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# Ukrainian refugees – experiences from the first phase in Norway

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NIBR Report 2022:11

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Abstract: On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. On assignment from the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), NIBR has evaluate how persons fleeing from Ukraine to Norway experienced their initial reception. Through 1) interviews with frontline workers and volunteers, 2) individual and focus group interviews with Ukrainian refugees, 3) observation at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde, 4) a survey to Ukrainian refugees in Norway, and 5) analysis of policy changes and the governmental information strategy, the overall research question to be answered was: How do Ukrainian refugees experience the initial phase in Norway: registration, reception, settlement and initial integration?

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# Preface

This report has been written on assignment from the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi).

The overall research question of this project has been: How have Ukrainian refugees experienced the first phase in Norway: registration, reception, settlement and initial integration?

The data for this study was collected between May and July 2022 and includes 1) focus group interviews with frontline workers and volunteers, 2) individual and group interviews with Ukrainian refugees in Norway, 3) observation at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde, 4) a survey of adult Ukrainians who had fled to Norway, and 5) documentation of policy developments and UDI and IMDi's information strategy from February to July 2022.

The assignment was carried out by a team of researchers at the Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR), at OsloMet, consisting of Vilde Hernes (project manager), Oleksandra Deineko, Marthe Handå Myhre, Tone Liodden, and Anne Balke Staver. Aadne Aasland and Kristian Tronstad have helped with quality assurance during the data collection process and by commenting on earlier drafts.

We are very grateful to all Ukrainians and frontline workers who has shared their experiences with us, in interviews and/or the survey. Their participation has been invaluable to gain insight into the Ukrainian refugees' experiences after their arrival to Norway.

We also want to thank our contact persons Rachel Elisabeth Eide and Sara Michelle Wiik at UDI and Nadiya Fedoryshyn and Birgit Kvernflaten at IMDi for a pleasant and constructive cooperation throughout the project period.

NIBR, September 2022

Kristian Rose Tronstad  
Head of Research, NIBR

# Table of Contents

Figures.....	4
Tables.....	5
Summary .....	6
1 Introduction.....	13
1.1 Assignment and research questions.....	13
1.2 Ukrainian refugees fleeing to Norway, February – July 2022.....	15
1.3 Structure of the report .....	17
2 Research design and methods .....	19
2.1 Overall research design .....	19
2.2 Step 1: Focus group interviews with ‘frontline workers’ and volunteers.....	19
2.3 Step 2: Observation and qualitative interviews with Ukrainians.....	20
2.4 Step 3: Survey of Ukrainians in Norway .....	23
2.5 Analysis of policy changes and information measures and strategy.....	25
2.6 Quality assurance .....	26
3 Policy changes since February 2022.....	27
3.1 Overview: policy changes, February–July 2022 .....	27
3.2 From arrival to formal settlement in a municipality .....	28
3.3 Asylum: regulations and procedures .....	28
3.4 Reception .....	30
3.5 Settlement in a municipality .....	32
3.6 Introduction programme.....	33
4 Who are the Ukrainians who fled to Norway? .....	35
4.1 Region of residence in Ukraine before the war .....	35
4.2 Previous experience and qualifications .....	36
4.3 Family situation in Norway and Ukraine .....	37
4.4 Pre-existing network and reason for coming to Norway.....	38
4.5 Ukrainians as a ‘new’ group of refugees.....	39
5 Evaluation of overall reception, actors and services .....	41
5.1 Ukrainians are overall very satisfied with their reception in Norway .....	41
5.2 Overall positive evaluations of governmental and non-governmental actors.....	44
5.3 More varied assessments of services and procedures .....	45
6 Evaluation of information provided by the public authorities .....	47
6.1 UDI’s information strategy and measures.....	47
6.2 IMDi’s information strategy and measures .....	52
6.3 Over 70 % experienced information challenges .....	54
6.4 Main information challenges .....	55
6.5 Webpages, social media and social networks as essential sources.....	57
6.6 Varying assessments of information about specific services .....	59
7 Registration for collective protection .....	61
7.1 Actors and facilities .....	61
7.2 Observation at Råde: steps in the registration process.....	62
7.3 Ukrainians’ experiences with the registration procedure at Råde .....	65
7.4 Registration in other police districts .....	68
8 Where and how did Ukrainians live during the first phase? .....	70
8.1 Accommodation during different stages after arrival .....	70

8.2	Initial accommodation at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde .....	71
8.3	Living privately – new procedures, many questions .....	73
8.4	Accommodation at reception centres .....	74
9	Settlement .....	78
9.1	New practices: many paths to formal settlement.....	78
9.2	Two main questions for those staying in reception centres: settlement where and when? .....	79
9.3	Many questions from those not living in reception centres.....	81
10	Financial situation .....	83
10.1	Differing pre-settlement practices for financial assistance .....	84
10.2	Financial assistance after formal settlement.....	86
10.3	Unanswered questions about financial rights .....	87
11	Interpreting services.....	88
11.1	Varying access to interpreting services, but good quality .....	89
11.2	Usage of Russian language and interpreters of Russian origin .....	90
12	Other public services .....	92
12.1	Schools.....	92
12.2	Kindergarten.....	92
12.3	Health services.....	92
12.4	Pets .....	94
13	Future prospects and integration .....	96
13.1	Thoughts about the war and potential return to Ukraine: indications of a long-term perspective .....	96
13.2	The majority aim to find work in Norway.....	101
13.3	‘Everyone’ wants to attend the introduction programme and Norwegian courses .....	102
13.4	Family reunification .....	105
14	Cross-cutting reflections and recommendations .....	106
14.1	Challenges with existing procedures and information strategies .....	106
14.2	Local autonomy and differential treatment.....	108
14.3	Expectation management: not only <i>what</i> , but also <i>why</i> .....	109
14.4	Reaching the ‘end-user:’ timing, suitable channels and formats of information.....	109
14.5	The interpretation dilemma .....	110
14.6	Temporary adaptations for Ukrainian refugees – dilemmas of unequal treatment and long-term consequences.....	111
14.7	Should I stay or should I go? Reflections on future challenges for return and integration policies .....	113
	References .....	115

# Figures

Figure 1: Ukrainian refugees from February-July 2022, by age categories .....	15
Figure 2: Number of asylum application, 2012–July 2022.....	16
Figure 3: Registered application for collective protection from Ukrainian citizens, February–August (week 8-30) 2022.....	16
Figure 4: Number of formal settlement of refugees, 2012-sept 2022.....	17
Figure 5: Overall research design and methods.....	19
Figure 6: Comparison of age groups in sample and population.....	25
Figure 7: The four stages between arrival and formal settlement .....	28
Figure 8: Different options for accommodation pre-settlement and paths to formal settlement in a municipality.....	33
Figure 9: Region (oblast) of residence in Ukraine before the war .....	35
Figure 10: Education level.....	36
Figure 11: Main activity before arrival in Norway.....	36
Figure 12: Language proficiency (Ukrainian, Russian, English).....	37
Figure 13: Age of children (multiple options were possible) (N=374).....	37
Figure 14: With whom did they travel to Norway? (multiple options were possible) .....	38
Figure 15: Family who stayed behind in Ukraine? (multiple options were possible).....	38
Figure 16: Existing family/friends/network in Norway (multiple options were possible).....	38
Figure 17: Why did you choose to come to Norway? .....	39
Figure 18: Assessment of overall experience in Norway.....	42
Figure 19: Assessment of national public actors .....	44
Figure 20: Assessment of local and non-governmental actors.....	45
Figure 21: Assessment of services or procedures.....	46
Figure 22: Main challenges for finding information (multiple options possible).....	55
Figure 23: Usage of different sources for information.....	58
Figure 24: Evaluation of the information on various services (1).....	59
Figure 25: Evaluation of the information on various services (2).....	59
Figure 26: Accommodation before formal settlement.....	71
Figure 27: Financial situation for persons living at Råde and other reception centres.....	84
Figure 28: Financial situation for persons living privately .....	85
Figure 29: Financial situation after settlement, by those who settled through public assistance or self-settlement .....	86
Figure 30: Need for and access to interpreters.....	89
Figure 31: Evaluation of interpreting services.....	90
Figure 32: Ukrainian refugees' estimation of the duration of the war .....	96
Figure 33: Statement: "I will return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends".....	97
Figure 34: Statement: "I will return to Ukraine as soon as it is safe in my hometown.....	97
Figure 35: Statement: "I consider moving to a different part of Ukraine than my hometown if only selected areas of Ukraine become safe".....	97
Figure 36: Statemen: "I would rather continue to live in Norway than restart my life in a new city in Ukraine".....	98
Figure 37: Aspirations for future main activity in Norway.....	101
Figure 38: Participation in the introduction programme.....	103
Figure 39: Full-time or part-time participation in introduction programme.....	103
Figure 40: Preferred language courses: Norwegian, English or both?.....	104
Figure 41: Participation in Norwegian language courses if employed.....	105
Figure 42: Plan/hopes for family reunion .....	105

## Tables

Table 1: Main topics and sub-questions .....	14
Table 2: Participants in focus group interviews with frontline workers and volunteers .....	20
Table 3: Policy changes, February-July 2022 .....	27
Table 4: Regression analysis of Ukrainians' overall evaluation of Norwegian reception .....	43

# Summary

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Between February and August 2022, almost 7 million Ukrainians fled to other countries, and millions more became internally displaced in Ukraine. On 4 March, the EU Council decided to trigger the Temporary Protection Directive, and on 11 March, Norway followed by applying Section 34 of the Immigration Act to grant temporary collective protection to Ukrainians seeking asylum in Norway.

The ensuing months were marked by considerable uncertainty as to how many Ukrainian refugees<sup>1</sup> Norway could expect. By August 2022, Norway had received approximately 24 000 applications from persons fleeing from the war in Ukraine. Although this number was lower than some of the initial predictions, it constituted a significant increase compared to recent years, when between 1400 and 2300 people had applied for asylum in Norway (UDI, 2021).

This was not the first time Norway had faced the challenge of rapidly upscaling its reception capacity for persons seeking protection. However, every crisis has its unique features and challenges, and the receiving countries have had to adapt accordingly, as the situation of Ukrainian refugees has differed in many ways from that of other asylum-seekers and refugee groups.

