several locations. Therefore, double-counting is a typical feature in such fluid situations. In this case, people escaping and traveling within Ukraine might be counted several times as IDPs; also, people arriving in the EU might be registered at several borders, for instance, on entry to Poland, on entry to Germany and again in the Netherlands. Therefore, numbers of registrations might be higher than the actual number of people. On the other hand, in such dynamic situations a certain number of people might also slip registration so that more people enter or stay in a country than known to the authorities. Therefore, all administrative data as well as estimates are now more than indicate.

Current Situation: How Many People Have Been Displaced Internally and Internationally and How Many More Could Be Expected?¹

On average, during the first three weeks of fighting 160,000 Ukrainians left their country every day. At the beginning about 140,000 to 150,000 fled per day, from 4 March that increased to 210,000 per day, decreased to 120,000 from 10 March and to 65,000

The first surge consisted of about 10.6 million or more displaced people.

at 20 March (see [UNHCR for daily updates](#)). By 21 March, there were already 3.6 million displaced persons in the EU. Of these, so far, more than 60% went to Poland, 9% to Hungary, 7.4% to Slovakia, 7% to Moldova and Romania and 5.7% to Russia (including 50,000 who were evacuated, [not necessarily voluntarily](#), from occupied Donbas to Russia). Some very disturbing reports suggest that Russia also began [deporting Ukrainians](#) from some occupied territories to so-called 'filtration camps'² in Donetsk and then to villages in Russia. This is said to affect to date at least 7,000 inhabitants of Mariupol. Whereas arrivals to Poland largely seem to stay there, an NGO representative said that in Slovakia 90% of the

Deportation of Ukrainians from occupied territories to Russia is yet another disturbing feature.

¹ There are more and more statistics available on IDPs and internationally displaced persons and the overall evidence base has improved. However, there are also problems with these statistics, well known from previous crises. One key problem is double-counting, for instance, of IDPs within Ukraine, who are counted in the cities along the route, in Poltava, Kmelnyzkyj and Lviv, and then on arrival in Poland or Moldova and Romania and again in Lithuania, Germany and possibly even once more in the Netherlands.

² 'Filtration camps' have been introduced by the NKWD, the Russian security service in the 1940s as well as the Russian army during the second Chechnya war to [intern, torture and even rape and the insurgents](#).

arrivals move further west. Also arrivals in Moldova seem to mostly continue to Romania. So far, the arrivals are overwhelmingly women with children and some elderly, up to [50% are actually children](#). There are also [reports](#) about unaccompanied minors or even human trafficking; however, so far there is little if any evidence. There is also a certain number of nationals from other countries, EU and non-EU among the displaced persons. From 24 February, men are restricted from leaving the country, because of [martial law and general mobilisation](#) into the army. From 6 March the level of displacement to the EU seems to have decreased slightly. It occurs that displacement from 24 February to 20 March was the first surge.

With regards to internally displaced persons (IDPs) already before 24 February had Ukrainians silently relocated from east to west, the city of Lviv was full with cars with eastern number plates, also all hotels, holiday apartments in town as well in the mountain resorts to the south were fully booked we were told. Further to this, people also retreated to their weekend homes (dachas). During the first movement of displaced persons many men drove the family cars towards the borders. Later, we received eyewitness accounts reporting that men were prevented boarding evacuation trains, as from Kharkiv. Finally, by 13 March, there were about 390,000 registered IDPs only in central and the western provinces. In Lviv alone, numbers rose from 75,000 IDPs on 5 March to 200,000 on 8 March, increasing its population by 25%. The city is “full of people”, a colleague described the situation, but still more arrive every day, $\frac{3}{4}$ are there to stay and $\frac{1}{4}$ are in transit, people say. The major [Sadovyi explained](#) “Lviv can’t accept more refugees” and asked for help. In addition, people are escaping from Kharkiv either to smaller towns and villages in the province or they are evacuated to Poltava. Also from people are evacuated [Sumi to Poltava](#) and from [Mariupol to Mykolaiv](#)³. Despite the bombing of critical infrastructure including train stations trains are still running, so far [over 2 million people have been evacuated by train](#) from east to west in a massive operation. Meanwhile, UN sources gives a number of [6.48 million](#) (16 March), this is much higher than previous estimates of [one million](#) IDPs or [1.85 million IDPs](#) and more realistic. Of all IDPs, [53 % are women](#). [Another survey](#) found that 44% of the adult population, equivalent of 15 million individuals, have been “temporarily separated from their families because of the war”; ‘separation’ is not further specified but also includes IDPs.

Table: IDPs in Ukraine from current Russian attack, 13 March 2022

Oblast	Number of IDPs	Date	Source
Lviv	200,000	7 March	TSN
Zakarpattia	60,000	7 March	Life net
Kmelnyzkyj	16,000, another 88,000 moved further west	8 March, 13 March	UAVarta
Kirovograd	43,000	13 March	UAVarta
Chernivtsi	over 36,000	10 March	UAVarta
Ternopil'ska	15,000	7 March	TV4
Volyn'ska	over 10,000	7 March	Rayon
Frankiv'ska	over 4,000	8 March	Depo
Rivnens'ka	over 4,000	7 March	Gov.ua

During the first wave of the Russian invasion nine provinces - Kiev, Chernigiv, Sumi, Kharkiv, Lugansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya, Kherson and Mykolaiv - with a total population of 16 million people came

³ Humanitarian corridors and evacuations are controversial because they (a) basically hand over cities to the enemy, (2) during evacuation the people are exposed to enemy fire as observed in Srebrenica, Syria and now Ukraine and (c) it requires forces to enforce the evacuation and protect the evacuees but often these are not available (see [here](#)).

under direct attack whereas Odessa with its population of 2.4 million has been threatened by further military advances. This means that by 21/3 10.1 million or 55% of the population were already displaced, 6.5 million or 35.3 % internally and 3.6 million or 19.6% internationally. [An IOM study suggests](#) that a third of the population of Kiev province, 1.6 million, or half of Kiev city, and half of the people of Kharkiv province, 1.3 million, have fled suggesting that the other half has hitherto stayed; this includes of course the men aged 18 to 60. Also, many people have already fled Odessa prior any fighting, [up to 550,000 it seems](#). Under the current conditions, date 16 March, [another 2.2. million consider fleeing](#) their homes.

Due to the ongoing invasion a second wave is likely to follow upon attack of Kiev, intensified attacks on Kharkiv, attacks on Dnepro, Poltava, Odessa and other provinces. This would affect at least another 11 million more people approximately plus 2,85 million those who were [already displaced internally to central, north and southern Ukraine](#). If the patterns of displacement observed so far persist, another 7.6 million would be displaced. A third wave would be imminent if Russia also attacks western Ukraine, that would displace at least 8.7 million including the 2.6 IDPs already in western Ukraine. And a fourth wave would be caused by the collapse of the Ukrainian army and the fleeing of many of the men. Already the second wave will have biblical proportions displacing an entire nation.

A second surge could involve another 7.6 mio. displaced Ukrainians. Thus, in total, 18.2 mio. or 49.2% of the total population could be displaced.

Some controversy arose over what was understood as [discrimination of people of colour](#) during evacuation, access to transportation and at border crossings to the EU. However, matters were more complex than many commentators suggested. Notably, Ukraine resorted to give preference to vulnerable people (women, children and the elderly) while men aged 18 to 60 were restricted from leaving cities and country. However, because most international students or workers were young men they fell outside of the category of prioritised people; they were thus not simply restricted from boarding trains or crossing borders because they were brown or black but because they were male and young. In this controversy where due to limited resources and congestion not all in need could be served, an unfortunate controversy arose over whom to prioritise, vulnerable people vs. Black people. Not recognising this dilemma was very unfortunate.

How Many Ukrainian and Other Displaced Persons Would Move to the EU?

Unlike Syria, Ukraine is a neighbouring country of the EU, only a nine-hour drive from Berlin (900 kilometres), less from Warsaw (4 hours, 400 kilometres) or Budapest (330 kilometres), and therefore easy to reach. The land borders between Ukraine and its neighbouring countries Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland are 1,380 kilometres long and not hermetically sealed, there are no old minefields, no walls, partly old fences and watchtowers on the Ukrainian side, but hardly on the EU side and only a few wide rivers. The proximity to the EU is relevant, because refugees primarily seek protection within their own country and beyond that mainly in neighbouring countries (e.g. Syrians since 2011 in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, Afghans since 1979 in Pakistan and Iran, Yugoslavs around 1991 in Austria and Germany, etc.). Moreover, since 2017, [migration to the EU has been visa-free](#) allowing Ukrainians to stay in any EU country for 90 of 180 or 180 of 365 days with a residence permit. All this allows Ukrainian refugees to enter the territory of the EU relatively easily and quickly.

More importantly, however, is that in 2020, according to Eurostat, there were already around 600,000 [Ukrainian-born people registered in the EU](#), plus [up to 1.3 million in Poland and 250,000 in Germany](#)⁴, an unknown number in Greece and Ireland, and irregular migrants. They all have family, colleagues and friends in Ukraine. Many had been previously in the EU for work, studies or holidays. Therefore, through migration Ukraine has actually been well integrated from below with the EU. Ukrainians in the EU represent a [large migration network](#), within which people usually migrate more easily.