On assignment from the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) conducted a study with the following research question: *How have Ukrainian refugees experienced the first phase in Norway: registration, reception, settlement and initial integration?*

Our research design builds on a three-step process of data collection, conducted mainly between May and July 2022: 1) focus group interviews with frontline workers and volunteers who had been in close contact with Ukrainians after their arrival to Norway; 2) individual and group interviews with Ukrainian refugees in Norway, and observation at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde; and 3) a survey of adult Ukrainians who had fled to Norway. This report also documents policy developments and UDI and IMDi's information strategy from February to July 2022.

## Who are the Ukrainian refugees in Norway?

Ukrainian refugees differ from other groups of asylum-seekers in Norway in several important respects. Ukrainians have 90-day visa-free access to the Schengen area. Therefore, they are free to decide in which European country they apply for protection, and they are not obliged to register as soon as they arrive. Moreover, the majority of Ukrainians arriving in Norway were women and children, as most males of fighting age (18–60 years) had to remain in Ukraine. According to UDI statistics as of June 2022, 79% of adult Ukrainian refugees who had registered for protection in Norway were women. Almost half of the respondents in our survey reported having children under 18 years of age, generally one or two children.

Our survey data also provided information on the qualifications of Ukrainian asylum-seekers. As many as 65% reported having completed higher education; another 15% had begun but not completed higher education; and about 10% reported having vocational-technical education.

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<sup>1</sup> In the report, we refer to Ukrainian asylum-seekers and Ukrainians who have been granted collective protection or asylum in Norway as 'Ukrainian refugees', in accordance with common usage of this term. However, it should be noted that Ukrainians benefiting from collective protection in accordance with Section 34 of the Immigration Act are not formally recognized as 'refugees' under Norwegian law, as this requires individual assessment in each case (Immigration Act, Section 28). Additionally, Section 34 of the Immigration Act also defines rights for collective protection to persons who are third-country nationals and stateless persons who 1) had received international protection or similar national protection status in Ukraine prior to 24 February 2022, and 2) are close family members of persons who receive collective protection. However, the two latter groups constitute a very small share of the total number of persons who get collective protection in Norway. Thus, to simplify the language in this report, we refer to all three target groups of Section 34 of the Immigration Act as 'Ukrainian refugees'.

90 % speak both Ukrainian and Russian fluently. Although many Ukrainians are highly educated, only 11% report that they speak English fluently. 30% speak basic English, and about 60% report that they speak English poorly or not at all. Thus, there has been a need for interpreters in Russian and Ukrainian language, as the Ukrainian refugees often speak neither Norwegian nor sufficient English to communicate directly with Norwegian public servants. About one-third of the Ukrainian refugees reported not having had access to interpreters when needed; 5% were never provided with an interpreter when necessary, and 30% only on some occasions. However, the majority of those who had been provided with interpreter services – almost 80 % – answered that the services were good or excellent.

### **Ukrainians are generally very satisfied with their reception in Norway**

Ukrainian refugees in Norway express considerable gratitude towards the Norwegian authorities and the Norwegian people. In the interviews, almost all explicitly stated their appreciation of the help they have received. In our survey, on a scale from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly), respondents gave an average score of about 4.5 out of 5 when evaluating how the Norwegian people have welcomed them, and generally how they have been received in Norway. Views on how the Norwegian reception system has functioned are also mainly positive – although somewhat lower on the scale, with an average of 3.8 out of 5.

Survey respondents also report generally positive experiences with national public actors – an average score of 4 out of 5, or higher, for all actors. Local and non-governmental actors get even higher scores, around 4.5 out of 5. The police and municipalities have slightly higher scores than the other actors; otherwise, differences are minimal. Respondents' evaluations of services and procedures are more variable, but with generally high scores. School and kindergarten top the list, whereas respondents report being less satisfied with the access to medicines, and procedures concerning their pets.

### **Updated and understandable information as a main challenge**

Whereas Ukrainians in general give very positive assessments of their overall reception and their encounters with Norwegian public officials, a consistent finding was that they experienced lack of information as one of the main challenges. More than 70% answered that it had been difficult to find the right information – as concerns navigating between different webpages and governmental actors, and because information has been perceived as unclear or insufficient. The first weeks and months after Ukrainians started arriving in high numbers, several policy changes were rapidly implemented concerning the asylum procedure, reception, settlement and integration of Ukrainian refugees. UDI and IMDi admit that these ongoing policy changes made it challenging to provide continuously updated information to Ukrainians, as well as to other actors. An additional element that complicated this picture was that police districts and municipalities had differing practices: this created additional confusion, as Ukrainians in Norway often share and compare information in social media channels.

Ukrainian refugees generally note the lack of coherent information about the overall process and the various steps involved: such information should preferably be available on one webpage. They have consulted many different sources to find information after arriving in Norway. About two-thirds report having consulted the webpages of Norwegian public actors. Facebook groups are the second most used sources of information, closely followed by direct communication with other Ukrainians in Norway and their networks. That the social media and networks have 'competed' with official Norway as sources of information has sometimes resulted in the rapid spread of misleading information. However, the overall impression is that the provision of information has improved with time, not least as regards more information in the Ukrainian and Russian languages on public webpages.

## Registration for collective protection

Since November 2020, all registration of asylum applications take place through a unified process at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde. When the sudden influx of Ukrainians started at the end of February 2022, the National Arrivals Centre was put under pressure, and several adjustments were necessary. Thus, existing procedures and information about the process and the steps involved became outdated and misleading. The fact that the registration procedure was still 'in the making' is clearly reflected in our interview material and observations. Refugees noted two main problems: 1) long waiting hours, which often differed from the time estimate they had been given; and 2) lack of information about the different steps involved in the process at Råde.

On March 12, registration was also made possible in other police districts around the country, implying that Ukrainians residing in other parts of the country did not have to travel to Råde in order to register. This expansion lessened the pressure on Råde and was also mentioned positively by those who were staying with family and friends far from Råde. Generally, Ukrainian asylum-seekers who had registered in other places than Råde were very satisfied and described the procedures as unproblematic.

## Staying in and outside of reception centres

65% of the Ukrainian refugees reported that they had some kind of pre-existing network in Norway (family, friends and acquaintances, professional contacts, etc.) prior to arriving; over 30% had family in Norway and about 20% had friends residing in Norway. In mid-March 2022, UDI expanded the system for alternative reception placement (AMOT); many Ukrainian refugees have now availed themselves of the possibility to not live in reception centres while awaiting formal settlement in a Norwegian municipality. Our survey showed that about 50–60% stayed at either Råde or reception centres during the registration and application process; the others had arranged accommodation privately.

Our interviews show that experiences with reception centres differ substantially. When numbers of Ukrainians seeking protection in Norway increased rapidly in March 2022, UDI established emergency reception centres (*akkuttinnkvartering*), which operate under different formal standards than those to regular reception centres. In our group interviews with Norwegian frontline workers, participants criticized the conditions at specific reception centres. They reported examples of objective standards of accommodation and services that had not been met, and difficulties caused by the reception centres being overburdened due to the constant arrival of new groups. All the same, we find that Ukrainian refugees have generally been satisfied with how they were met and treated at the reception centres. In some cases, conditions even exceed their expectations, for instance, concerning the facilities and the food. Several interviewees mentioned that they greatly appreciated the efforts of volunteers and NGOs, who involved them in various activities and provided them with necessities. What did create irritation and frustration among some were the perceived differences in treatment across reception centres. In addition, some interviewees pointed out that it would have been easier if they could have known what information and services to expect from the reception centre providers.

Ukrainian refugees not staying in reception centres have very much appreciated this possibility. Those who arranged their own accommodation often had resourceful network of 'private helpers' – family and friends who had lived in Norway for a long time, social or professional contacts, or other Norwegian acquaintances or volunteers. In some cases, private helpers significantly influenced the registration and settlement processes. However, despite many positive experiences with being able to live privately, there were also some challenges. Those not staying in reception centres were left to their own devices or those of their private helpers to obtain information on services and procedures. According to several frontline workers, Ukrainian refugees who did not stay in reception centres often were less informed – or were even directly misinformed – about relevant procedures and rights. Some interviewees themselves noted their total dependency on the people who hosted them. Norwegian frontliners working in the

municipalities and in NGOs also noted concerns about living conditions and the risk of exploitation of those in private accommodation.

### **Two main questions: *when* and *where* will I be settled?**

Norway has traditionally practised a settlement model where refugees are allocated to municipalities on the basis of agreements between the state and the municipalities. To a much greater degree than with previous refugee groups, Ukrainians have settled through direct agreements with the municipalities in question. Moreover, with the rapid application processes for Ukrainians seeking protection, the question of settlement arose much earlier than in previous reception processes, and the availability of several paths to formal settlement complicated the picture.

Questions about settlement have been a concern for Ukrainian refugees. For those who stayed at reception centres and were going to be settled with assistance from IMDi, the main concern has been uncertainty about *where* in Norway they would be settled, and frustration about not being able to influence the decision as much as they would have liked. At the time of high arrivals in March, settlement interviews became an administrative bottleneck. From early April, questions in the settlement interview were reduced from 25 to three: about family or network in Norway, and considerations related to health issues or pets (from late May, this was expanded with two more questions: about work experience and formal education). Many Ukrainians expressed frustration about not being able to talk directly to IMDi about their settlement. Additionally, when we conducted interviews in May and June, many interviewees worried about *when* they would be settled.

For those staying privately, whether registered as AMOT or not, there was a shortage of information about their rights. Many got assistance from their family and network in navigating these processes moreover, the municipalities often were flexible in finding solutions and formalizing the settlement.

### **Different local practices for financial assistance**

Asylum-seekers in Norway are entitled to public assistance for accommodation and livelihood, either at reception centres or, for those not staying at reception centres, through the AMOT system. Both our survey and the interviews show that the financial assistance provided to Ukrainian refugees has differed significantly. Whereas some got financial assistance from reception centres or the municipality even before registration, the majority had to live on their own funds during this initial period – which, however, could be a matter of days if they had registered immediately upon arrival in Norway. The number of Ukrainian refugees who report having received financial assistance has increased during the application process and the pre-settlement phase.

For those staying at reception centres, there have been cases (we do not know the scope) of persons who did not get the financial assistance (pocket money) to which they were entitled during the first months. They struggled to buy medications, food, sanitary items, etc. In August 2022, UDI reported that they would reimburse those who had not received what they were entitled to.

Most of those who did not stay in reception centres report to having subsisted on private funds or with support from family or friends prior to registering for protection and during the application process. We have found examples of highly differing practices across municipalities as regards when they start providing financial assistance and in what form. Through networks and the social media, many refugees became aware of these differing local practices, which created both confusion and frustration. They perceived this inequality in financial assistance from the municipalities as unfair; some interviewees stated that they were surprised to 'encounter such

inequality in a country like Norway'. Others mentioned that they felt uncomfortable because they felt themselves to be a (financial) burden on the family members with whom they were staying.

Ukrainian refugees who had not been yet formally settled in a municipality reported the need for more information about their possibilities for financial assistance after settlement and after being enrolled in the introduction programme. Some were unclear as to what assistance they could get – or lose – if they became employed.

### **Future prospects and integration**

Most respondents think that the war – and their stay in Norway – will be more long-term: only 16 % answered that they thought the war will end in the course of 2022. Moreover, only 26% answered 'yes' when asked whether they wanted to return to Ukraine as soon as the war ended; over 50% were unsure, and 19% answered 'no'. Our interviews showed that whether people want to return or not may depend on what their home region in Ukraine was, and other background factors. Those from areas under Russian occupation saw no possibilities for returning anytime soon. Further, 76% answered that they would *not* consider moving to a different part of Ukraine than their hometown if only certain areas of Ukraine were safe, and two-thirds said they would prefer to continue living in Norway, rather than having to restart their lives in a new location in Ukraine.

One out of four respondents had a husband or wife who remained in Ukraine; 60% reported having parents or other close family members still in Ukraine. About one third said that they planned or hoped that additional family members could come to Norway.

Thus, it is less surprising that almost all respondents want to participate in the introduction programme and learn Norwegian, as to start their integration into Norwegian society. Further, 20% want to participate part-time, and the majority prefer to learn both Norwegian and English during the introduction programme. Almost 80% hope to be employed or self-employed if their stay in Norway becomes long-term; 5% see themselves as students, and 10% as retired.

### **Cross-cutting reflections and recommendations**

In the report's last chapter, we combine insights from the empirical chapters and present some cross-cutting reflections about ongoing and future challenges and dilemmas. Drawing on these reflections, we offer some recommendations for addressing the specific challenges that have occurred in this situation, as well as more general recommendations or lessons for future situations with high influxes of asylum-seekers. We also make suggestions for future research that has been beyond the scope of this report.

### **Coordinated policy changes and information strategies**

Many of today's systems and procedures for registration, accommodation, settlement and integration have been designed for asylum-seekers who will undergo an individual asylum assessment and be granted individual refugee status (not collective protection). Since February 2022, public actors have made (rapid) necessary changes to policies and practices to deal with the current situation.

- We recommend that relevant public actors critically review recent policy changes – and how changes in one part of the reception process may affect other parts – to assess whether amendments should be made to the processes of registration, application, pre-settlement and formal settlement for persons seeking collective protection.

A major challenge for Ukrainian refugees has been to navigate between the various actors involved and to get an overview of the overall reception process that lies ahead.

- We find that Ukrainian refugees clearly request the authorities to establish one webpage (or access point) where they can find the overall information from public actors. We

recommend that if such a webpage is to be established, all involved actors should have dedicated resources for maintaining the webpage, to ensure continuously updated information.

### ***Experience of unequal treatment with different local practices***

Our study confirms that not all Ukrainian refugees who stayed in reception centres received the pocket money to which they were entitled. UDI is now working on reimbursing those concerned.

- For the future, better practices should be established so that all reception-centre providers are able to fulfil their financial obligations to residents.

During the registration and application process, many Ukrainian refugees have stayed in private accommodation or with family or other networks. It is largely up to the municipalities to decide what financial assistance to provide and when: and this may help to explain why Ukrainian refugees' experience with municipalities and NAV has differed significantly.

- Further studies are required to find out more about the practices of municipalities and Ukrainian refugees concerning financial assistance before formal settlement, and practices of helping refugees with accommodation.
- It is important to provide information to Ukrainian refugees and other asylum-seekers staying in accommodation outside the official system as to why such differences in financial assistance may occur.
- Policy-makers should consider measures to reduce experiences of unequal treatment among persons seeking asylum in Norway.

### ***Expectation management***

One main observation from our study is how inaccurate (or lack of) information has led to unrealistic expectations, in turn influencing Ukrainian refugees' experiences of the procedures and services they encounter. We offer three recommendations:

- Inform clearly that time estimates may be uncertain during new procedures and high numbers of arrivals.
- Explain not only *what* (e.g., right, procedures, etc.), but also *why*, in order to create a better understanding of the various policies/procedures involved (e.g., why Norway has its current settlement model).
- In cases of ongoing policy processes (where public actors may not yet have clear answers): inform about the ongoing process and that as yet no decisions have been made on this matter and indicate approximately when answers may be expected.

### ***Timing, suitable channels and formats of information***

Our survey, conducted in June 2022, showed that, during registration and the application process, about half of the Ukrainian refugees were staying in accommodation not within the official reception system; providing sufficient information to this group has been a major challenge.

- In the continuing process, public actors must develop targeted information strategies on how to provide information to this (relatively large) group of Ukrainian refugees.
- For future crisis situations, we recommend that policy-makers allow enough time to developing strategies for informing relevant actors and end-users – *before* policy changes are implemented, to minimize double-work and possible misunderstandings.
- Future studies should explore how frontline workers and volunteers have experienced UDI's and IMDi's information strategy and measures, and whether they have received sufficient information and guidance.

Social media platforms have become important sources of information for Ukrainian refugees. However, using these channels may be challenging for public actors, because of the need to ensure that their platforms do not become arenas where asylum-seekers may inadvertently reveal sensitive information about themselves.

- We recommend using social media as an active communication platform in times of crisis to reach target groups that may be difficult to reach through traditional information channels. However, the use of social media should be further developed and evaluated for both this and future situations of high influxes of asylum-seekers.

### ***Interpreting***

- Although we find that very few Ukrainian refugees raise this question, public actors who use interpreting services for Ukrainian refugees should be aware that using the Russian language and interpreters with a Russian ethnic background may be a politicized and sensitive issue for some Ukrainian refugees. IMDi should ensure that relevant public actors are informed about the national guidelines for interpreting.

### ***Evaluation of temporary legislation***

There have been many temporary policy changes and adaptations for refugees since February 2022. Most of these changes have been aimed at Ukrainians specifically and have not involved general changes for all asylum-seekers. Some questions related to future policy development arise:

- We recommend evaluating the effects of the new temporary policies and practices to consider: 1) whether the temporary changes should be prolonged when they expire (for new arrivals from Ukraine), or whether they should be adjusted/removed; and 2) whether there are any policies or practices made for Ukrainian refugees that should be expanded to include other or all groups of asylum-seekers and refugees in Norway.
- Several actors have highlighted that the changes in policies and practices for Ukrainians may cause unequal treatment between Ukrainian refugees and other groups seeking protection in Norway. This challenge of unequal treatment – and its possible consequences for frontline workers and other groups of asylum-seekers – should be explicitly acknowledged and evaluated in connection with future policy developments.
- Ukrainians should be informed about the options for applying for various types of permits – not least, what these different permits entail concerning short- and long-term rights to e.g., financial aid and integration measures, as well as differences between permits concerning the path to permanent residence and Norwegian citizenship.

### ***Reflections on future challenges for return and integration policies***

During the initial period after the invasion, many policy-makers assumed that the Ukrainian refugees' stay in Norway would be short-term and temporary. However, only one-fourth of our respondents confirmed that they want to return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends.

- Future research should investigate why refugees may not want to or plan to return to Ukraine: this could be highly relevant in developing future return policies.
- A question for future policy development is whether the current labour-market integration strategy should have a short- or long-term perspective.

# 1 Introduction

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Between February and August 2022, almost 7 million Ukrainians fled to other countries, and millions more became internally displaced in Ukraine. The neighbouring countries – Poland, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Moldova – have received the great majority of those fleeing the war, but Ukrainians have also sought protection in other countries, including Norway (UNHCR, 2022).

In the beginning of March 2022, European countries decided to offer collective protection to those fleeing from Ukraine, which meant that most persons fleeing the war would be accorded protection without individual asylum assessments (for details, see chapter 3). On 11 March, the Norwegian government followed and activated the Immigration Act Section 34 that largely mirrors the EUs Temporary Protection Directive. By July 2022, Norway had received approximately 22 500 applications for asylum from persons fleeing from Ukraine. In this report, we refer to Ukrainian asylum-seekers (and those who are granted protection) in Norway as 'Ukrainian refugees', in accordance with common usage of this term. However, it should be noted that Ukrainians seeking or benefiting from collective protection in accordance with Section 34 of the Immigration Act are not formally recognized as refugees under Norwegian law, as this requires individual assessment in each case (Immigration Act, Section 28).

When Ukrainians started arriving in Norway in large numbers, they met a governmental and local reception apparatus which already had long experience in receiving refugees. However, sudden increases in arrivals are necessarily demanding, as services need to be rapidly scaled up and adjusted. Additionally, the situation of these Ukrainians has differed in many ways from that of other asylum-seekers and refugee groups. A unique feature of the Ukrainian refugees' situation is that they have visa-free access to the Schengen area for travel of up to 90 days within any 180-day period. They can therefore choose in which country they apply for asylum, and they do not need to register immediately after arrival in Norway. Second, unlike other refugee groups, most Ukrainians who arrived in Norway and other European countries have been women and children, because most males of fighting age (18–60 years) had to remain in Ukraine. When many of those who arrive are single parents with children, this may have implications for their reception and further integration or return. Third, since Ukrainians receive temporary collective protection, most applications can be processed more quickly than individual asylum assessments. Additionally, as many Ukrainian refugees have pre-existing networks in Norway, many have found private accommodation outside the normal reception system.

All these factors have altered the normal procedures and steps in the post-arrival period with regard to registration, reception, settlement and initial integration. The process related to seeking asylum and settling in Norway normally takes several months; and there is a distinct order, where the various public actors have specific responsibilities. In the case of Ukrainians, everything has happened much faster. The various steps no longer take place sequentially but occur more or less simultaneously – which also means that the division of responsibility among the actors is no longer as clear.

## 1.1 Assignment and research questions

In April 2022, NIBR received a joint assignment from the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) to evaluate how persons fleeing from Ukraine to Norway experienced their initial reception.