Ukraine is integrated well from below with the EU

From the 2014 conflict and the pattern of forced migration it was not possible to draw conclusions as to how many people might seek protection in the EU. In 2014/2015, only [35,500 had sought asylum in the EU](#). At that time there were sufficient domestic flight alternatives, but this would hardly be the case if half the country were occupied. It is therefore unlikely that the rest of [Ukraine, one of the poorest countries in Europe](#), which suffered greatly from the post-1991 transformation and the Russian aggression of 2014, would be able to cope with such a large-scale displacement. Therefore, this time large numbers of people seek to flee further west to the EU. The destination and scale will also be determined by existing transnational linkages. So far, by week 4 of the Russian invasion 3.6 million Ukrainians fled to the EU, this is 35% of all displaced persons. However, currently there are signs that the [absorption capacity of western Ukraine reaches its limit](#). This means that a much higher proportion of potentially the second surge of 8.7, hence more than 30% or 3 million people would seek protection in the EU. If every Ukrainian already in the EU before the war attract only one other Ukrainian this would amount to 2 million and if they attract two others this would amount to 4 million and so on. However, forced migrants also move without having any network, hence more will move.

How is the Situation in Poland, Germany and Elsewhere?

For 30 years, Ukrainians have been realising some European integration from below through migration. Before the war there were already about 2 million or more Ukrainians in the EU. Key destinations for labour migration were Germany, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece and later mainly Poland.

So far, during the first 18 days of war Poland has received 1.7 million Ukrainians, it also hosts 1-1.5 million Ukrainian labour migrants, but also students. The [Polish government](#) declares 'all persons fleeing from Ukraine [...] do not need to register or worry about formalities at reception points. All persons fleeing Ukraine, seeking refuge in Poland, do not need to worry about the legality of their stay. There is also no need to submit any applications at the Office for Foreigners / voivodship offices / Border Guard posts in the coming days'. However, access to [public services and benefits](#) is limited, access to [employment](#) is not yet automatically granted. [Warsaw](#) hosts 300,000 Ukrainian refugees and the major claims the city has reached its limits. There are also reports suggesting that Polish civil society reaches burn-out.

⁴ Germany: 331.000 with Ukrainian migration background; of these Ukrainian citizens residing in Germany: 135.000 (older statistics from 2018 were slightly higher, 141.000, but this is not logic because annual net migration is positive, 6.000 annually; Ukrainians with dual nationality (Ukrainian and German), 24.000. It is not clear whether irregular immigrants known to the authorities (Ausreisepflichtige) are included, these are another 13.000. Besides, there are also irregular immigrants not known to the authorities, possible another 10-15.000. And because there is a visa-free entry policy for Ukrainians allowing them to stay legally for 90 out of 180 days / 180 out of 365 days without the need to register themselves as 'residing in Germany' there might well be several 10.000 falling into this category. Therefore, a total of 250,000 is a plausible estimate. Sources: <https://mediendienst-integration.de/artikel/wie-viele-ukrainischstaemmige-leben-in-deutschland.html>, https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2022/03/PD22_N011_12.html

Ukrainians can travel freely within Schengen, hence from Poland, Slovakia and Hungary (but not Romania which is not in Schengen) to Germany or elsewhere to stay for 90 days without the need to register with the authorities. Ukrainians also travel overland toward Turkey. Polish, Slovak, Hungarian and other train companies offer free rides to Ukrainians, also [WizzAir offered 100,000 free tickets](#) to Ukrainians and many car rental or taxi companies provide free rides all facilitating quick local, regional and international transportation. There is a large network of overland and air travel connecting Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Moldova/Romania with other countries. This allows Ukrainians to relocate fairly easily to a city of their choice.

During the first couple of days, only 1,700 Ukrainian refugees arrived in Germany, during the first week, about 38,000 arrived, and on Tuesday, 22 March numbers had already risen to over [232,000, or 14,000](#) arrivals on just one day. Most seem to arrive by trains coming from Warsaw and Krakow. Berlin [registered only 7,000](#) but hosts around 20,000, only a fraction of what Warsaw does but already authorities claims it is overwhelmed. This is hardly comprehensible. [Munich](#) also received 16,000 and [Hamburg](#) 9,000. Many more will have been in the country who are not registered, so a figure of 300,000 is thus more realistic. Once arrived, the authorities issue some provisional residence document preceding the temporary protection status; both include the right to work and social benefits.