Through 1) interviews with frontline workers and volunteers, 2) individual and focus group interviews with Ukrainian refugees, 3) observation at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde, 4) a survey to Ukrainian refugees in Norway, and 5) analysis of policy changes and the governmental information strategy, the overall research question to be answered was:

*How do Ukrainian refugees experience the initial phase in Norway: registration, reception, settlement and initial integration?*

When this project started in April 2022, it was uncertain how the war and refugee arrivals in Norway would develop during the project period. It was therefore not clear which specific sub-questions would be most relevant to pursue. The findings from early data collection indicated some important topics for further investigation. The project team came to adapt the research questions in dialogue with UDI and IMDi as the situation and project developed. Table 1 summarizes the main topics and sub-questions of this final report.

Table 1: Main topics and sub-questions

Documentation of policy development	What changes in legislation / regulations / instructions / practices were made between February and July 2022?
Evaluation of procedures and processes	<p>How do Ukrainian refugees evaluate the overall reception, actors and services encountered during their initial stay in Norway?</p> <p>Are there differences in their experiences of registration and reception depending on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• whether they had an existing network in Norway before arrival?</li> <li>• certain language skills (especially in English) and digital skills?</li> <li>• other background factors?</li> <li>• whether they live privately and or in reception centres?</li> <li>• whether they are families with children, elderly or single?</li> </ul> <p>Who helped to attend to their needs – the authorities, voluntary organizations, private networks?</p> <p>How have the interpreting services functioned in the various phases of the process?</p>
Information	<p>Where do Ukrainian refugees seek information about the opportunities they have in Norway, and which sources of information do they trust?</p> <p>How do Ukrainians evaluate the information they have received about various services and procedures?</p> <p>To what extent do they understand the information from different public actors about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• registration, reception, accommodation, settlement and integration?</li> <li>• opportunities, duties and rights in Norway after arrival (attending an introduction programme, offers for school, kindergarten, healthcare, etc.)?</li> </ul>
Future prospects	<p>What prospects do Ukrainian refugees have as regards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the duration of the war?</li> <li>- the potential for returning to Ukraine?</li> <li>- integration into Norwegian society?</li> </ul>

The aim of this assignment is three-fold. First, we presented preliminary drafts of the research findings throughout the project period, enabling the Norwegian authorities to adjust policies, practice and information strategy as the situation with Ukrainians in Norway unfolded. Second, the evaluation is of future value, as knowledge about challenges and solutions in a crisis situation – documented in real time – can be relevant for handling future crises. Third, documenting a distinct period in the Norwegian refugee protection regime has historical value in its own right.

## 1.2 Ukrainian refugees fleeing to Norway, February – July 2022

The Russian invasion in Ukraine has led to the largest migration wave in Europe since the Second World War. The initial months, UDI presented different scenarios concerning how many refugees Norway could expect. Due to high uncertainty in this ongoing conflict, the initial prognoses in April varied between 20 000 and 120 000 for 2022<sup>2</sup>.

Based on statistics from UDI, we now know that as of July 2022, Norway had received over 24 000 asylum applicants in total, whereas over 22 500 were from persons seeking asylum because of the war in Ukraine. In this section we present the 1) gender and age distribution for the Ukrainian refugees, 2) the total number of applications in a historical perspective and development from February to July 2022, and 3) statistics of settlements in municipalities as of July 2022. All numbers in this section are based on official statistics provided by UDI and IMDi.

First, what is the age and gender distribution of Ukrainian refugees in Norway?

Figure 1: Ukrainian refugees from February-July 2022, by age categories

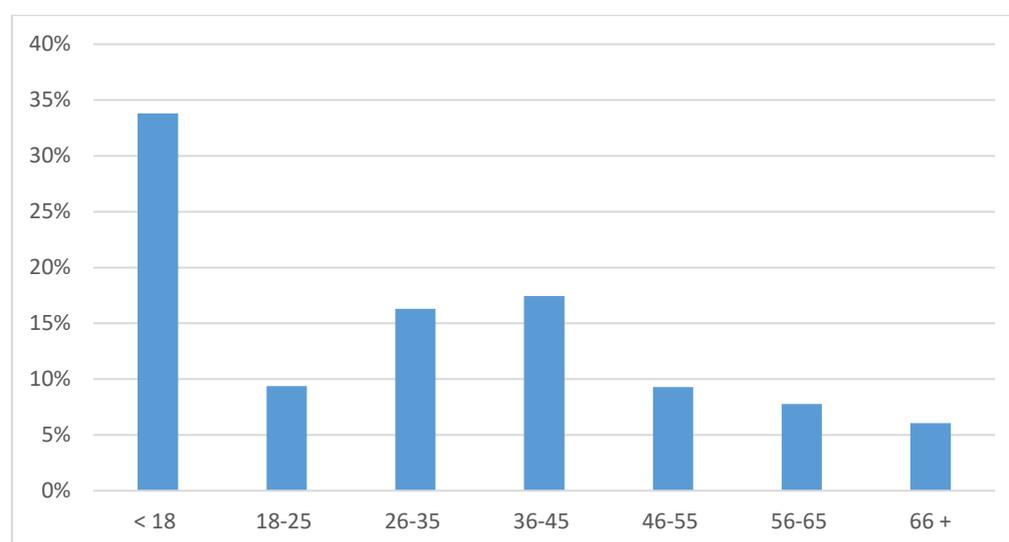


Figure 1 shows that one third of the Ukrainian refugees (as of July 2022) were below 18 years. Over 50% are between 18-55 years old, while about 15% are 56 years or older. When including those below 18 years, the gender distribution is 34% men and 66% women. However, because most males of fighting age (18–60 years) had to remain in Ukraine, the distribution between men and women when only accounting for those over 18 years old is 26% men and 74% women.

Second, how many Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Norway compared to previous arrivals of asylum-seekers, and how has this developed the initial period (until July 2022)?

<sup>2</sup> [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://udi.no/globalassets/statistikk-og-analyse/ukraina/scenarioer-om-antall-flyktninger-fra-ukraina\\_5-april-2022.pdf](https://udi.no/globalassets/statistikk-og-analyse/ukraina/scenarioer-om-antall-flyktninger-fra-ukraina_5-april-2022.pdf)

Figure 2: Number of asylum application, 2012–July 2022.

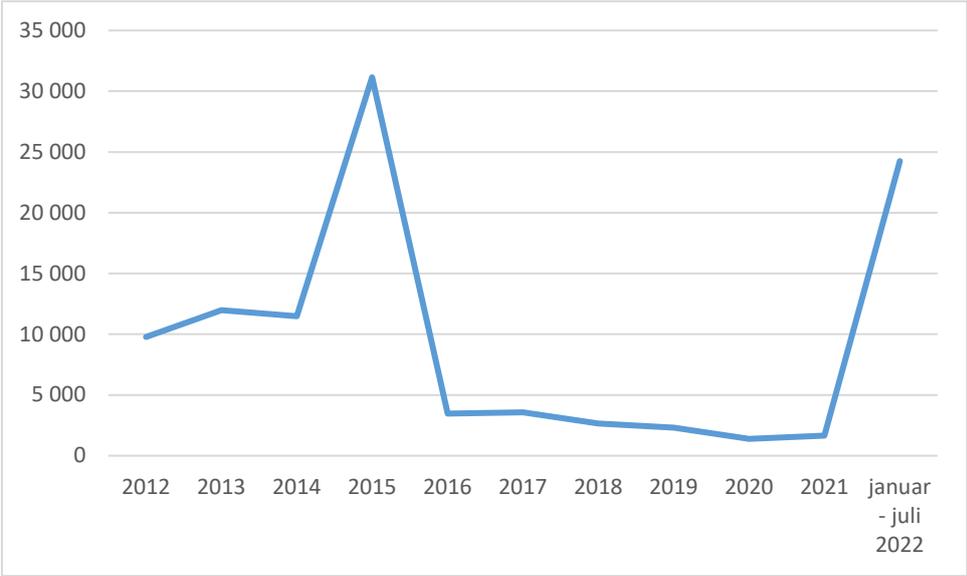
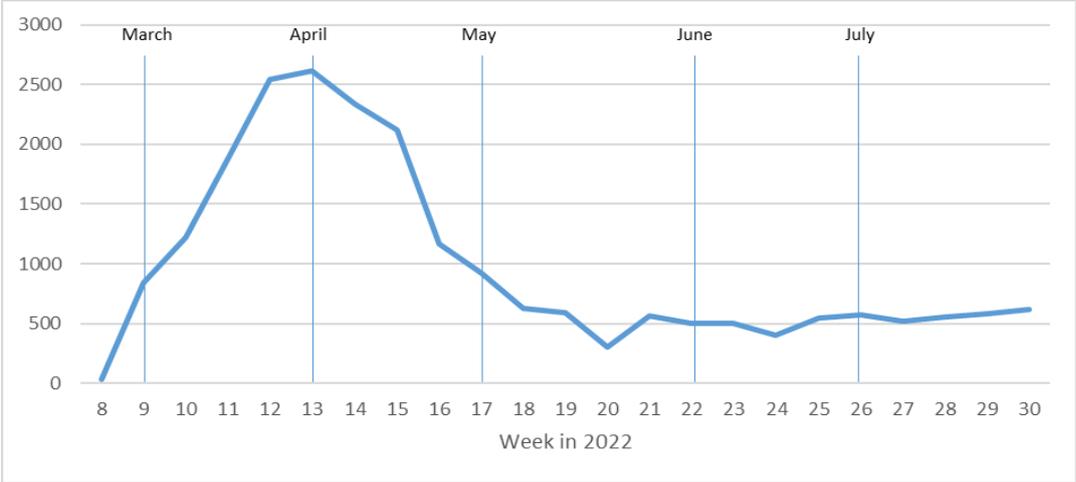


Figure 2 shows the development of asylum application from 2012 up until July 2022. We see that the number of applications as of July 2022 exceeds the number of applicants in total for most previous years. The exception is 2015, where over 31 000 applicants were registered. However, this number is for the whole year, and the numbers for 2022 is only applications as of July 2022. The current prognoses from UDI as of September 2022 (when the final revision of this report was made) was 40 000<sup>3</sup>, thus, according to current prognoses, the number of asylum applicants will exceed the levels in 2015. Additionally, an important difference is that the applicants in 2015/2016 were subject to individual assessments, implying that several applicants did not get their application granted (e.g., in 2016, the share of asylum-seekers in Norway that got their application granted was just above 50%<sup>4</sup>). For the Ukrainian refugees who apply for collective protection, it may be assumed that nearly all applicants will qualify for protection and get their application granted.

Figure 3: Registered application for collective protection from Ukrainian citizens, February–August (week 8-30) 2022



<sup>3</sup> <https://www.udi.no/nn/statistikk-og-analyse/statistikknotater/justerer-opp-scenarioet-til-40.000/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.udi.no/statistikk-og-analyse/statistikk/asylvedtak-etter-statsborgerskap-og-utfall-2016/>

Figure 3 shows that there was an exponential increase in asylum-seekers from Ukraine who registered their applications in March, and that it peaked in early April, before steadily declining until mid-June. From June, it has been some variations from week to week, but on average there has been over 500 new applications a week. Although this is a lower level than the peak around April, it is important to remember that the last five years (calculated based on applications in 2017-2021), the average weekly numbers of asylum-seekers have been between 26-70 applications in total. Thus, although the number of Ukrainian refugees has dropped from May, the number of applicants is substantially larger than the average number of asylum-seekers the last five years.

Third, how many Ukrainian refugees have been settled after having been granted collective protection? How is this number in relative terms compared to previous years, and has the time it takes from asylum or collective protection is granted until settlement happens in a municipality been reduced?

Figure 4: Number of formal settlement of refugees, 2012-sept 2022

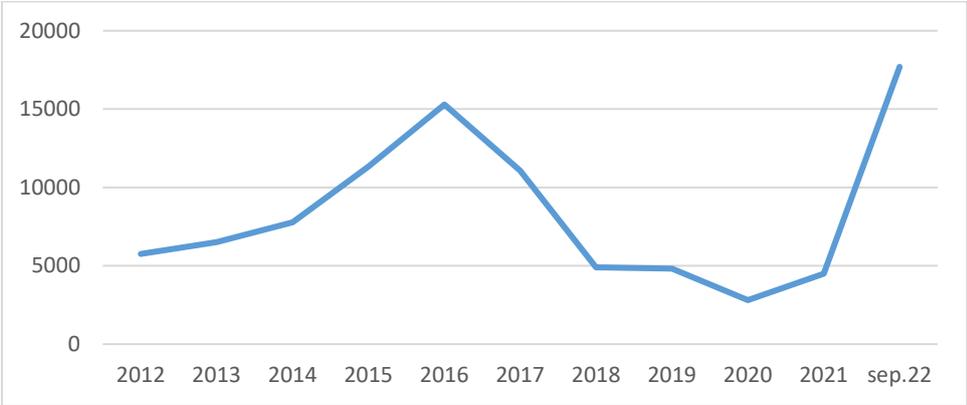


Figure 4 shows the number of refugees settled per year in the period from 2012 to September 2022. We see that Norwegian municipalities – with close to 18 000 settlements at the beginning of September 2022 – already had settled more refugees than they ever settled during an entire year when comparing with the annual numbers of settlements the previous ten years. There was a peak in 2015 and many refugees were also settled in the two following years, but since 2018, the number has been relatively low, between 2800-5000 settlements per year.

At the same time as the number of settlements have increased significantly, the average time from granted application to settlement in a municipality has been substantially reduced. While the average time from decision to settlement was 6,8 months in 2020 and 6,3 months in 2021, IMDi reports that the average time in 2022 (based on numbers up to August) has been 1,8 months.

### 1.3 Structure of the report

Before this introduction chapter (chapter 1), the report includes a summary of the main findings of the report and NIBR’s recommendations based on those findings.

In chapter 2, we present the overall research design and the methods and data sources used. We also assess the ethical issues of conducting studies of persons in a vulnerable situation.

In chapter 3, we document policy changes made between February and July 2022 to accommodate for a high number of Ukrainian refugees.

In chapter 4, based on a survey conducted as part of this study, important background statistics of the Ukrainian refugees in Norway are presented, including their place of residence before the

war, their qualifications, and information about their family and network in both Norway and Ukraine.

Chapter 5 to 12 document our empirical findings concerning the Ukrainian refugees' overall evaluation of their reception in Norway and their experiences with specific services and procedures that Ukrainians have encountered after their arrival.

In chapter 5, we present the Ukrainians overall evaluation of how they have been received in Norway and their assessment of specific actors and services.

In chapter 6, we start by presenting UDI and IMD's information strategies and measures toward Ukrainians, before accounting for the Ukrainians' evaluation of the information provided by public actors.

Further, we describe their experiences with the registration procedure (chapter 7), different options for accommodation (e.g., privately or at reception centres) (chapter 8), formal settlement in a municipality (chapter 9), their financial situation and public support (chapter 10), interpreting services (chapter 11) and other public services including kindergarten, school, health services and procedures for pets (chapter 12).

In chapter 13, we focus on the Ukrainian refugees' prospects for the future, their thoughts about a potential return to Ukraine and aspirations for integration into the Norwegian society.

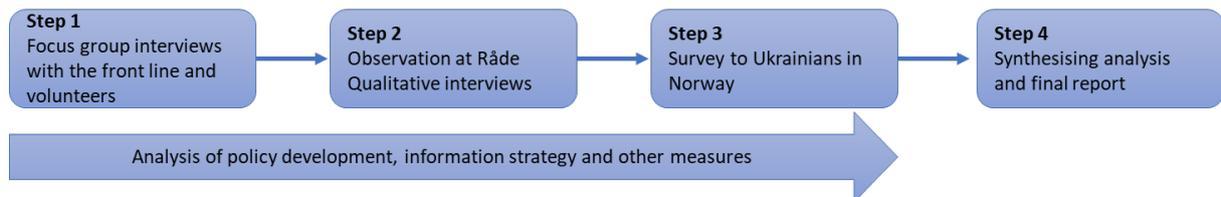
Lastly, in chapter 14, we make some cross-cutting reflections based on insight from the various chapters in the report and discuss both current and future challenges and dilemmas. Based on these analyses, we give recommendations for both the current situation, potential future situations of high influxes of asylum-seekers, and future research.

## 2 Research design and methods

### 2.1 Overall research design

To answer the research questions presented in Table 1, various types of data were collected between May and August 2022. Figure 5 shows the overall research design of the project.

Figure 5: Overall research design and methods



In the course of this project, NIBR has presented UDI and IMDi with three research notes with preliminary findings from the data collection in Steps 1 to 3, as shown in Figure 5. This report synthesizes the findings from these three research notes, in addition to presenting an analysis of policy developments and UDI and IMDi's information strategy and measures.

### 2.2 Step 1: Focus group interviews with 'frontline workers' and volunteers

As a first step to gain knowledge about Ukrainian refugees' experiences during their first months in Norway after the Russian invasion, we conducted focus group interviews with frontline workers and volunteers. Many persons – public and non-public actors – had extensive contact with newly arrived Ukrainians who fled to Norway during those first months. By May 2022, these actors had substantial insights into the challenges facing different groups of Ukrainians on arrival, as well as their needs and questions. The main purpose of these focus group interviews was to obtain information that UDI and IMDi could use for ongoing adjustment and development of policy, and for improving information measures.

UDI and IMDi facilitated recruitment of respondents among relevant UDI and IMDi staff, reception centre operators and employees at the National Police Immigration Service (PU) – actors who had been in direct contact with Ukrainians during their first months in Norway. Further, NIBR invited representatives of NGOs, as well as a selection of municipalities, interpreters, and Ukrainians living in Norway, who were active as volunteers. In the following, we refer to these various actors as 'frontline workers' or 'the front line'.

Almost all actors responded positively to the invitation. Still, as many of them had busy schedules, some had to cancel at the last minute (particularly interpreters who had to work overtime at Råde). Those who had to cancel were offered to provide their comments, feedback and suggestions in writing. See Table 2 for list of participants who either participated in the focus group interviews or who submitted their comments in writing.

Table 2: Participants in focus group interviews with frontline workers and volunteers

<b>6 groups</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
NGOs and private contractors	5
Municipalities	5
UDI and PU	5
IMDi, NAV, UDI Region	5
Interpreters	2 <sup>5</sup>
Ukrainians in Norway	5
<b>Total number of participants</b>	<b>27</b>

Participants were sent information in advance about the main topics, so that they could gather information and discuss the questions with others in their organization prior to the interview. The focus group interviews were conducted digitally on Zoom on 4 May, with the researchers taking notes. The interviews were also recorded (audio only).

## 2.3 Step 2: Observation and qualitative interviews with Ukrainians

### 2.3.1 Observation at National Arrivals Centre at Råde

Two project members from NIBR conducted two days of observations at Råde as part of the project. The first visit took place in mid-May and the second visit approximately one month later (the exact dates are not disclosed, to ensure interviewee anonymity). The visits were planned in advance and agreed upon with UDI and the management at Råde: the staff at Råde had also been informed. Because of regulations concerning visitors in a building that is partly regulated by the police, the NIBR researchers were accompanied by a UDI representative throughout their visits.

During the observations, we became acquainted with how the Råde facilities were set up and how asylum-seekers are welcomed and informed about the process. We spoke with Ukrainians then in the process of registering their application for asylum. We provided written information in Ukrainian about the research project to the people with whom we spoke, assuring them that speaking to us was voluntary, and that their anonymity as participants would be guaranteed. We also had short conversations with various staff-members at Råde; with the police, UDI, LINK, NOAS, and a nurse, briefly explaining the purpose of our research project. We took notes during the conversations but did not write down any names or personal information.

Visit 1: During the first visit, we accompanied a group of asylum-seekers from Ukraine who had arrived at approximately the same time. The intention was to follow all the steps of the registration procedure together with the group, to observe what happened at each step, what information applicants received, and how much time the procedure took altogether. During this first visit, we spoke with five women from Ukraine. We stayed at Råde until all of the applicants had finished the registration process.

Visit 2: During the second visit, we spent time in all the areas that are part of the registration process (luggage screening, police control, issuing of Råde card etc.), but did not follow the applicants throughout the process in the same way as during the first visit. Instead, we spent time

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<sup>5</sup> We had scheduled a focus group interview with 6 interpreters, but unfortunately 5 had to cancel because of overtime work at Råde or similar challenges.

in the main dwelling space (*'teltsalen'*) and spoke with Link staff and other Råde employees as well as representatives of NOAS, whose office is situated in connection to the dwelling space.

### 2.3.2 Interviews with Ukrainian refugees

In the course of the project, we have altogether interviewed 40 Ukrainians who arrived in Norway in winter/spring 2022. In the period from 16 May to 3 June, we conducted 26 interviews (23 individual interviews, 3 group interviews) and on 4 July and 9 August, we conducted two additional focus group interviews.