The up to 250,000 Ukrainians in Germany represent a significant migration network which facilitates migration and also potentially hosts displaced Ukrainians. If every individual, couple or family hosts one or two displaced Ukrainians already 125,000 to 250,000 or more could be hosted. Furthermore, there are 2.5 million ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union ([Aussiedler](#)). They are said to be divided in a pro-Russian group, notably the elderly, and a pro-Ukrainian element, rather the younger generation. Members of this group, [notably free churches](#) (Freikirchen) began hosting Ukrainians in significant numbers. Also some members of the community of the [866,000 Poles](#) have begun to host Ukrainians.

From the end of week two, displaced Ukrainians also began arriving in other countries such as Czech Republic ([220,000-300,000](#)), Italy ([65,350](#)), [Austria](#) (200,000 of whom only 20%, so far 40,000 stay), [Turkey](#) (58,000), Lithuania ([28,700](#)), France ([26,000](#)), Spain ([25,000](#)), Estonia ([22,185](#)), Belgium ([20,000](#)), the Netherlands ([12,000](#)), Greece ([over 10,000](#)), Denmark ([10,000](#)), Croatia ([10,000](#)) and so on (by 23/3/2022). This demonstrates that within four weeks 900,000 Ukrainians plus many more who did not yet register, hence at least 25% of all arrivals in the EU travelled onward to other countries. This is expected to increase in accordance with the existing migration networks in many countries and also due to previous migration experiences of Ukrainians. Almost all of this so far is by self-selection and self-organised but not by state-run relocation schemes.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that whilst some Ukrainians prioritise child care others aspire to quickly find employment, for instance, to support the elderly left behind. With the quickly worsening of the economic state of Ukraine and the provisioning situation this might soon become a strong motivation for identifying an income.

Putting the Displacement Crisis into Perspective of Other Crises and Migrations

In order to assess the severity of the crisis we first compare it with other crises of displacement. And in order to assess the impact on the host countries of displaced persons we, second, consider some broader demographic processes.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine triggered the fastest large-scale displacement in Europe since World War II and one of the fastest worldwide. In comparison, in Ukraine within 8 days of war more people

were displaced than in and from Syria during the first 365 days (170,000 refugees and 1.2 million IDPs) and as many people were displaced within the first 4 weeks (3.5 million refugees/6.5 million IDPs) as during the first four years in Syria (2.8 million refugees/6.5 million IDPs). Also, within four weeks 10.1 million were displaced as compared to 40 million during the five years of WW2. During the [Indian partition](#) 1947 10-20 million were displaced and 750,000 from [Palestine](#) in 1948. In [former Yugoslavia](#), 1991 to 1998, 3.7 to 4 million were displaced of whom around 800,000 thousand people escaped to the EU, mostly to Germany, but also to Austria and Switzerland. By 2018, there were [still 310,000 IDPs](#). From 2011 to 2022, Turkey received around 4 million Syrians, Lebanon 1.5 million and Jordan 670,000. However, onward migration of around 1 million people was significant and usually irregular, dramatic and chaotic. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is a European war; it thus primarily affects the region. As is typical in such a situation displaced persons first seek shelter within their country and/or the neighbouring countries, EU countries, first and foremost Poland, are thus prime destination countries. So far, onward migration is limited, regular and smooth. Other than in 2015, there is not yet any significant protection gap of people *en route* as it was the case in 2015 on the Greek islands and the Balkans.

Displacement from Ukraine and arrival of Ukrainians in the EU must also be seen within the wider context of demographic and migratory processes. For instance, in the [EU the working age population](#) is declining since 2006; notably, [since 1999](#), Poland's population is declining due to natural causes and migration. There are at least 3 million Polish-born people living in other EU member states. Comparing this with the 1.1 million or more labour migrants and the 2.3 million Ukrainian displaced persons who arrived in 2022 suggests that the balance of population loss and refugee influx could have reached an equilibrium. In fact, the entire EU population is ageing and without migration would be declining. So far, the 3.6 million Ukrainian displaced persons on the EU amount to 0.8 of the EU population adding less than one person to every one hundred EU residents.

Concluding Remarks

The war is a [war not simply on one country, Ukraine, but on Europe](#), its freedoms, democracy and values, as many commentators suggest. Russia attacks Ukraine because it is adopting western values, for [being European](#) and for [aspires to become member of the EU](#). Notably, the [leader of the Russian Orthodox church](#) justifies the war with aiming at the evil west. In addition, the war occurs in the immediate neighbourhood of the EU and thus gives it a specific regional dimension. Therefore, this war is different from the wars in Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Georgia and other recent conflicts and triggers different responses. Finally, it needs to be recognised that three of the largest displacements of the past decades, Afghanistan, Syria and now Ukraine are partly driven by Russian imperialism; Russia is thus a major driver of forced migration in the region.