Interviewees were recruited through several channels: 1) through social media (an announcement was posted on the Facebook group 'Ukrainske flyktninger til Norge – info /Біженці з України до Норвегії' with information about the project and an invitation to contact us if they wished to participate in the study), 2) through representatives of various NGOs and municipalities, 3) through the Ukrainian community in Norway, 4) through the researchers' networks (one project member is a refugee from Ukraine herself, and has a network among Ukrainians in Norway<sup>6</sup>) 5) by asking interviewees to provide us with contacts among their friends and acquaintances (the 'snowball method').

The project investigates the experiences of a complex group. To ensure that we got the perspectives of a wide range of people, we sought to recruit interviewees who differed in terms of the following:

- gender
- age (range from 22 to 68 years)
- arriving in Norway with children, or without
- existing network in Norway, or not
- language and digital skills
- accommodation during the first phase in Norway (living at reception centre or privately, and settled through self-settlement or publicly assisted settlement)
- date of arrival in Norway
- geographical location in Norway
- geographical region of residency in Ukraine

Our interviewees included persons from all parts of Ukraine (north, south, east, west, centre), both large cities and smaller towns – Irpin, Melitopol, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv, Zhytomir region, Poltava, Krivui Rig, Lviv, Mykolaiv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lugansk, Zhytomir, Bila Scerkva (Kyiv region), Odessa, Sumi, Izum (Kharkiv region), and Pervomaiskiy (Kharkiv region).

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<sup>6</sup> In line with research ethical considerations, the Ukrainian researcher did not interview people she already knew prior to the start of the project, but used her network to get in touch with other potential interviewees.



At the time of our interviews, the Ukrainian refugees were geographically spread in Norway, staying in Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger, Langhus, Norde Follo, Flå, Lorenskog, Narvik, Tønsberg, Flore, Råde, Rogaland, Kristiansand, Bodø, Lyngdal, Hitra, Gålå, Hvaler, Kongsberg, Setermoen, Jordal, Trondheim, Bærum, Brune and Alver.

All interviewees were provided with a detailed consent form that contained general information about the research project, voluntary participation, the interviewee's rights in terms of withdrawing from participation and the researcher's obligations with regard to storage of data, etc. (more details in 2.3.3.). For interviews conducted digitally, participants got their consent forms via personal emails and consented in writing. At in-person interviews, printed versions were presented to the interviewee and signed before the start of the interview.

The group interviews included two peer group interviews (one with a married couple; one with three sisters); and three focus group interviews with Ukrainians: 1) staying at reception centres (5 participants); 2) living privately (3 participants); 3) who had already been settled in municipalities (4 participants). In most interviews (80%), two researchers participated: one was responsible for taking notes while the other conducted the interview. Since one of the researchers was fluent in Russian and not Ukrainian, interviewees were asked if it was ok for them to speak in Russian (or English). If they preferred Ukrainian, the interviews were conducted in Ukrainian by the Ukrainian-speaking researcher<sup>7</sup>. The researchers conducted 4 interviews in person and 24 digitally. The use of the digital format made it possible to reach participants residing in different regions in Norway. The interviews lasted between 55 and 100 minutes. All interviews were taped, so that the researchers could listen to the interview again to make more accurate notes, if needed.

In the interviews, we asked about the following topics: background, migration history, existing network in Norway, registration and application process, accommodation and settlement, expectations about Norway, knowledge about rights and opportunities, contact with various actors, interpreting services, everyday life and communications in Norway, school/kindergarten for children, pets, where they got or sought information and their evaluation of this information, the introduction programme, their financial situation, and their thoughts about the future.

<sup>7</sup> In total, out of 23 individual interviews 17 were conducted in Russian, 3 in Ukrainian and 3 in English. Among 5 group interviews, 2 were conducted in Russian and 3 in mixed Russian and Ukrainian (During these group interviews, some participants spoke in Russian, others in Ukrainian).

In June 2022, when all but two focus group interviews were done, the two researchers who conducted the interviews and the project manager held a workshop following a four-step “collective qualitative analysis” (Eggebo, 2020). The four steps include: 1) Joint review of the data material (common discussion of interview notes); 2) mapping of the main topics; 3) grouping of themes and sub-themes; 4) establishing the report structure and a workplan based on the themes and sub-themes identified.

### **2.3.3 Ethical reflections and measures for interviews with vulnerable groups**

The project has been registered and approved by the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (SIKT) (formerly NSD) and has followed the research ethics guidelines from the National Research Ethics Committee for Social Sciences and Humanities (NESH).

Ukrainians who have recently arrived in Norway often find themselves in a vulnerable situation. As researchers, we should take care not to add stress to an already difficult situation. Although Ukrainians’ experiences with the war are not in focus in this study, such experiences could surface during the interviews. A difficult topic for this group could be family members and friends still in Ukraine. Thus, it was important for project researchers to be prepared for emotional reactions from the Ukrainian refugees. We believe that it has been an advantage that the researchers who conducted the interviews have substantial familiarity with Ukrainian contemporary history, culture and language, because such knowledge enhances their understanding of the situation of the interviewees.

Several research participants saw the interviews as a welcomed opportunity to share their needs and experiences so that we could convey them to Norwegian authorities. Earlier studies the project members have conducted had shown that research participants may find it particularly meaningful to be involved in focus group interviews, where they can discuss their experiences with others in a similar situation.

All survey respondents were informed that participation was voluntary and that the information they provided would be treated anonymously and on an aggregate level, so that no individuals could be identified. Interviewees were further informed about the voluntary nature of participation, that information which could identify them would not be used in the report, and that we would ensure their anonymity and integrity. They received written information about the project and their rights as research participants in Ukrainian or Russian.

As a rule, researchers should obtain informed consent from research participants. However, at Råde it was not possible to collect informed consent about our research project from all those who were present, but we did collect such consent from everyone with whom we spoke. We provided information both orally and by distributing an information sheet in Russian and Ukrainian. On our visits, we made sure not to note down any personal information about the interviewees.

Throughout the analyses, we have taken care to treat the research data in ways that ensured confidentiality. Data from the survey and interviews have been stored on OsloMet’s password-protected server, accessible only for researchers involved in the project. In this report, we have anonymized any information that might make it possible for individuals to be identified.

## **2.4 Step 3: Survey of Ukrainians in Norway**

Based on the preliminary analysis of steps 1 and 2, we developed a survey specifically directed at persons who fled to Norway after the Russian invasion in February 2022. Data collection took place between 10 and 22 June 2022. We received 680 responses.

Survey questions concerned the Ukrainians’ experience with the Norwegian authorities (e.g., the police, UDI, IMDi, the municipality), how they obtained information about the system and their

rights in Norway, where and how they lived during the various stages their initial period in Norway, the importance of personal networks and voluntary organizations, and future prospects. In addition, we asked about background characteristics – gender, age, language skills, level of formal education, place of residence, family ties in Ukraine, persons with whom they travelled to Norway, etc.

The survey was first developed in English and sent to UDI and IMDi for comments. After revisions based on the comments received – and internal quality assurance by project members at NIBR – the survey was translated into Russian and Ukrainian by a Ukrainian project member fluent in both languages. The Russian and Ukrainian versions were then checked by two external academics – one Ukrainian and one Russian-speaking. Lastly, the survey was piloted by four Ukrainians in Norway, and revisions were made on the basis of their comments.

#### **2.4.1 Recruitment through different channels**

Recruitment to the survey took place through several channels:

1. We prepared a short information video about the survey in Ukrainian and shared it in multiple fora for Ukrainians (the Facebook groups ‘Ukrainske flyktkninger til Norge – including info / Біженці з України в Норвегії’, ‘Ukrainians in Norway (Українці у Норвегії)’, ‘Допомога біженцям у Бергені / Hjelp til ukrainske flyktninger i Bergen’, and ‘Help Ukrainian refugees’).
2. Emails with information about the survey (and links to all social media posts) were sent to all reception centres and municipalities in Norway and relevant volunteer organizations, inviting them to distribute the survey. In this email, we also included a flyer with a QR-code that could be printed and posted at relevant places.
3. We sent emails to all participants in the interviews in steps 1 and 2, requesting them to share this link among their communities and at the reception centres.
4. UDI and IMDi shared the survey through their networks.

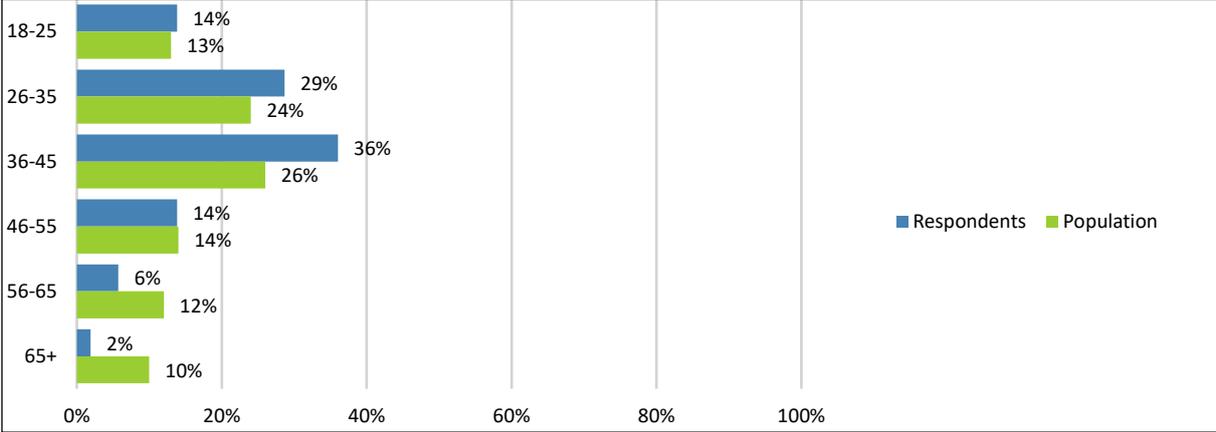
#### **2.4.2 Sample and methodological limitations**

The survey is based on open recruitment and self-selection (as opposed to a random sample). With a non-random sample, there is limited control over who answers, and who chooses *not* to answer. If the non-response is random, this is not a major problem, but if the sample is selective, the biases can affect the results, and thus, the possibilities for generalization.

The population we want to study are Ukrainians over 18 years of age who fled to Norway because of the Russian invasion in February 2022. UDI has provided statistics about the population at the time of the survey, making it possible check to whether our respondents differ significantly from the population on selected observable background characteristics.

Our survey had an over-representation of women compared to the overall population of Ukrainian refugees in Norway: 88% of our respondents were women, whereas UDI statistics (provided at the time of the survey) showed that 79% of Ukrainians over 18 years who had registered for protection were women (as of June 2022 when the survey was conducted).

Figure 6: Comparison of age groups in sample and population



Further, as shown in Figure 6, there was an (expected) under-representation of the two oldest age groups, from 55 years and upwards, and over-representation of persons aged 26-45.

As there are certain differences between our respondent sample and the population concerning age and gender, we include weights for gender and age in the statistical analyses. Weighting is a correction technique and refers to statistical adjustments that are made to survey data to improve the accuracy of the survey estimates and compensate for survey nonresponse (Bethlehem 2008). In our case, for example, we had a higher share of nonresponse from men and elderly compared to the population of Ukrainian refugees in Norway. Since male and elderly respondents are underrepresented among our respondents, their responses will be weighted extra when calculating averages or percentages in the different analyses in the report.

## 2.5 Analysis of policy changes and information measures and strategy

Throughout the project period, we documented legislative changes, UDI and IMDi’s information strategy, and other practices and measures directed at Ukrainians in the period from February to July 2022. This parallel analysis served two purposes. First, it was essential for the project team to have up-to-date knowledge of policy development in a constantly changing field, to explore relevant themes, and to develop suitably adapted questions for the interviews and survey. Second, this analysis forms the basis for the background chapters in this report (chapter 3, 6.1, and 6.2) which provide important context for evaluating Ukrainians’ experiences. Further, we aim not only to produce knowledge that can be used for ongoing policy development, but also to create a knowledge base that can be useful in future situations involving large numbers of asylum-seekers who arrive at the same time. Experiences from similar evaluations of crisis management have shown that it is very difficult for the actors involved to recall the details of processes later, as they were working under extremely high pressure and such periods are characterized by an unpredictable and often chaotic work situation (Hernes et al. 2021, 2022). Thus, ongoing documentation of policy and information-measure developments may prove valuable for developing recommendations for the ongoing situation as well as future situations involving high influxes of asylum-seekers.

Throughout the project period, UDI and IMDi have provided the project team with continuous updates on policy developments and information measures. We have systematically followed policy changes at Lovdata.no and consulted UDI’s and IMDi’s webpages regularly to document changes. In addition, to clarify specific questions that arose, we had two (group)interviews with persons responsible for information and communication (in total four persons) and email correspondence with employees in UDI and IMDi responsible for the information strategy.

## 2.6 Quality assurance

The empirical chapters have been co-written by the project members involved in the data collection. In connection with writing the final report, the project team had a joint workshop to identify the main findings and recommendations.

In addition to the main authors, the report has undergone rigorous quality assurance processes. First, senior researcher Aadne Aasland at NIBR helped to quality assure the interview guide and survey in the data collection process. The research director Kristian Tronstad at NIBR read through and quality-assured a first draft of the report. Second, UDI, IMDi and PU were presented with a revised draft on 9 September and were encouraged to provide comments and clarify any factual unclarities. On the basis of these comments, NIBR revised the draft before delivering this final report on 23 September 2022.

### 3 Policy changes since February 2022

The sudden needs brought on by the arrival of high numbers of Ukrainians in Norway led to a flurry of policy changes and rapid political processes.

In this chapter, we outline key changes to legislation concerning the reception, asylum processing, settlement and integration of persons displaced from Ukraine. We first provide a snapshot of the process in the form of a timeline before we briefly outline the different steps in the process from arrival to formal settlement in a municipality. We describe the changes made in each step, and how the current approach for Ukrainians differs from the previous system for receiving asylum-seekers.

#### 3.1 Overview: policy changes, February–July 2022

Table 3 briefly outlines the amendments to legislation and instructions in form of a timeline.

Table 3: Policy changes, February-July 2022

DATES IN 2022	EVENT
24 FEBRUARY	Start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine
2 MARCH	EU Commission <i>Temporary Protection Directive Proposal</i>
4 MARCH	EU Council Decision to trigger the <i>Temporary Protection Directive</i>
7 MARCH	Temporary regulations on exemptions from the Planning and Building Act for accommodation of persons seeking protection (asylum-seekers)
11 MARCH	The Norwegian government follows the EU Temporary Protection Directive and triggers the use of <i>Immigration Act Section 34</i> by amending the Immigration Regulations, defining the target group in a new 7-5a
12 MARCH	Registration for collective protection is expanded to other police districts
16 MARCH	The Ministry of Justice and Public Security instructs UDI to expand the system for <i>alternative reception placement (AMOT)</i>
24 MARCH	The Ministry of Justice and Public Security issues its decision to transfer up to 2500 persons fleeing Ukraine from Moldova
31 MARCH	The Ministry of Justice and Public Security issues instruction on the reception of medical evacuees from Ukraine as part of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (amended 8 April 2022 and 3 June 2022)
5 APRIL	The Ministry of Justice and Public Security submits for consultation <i>Temporary amendments to various legislation in response to high arrivals</i>
12 APRIL	Consultation deadline
29 APRIL	The Ministry of Justice and Public Security issues <i>Temporary Amendments to legislation as a consequence of high arrivals of persons displaced from Ukraine (Prop 107 L)</i>
29 APRIL	Scope of use of Section 34 (as defined in Immigration Regulations Section 7-5a) amended to cover Ukrainians already in Norway
23 MAY	Parliamentary Committee Report on the proposed amendments ( <i>Innst. 352 L</i> )
3 JUNE	First reading in Parliament of <i>Prop 107</i>
7 JUNE	Second reading of <i>Prop 107</i> in Parliament and final vote Amendments to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Protective Services Act</li> <li>• Social Insurance Act</li> <li>• Education Act</li> <li>• Act relating to Specialist Health Services</li> <li>• Act relating to Patient and User Rights</li> <li>• Kindergarten Act</li> <li>• Act relating to the Planning and Processing of Building Applications</li> </ul>

15 JUNE

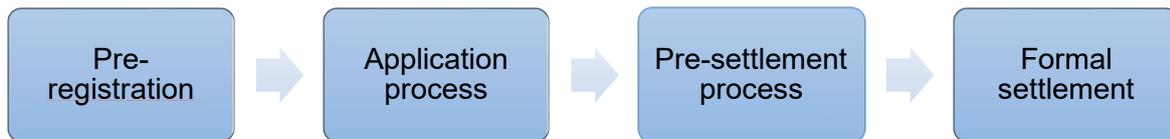
- Act relating to Municipal Health Services
- Integration Act (new chapter)

Entry into force: *Law on temporary amendments to legislation as a consequence of high arrivals of persons displaced from Ukraine*

## 3.2 From arrival to formal settlement in a municipality

As explained below, Ukrainian refugees arriving to Norway had to undergo a formal process before their application for collective protection was granted and they could be formally settled in a municipality. Figure 7 outlines the main stages in this process.

Figure 7: The four stages between arrival and formal settlement



First, as Ukrainians were not obliged to apply for protection immediately upon arrival (because they could legally stay in Norway with a tourist visa for three months), the first stage was pre-registration. After they had registered and applied for protection, they moved to the second stage, which we refer to as the application process, to await the decision. Third, once collective protection had been granted, came the stage of pre-settlement: the period between collective protection was granted and before formal settlement in a municipality took place. The final stage of the process was formal settlement in a Norwegian municipality.

## 3.3 Asylum: regulations and procedures

### 3.3.1 Collective protection

The most notable development concerning protection for Ukrainian refugees was the decision by the Norwegian Government to trigger the use of Section 34 of the Immigration Act for the first time.<sup>8</sup> This section mirrors, but is not identical to, the EU Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), which the European Council decided to activate on 4 March 2022.<sup>9</sup> Similarly to the Directive, Section 34 requires the Government to issue a triggering decision which defines the group to which it is to apply. The Norwegian Government issued such a triggering decision on 11 March 2022, in the form of a new paragraph in the Immigration Regulations Section (7-5a),<sup>10</sup> making Section 34 of the Immigration Act applicable to

- a) Ukrainian citizens resident in Ukraine prior to 24 February 2022
- b) Third-country nationals and stateless persons who had received international protection or similar national protection status in Ukraine prior to 24 February 2022
- c) Third-country nationals and stateless persons who are close family members of persons mentioned in letter a or b, such as spouse, cohabiting partner, child under 18 years old and other members of the person's household prior to 24 February 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Collective temporary protection statuses had already been used in the 1990s for persons fleeing Bosnia and Kosovo, but these pre-date the 2008 Immigration Act as well as the development of a Common European Asylum System.

<sup>9</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec\\_impl/2022/382/oj](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2022/382/oj)

<sup>10</sup> <https://lovdata.no/dokument/LTI/forskrift/2022-03-11-361>

On 29 April 2022, Norway extended the scope to include Ukrainian citizens legally resident in Norway as of 24 February 2022, or who arrived later on the basis of a previously issued permit.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Ukrainian seasonal workers who were in Norway at the time of the invasion could remain in Norway and were allowed to continue working while waiting for a new permit.<sup>12</sup>

There are some differences between the EU TPD and Section 34 in the Norwegian Immigration Act. Ukrainians in EU countries are not required to *apply for asylum*, though each country must establish a national registration process through which a residence permit is issued. In any case, the TPD is largely enacted outside of the asylum process as set out in the Asylum Procedures Directive (APD); and the TPD specifies that persons covered by it *may* access the ordinary asylum procedure at any time, should they so wish, although the processing of claims can be postponed until after TPD expires.<sup>13</sup> The Norwegian legislation, on the contrary, specifies that collective protection is accessed upon application, which in practice means that collective protection is accessed through the asylum procedure. Further, it is specified that any application for individual asylum will be suspended until collective protection ceases.

### 3.3.2 Registering and applying for collective protection

Since November 2020, registration of asylum applications takes place at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde (south of Oslo). The actual registration is conducted by representatives of the National Police Immigration Service (PU) and may involve screening of applicants' electronic devices and examination of their belongings. PU's main concern is to establish the identity of the individual, disclose any facts that may affect societal security, and facilitate for a quick return of asylum seekers whose application for asylum potentially is rejected. Normally applicants will be asked to state their reasons for seeking asylum. PU has been working with UDI to create an integrated process, whereby all steps of the initial asylum process (registration, health screening and asylum interview) for the majority of asylum seekers should be completed at Råde within 21 days.