The Russian forces invading Ukraine have already unleashed [indiscriminate bombing](#) of cities, towns and residential areas and civilian structures. Apartment blocks, houses, schools, and universities, hospitals, kindergartens and museums, as well as power stations, water supply, heating pipes, dams, bridges and roads are being destroyed. [Half of Ukraine](#) came under intense attack from Russia aiming at least at 2/3 of the country including most major cities such as Kiev, Kharkiv, Chernigiv, Sumi, Mariupol and possibly Odessa. Several towns and villages are already completely destroyed (e.g. [Volnovakha](#), [Borodyanka](#), [Irpın](#), [Demidov](#), [Byshiv](#) and others). Therefore, the scope of displacement is even higher than what we initially feared. By 25 March, about 18 million people are already affected by the war; around 10.5 million people have already been displaced of whom 3.85 million have arrived in the EU. The key characteristics and patterns observed are that:

- The invasion is resulting in the fastest growing crisis of displacement since World War II in Europa. Of the four scenarios we developed in December 2021 our worst-case scenario 4 has become reality and is even exceeded.
- Many more displaced Ukrainians seek protection in the EU than we had [initially anticipated](#), very few displaced persons flee to Russia, only 5.7% compared to 25% in 2024 from Donbas. The current form of displacement is thus very different from the pattern observed in Ukraine in 2014.
- Because it is a regional conflict it is primarily a European and EU concern.
- Men aged 18 to 60 are restricted from leaving cities and country, this is due to the general mobilisation.
- At the beginning of the first surge people fled before being affected by the fighting but from the beginning of week two more people fled from direct fighting and bombing; since, more and more of the displaced are traumatised.
- Half to up to two thirds of the populations of the besieged cities stay, the others flee.
- Families are usually separated, men stay while women and children leave.
- Some of the elderly stay put, whilst others flee.
- The overwhelming majority of displaced persons are (younger) women and children, up to 90%.
- One third to half of the displaced persons are children.
- Some of over 60s fleeing take with them their grand-children whilst their parents stay.
- There are also more reports of unaccompanied minors sent away by their parents.
- Displaced persons usually prefer staying near their home, either within their country or in a neighbouring country and there near the border. Therefore, the majority are IDPs, while most who fled Ukraine rather stay in the EU countries neighbouring Ukraine.
- However, from the first country of arrival, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Moldova and Romania a certain proportion of the displaced persons also begin relocating to other EU and non-EU countries including Turkey, so far around one quarter.
- It is not yet certain for how long Ukrainians will require international protection. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most Ukrainians hope to be able to return within two, three months. However, that depends on the type of peace, occupation, level of destruction and/or absorption capacity of IDPs in free Ukraine (we prepare a separate paper on that topic).
- To date, numbers of Ukrainian displaced persons in the EU is equivalent to 0.86% of the EU population and also similar to the EU member states' loss of population due to ageing or migration or both.

Up to now, EU, national governments and civil society responded swiftly, humanely and adequately. Borders are kept open to all displaced persons, Ukrainians and third-country nationals alike. On 7 March the EU 2000 Temporary Protection Directive came into force providing Ukrainians and permanently residing third-country nationals in Ukraine including recognised refugees with a quick 12 to 16-month permit in Germany and many other EU country (other third-country nationals are usually granted a 15-day permit or kind of transit visa to arrange their return home or apply for another status). Free transportation within Ukraine and within and from Poland and Germany is granted. However, Poland [might not have sufficient capacities](#) to handle a large number of refugees for a long period of time. Poland should not be considered the "Turkey within the EU" meaning to shoulder the hosting of most Ukrainian displaced persons.

Policy implications

- do all that is necessary and feasible to halt and reverse the Russian invasion;
- provide supplies to Ukraine (first aid kits, bullet prove vests, medical supplies, food, non-food items);
- facilitate smooth migration within Ukraine and to the EU;
- implement the EU Temporary Protection Directive in a generous fashion;
- provide rapid material and financial support and knowhow to the first countries of arrival;
- facilitate relocation from Eastern EU member-states and Moldova if becoming necessary;
- prioritise Ukrainians' choice of destination country/city over compulsory dispersal;
- facilitate children's access to child care, primary and secondary education;
- offer direct advice and support to host families and communities;
- iron out various bureaucratic hurdles (landlord certificate, Ukrainian police records, overly demanding recognition of professional certificates), and
- permit easy access to the labour market.

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