The rapid arrival of high numbers of Ukrainians, who – unlike most asylum-seekers – had visa-free access to Norway, led to changes in the registration process. Normally, applicants must apply for protection as soon as possible after arrival, in order not to be staying illegally in Norway – but ever since 2017, Ukrainian citizens have been able to travel to the Schengen Area for up to 90 days within any 180-day period. Thus, they could stay in Norway for 90 days without registering. In light of this visa-free access, and the lack of capacity as regards both registration and reception, Ukrainians who already had a place to live were initially told by Norwegian authorities to wait to register. The Ministry of Justice also decided to de-centralize registration procedures; then, on 12 March 2022, it was announced that registration would be possible in eight police districts around the country.<sup>14</sup> Råde was still used for registration for individuals staying with friends or family in south-eastern Norway, as well as for those who had nowhere to stay and had to be channelled into the ordinary reception system.

Once an application for protection has been registered by the Police, whether at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde or at a police district office, UDI processes the application. Normally, claims for asylum are based on information from the asylum interview, and other available evidence such as the police report, information from the country of origin, and supplementary

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<sup>11</sup> <https://lovdata.no/dokument/LTI/forskrift/2022-04-29-644>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/vil-gi-ukrainske-sesongarbeidere-og-studenter-midlertidig-kollektiv-beskyttelse/id2908867/>

<sup>13</sup> TPD article 17, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32001L0055&from=EN>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/regjeringen-desentraliserer-asylregistreringen-i-forbindelse-med-krigen-i-ukraina/id2903972/>

evidence provided by the applicant. In order to qualify for collective protection, however, the question is simply whether the person falls within the scope of application of Section 34. For the majority of applicants from Ukraine, there were no individual asylum interviews. The most relevant information has been the person's citizenship and residence in Ukraine as of 24 February 2022. With this simplified process, the procedure can be speeded up, especially when the person has a biometric passport and identification can be rapid and certain. For cases where the available evidence is deemed sufficient, UDI has employed automated workflow<sup>15</sup>, and decisions have been rapidly issued to claimants. Statistics provided by UDI shows that the average time from registration to a decision on the application is significantly lower for collective protection than for individual asylum applications. Although the average from registration to decision has differed week to week from February to August 2022, the weekly average has varied between 3 to 61 days for Ukrainian citizens, and with around 30 days as an overall average. To compare, the average time to process an individual asylum application was 255 days (based on numbers from 2019-2021).

Still, although the automated workflow process was used for many applicants, some applicants still had to go through individual interviews (for example solitary under-aged asylum seekers, those who entered Norway through Russia and/or were from occupied territories, and those who have visas to other countries). For these applicants, the time from registration to decision may be considerably longer.

### 3.3.3 Return/visits to Ukraine

Ordinarily, refugees are prohibited from returning to their country of origin, as that would indicate that they are availing themselves of the protection of the same state from which they seek protection. However, as *collective protection* is *not* asylum, certain restrictions applicable to other asylum-seekers and refugees are not applied to Ukrainian refugees. It has been made clear that Ukrainians *can* return to Ukraine without losing their residence permit, and that the instruction from the Ministry of Justice and Public Security to withdraw refugee status from refugees who return to their home state is not applicable to Ukrainian collective protection holders.<sup>16</sup>

## 3.4 Reception

During the asylum application phase and until settlement in a Norwegian municipality, asylum-seekers and refugees may live in reception centres. Asylum-seekers are not obliged to reside in reception centres, but normally they forfeit their access to free housing and pocket money if they opt out of the reception system. The reception centres are formally overseen by UDI, but run by private companies, NGOs or municipalities. The biggest operators are the private companies Link and Hero. Centres vary in size, set-up and location in various parts of Norway. When capacity needed to be expanded, UDI engaged in tender processes where new and existing operators could compete for contracts for new emergency reception centres (*akuttinnkvartering*). Such emergency reception centres also includes hotels, which were used to rapidly expand capacity in case of mass influx.

In the first phase after arrival, many Ukrainians stayed with friends and family in Norway. In light of this, and due to the lack of adequate reception capacity, the Ministry of Justice decided to expand the system for 'alternative reception placement' (AMOT), in an instruction issued on 16

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<sup>15</sup> UDI has employed robotic process automation (RPA), a software that replicates the action of a human being interacting with the user interface of a computer system, in handling of the cases. Even though the robots do most of the work in many of the cases, a human decides which of the cases the robots are allowed to handle after a review.

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/2deac95cb0314cf5a18321717e095419/gi-07\\_2022-anvendelse-av-instruks-gi-03\\_2020-overfor-fordrevne-fra-ukraina-som-har-fatt-midlertidig-kollektiv-beskyttelse.pdf](https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/2deac95cb0314cf5a18321717e095419/gi-07_2022-anvendelse-av-instruks-gi-03_2020-overfor-fordrevne-fra-ukraina-som-har-fatt-midlertidig-kollektiv-beskyttelse.pdf)

March 2022.<sup>17</sup> AMOT<sup>18</sup> had existed as a system where asylum applicants could live outside reception centres, but subject to strict criteria for application, and it was not widely applied. Under the AMOT system, the municipality where the asylum-seeker lives assumes responsible for the applicant. He or she must apply for AMOT, and the municipality may accept or refuse to take on this responsibility. If the municipality does not accept it, the asylum-seeker is referred back to a reception centre if he or she needs financial and other assistance.

Ukrainian refugees who found a place to live in a municipality – either with family members, other private persons or a home organized by voluntary organizations or by the municipality (which is not part of the regular reception system) – could apply to be registered for AMOT in the municipality. If the municipality accepted AMOT for the individual, the municipality becomes responsible for that person, for which the municipality receives a grant from UDI to cover average expenditures. The municipality is to pay financial benefits to cover the expenses necessary for the asylum-seeker's livelihood. However, if the person is able to support him-/herself, such benefits are to be wholly or partially forfeited.<sup>19</sup>

It should also be noted that, prior to the influx of Ukrainians in 2022, pets were not allowed in the Norwegian reception system, and the Food Inspection Authority was not among the agencies involved in the asylum process. Due to the rapidly unfolding flight situation and availability of transportation, many refugees from Ukraine arrived with their pets. Norwegian authorities have set up various forms of accommodation for Ukrainian pets, and organized their vaccination, chipping and quarantine in order to prevent the spread of diseases like rabies. The Food Inspection Authority has made efforts to inform Ukrainians about the obligation to register their pets and submit them to compulsory checks,<sup>20</sup> and has placed pets in quarantine at no cost to the refugees.<sup>21</sup> Re-uniting pets with owners after quarantine has been an additional task for UDI in the coordination of reception centres.

The Integration Act regulates certain activities in reception centres. Residents are generally obligated to attend in courses in the Norwegian language and civic education. Municipalities that host reception centres are obliged to conduct 'competence mapping' (*kompetansekartlegging*) of refugees who will be settled in the municipality, in order to prepare for settlement. However, amendments to the Integration Act (described below) exempt Ukrainians from the obligation to attend classes in Norwegian and civics in reception centres, and competence mapping is made voluntary.

The reception centres are also responsible for conducting a settlement mapping – referred to as a settlement interview – which ordinarily includes 24 questions. When the time it took from application for collective protection to the decision was granted was drastically reduced compared to the procedure with individual asylum processes, this settlement interview became a bottleneck in the settlement process. To speed up the process, on 4 April 2022, this mapping was initially reduced from 24 to three questions – on 1) family and networks in Norway, 2) any health situation to be taken into consideration, and 3) whether the applicant had pets. The mapping was

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/3bfce5623ca44faa9542fff822f399b3/gi-04-2022.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.udiregelverk.no/rettskilder/udi-retningslinjer/udi-2020-005/>

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.udiregelverk.no/rettskilder/udi-retningslinjer/udi-2022-003/#2.2. Hva er midlertidig alternat](https://www.udiregelverk.no/rettskilder/udi-retningslinjer/udi-2022-003/#2.2. Hva_er_midlertidig_alternat)

<sup>20</sup>

[https://www.mattilsynet.no/dyr\\_og\\_dyrehold/reise\\_med\\_kjaledyr/reise\\_med\\_og\\_innforsel\\_av\\_hund\\_katt\\_og\\_ilder\\_til\\_norge/post\\_er\\_please\\_register\\_your\\_pet\\_if\\_you\\_come\\_from\\_ukraine.46342/binary/Poster%20Please%20register%20your%20pet%20if%20you%20come%20from%20Ukraine](https://www.mattilsynet.no/dyr_og_dyrehold/reise_med_kjaledyr/reise_med_og_innforsel_av_hund_katt_og_ilder_til_norge/post_er_please_register_your_pet_if_you_come_from_ukraine.46342/binary/Poster%20Please%20register%20your%20pet%20if%20you%20come%20from%20Ukraine)

<sup>21</sup>

[https://www.mattilsynet.no/dyr\\_og\\_dyrehold/reise\\_med\\_kjaledyr/reise\\_med\\_og\\_innforsel\\_av\\_hund\\_katt\\_og\\_ilder\\_til\\_norge/informasjon\\_til\\_deg\\_som\\_har\\_kjaledyr\\_fra\\_ukraina\\_i\\_midlertidig\\_karantene.46159](https://www.mattilsynet.no/dyr_og_dyrehold/reise_med_kjaledyr/reise_med_og_innforsel_av_hund_katt_og_ilder_til_norge/informasjon_til_deg_som_har_kjaledyr_fra_ukraina_i_midlertidig_karantene.46159)

subsequently expanded in May to include questions about work experience and education, with the aim of ensuring better-targeted settlement.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.5 Settlement in a municipality

Norway has had a publicly steered settlement model, where refugees are allocated to municipalities on the basis of agreements between the state and the municipalities. The state (through IMDi) sends requests to Norwegian municipalities based on prognoses as to how many refugees will need settlement the following year. The municipalities then decide if and how many refugees they are willing to settle. To be entitled to financial assistance and introduction programmes, refugees must be settled through such 'public' settlement agreements. In recent years, the Norwegian system has also opened up for 'self-settlement', whereby refugees may find their own housing, although they still must apply to the municipality to be formally settled there in order to retain their right to financial assistance and introduction programmes. If the municipality agrees to settle the refugee, IMDi is contacted, and a formal settlement agreement is made. However, the practice of self-settlement was not widespread prior to the arrival of Ukrainians, and many municipalities had not previously accepted refugees for self-settlement (Søholt & Dyb 2021).

As noted, Ukrainians have to a much larger extent than previous asylum-seekers lived outside Norway's reception system during the pre-settlement period, either by staying privately without public assistance, or through the AMOT system. Many Ukrainians not staying in reception centres – often with the help of their networks – have been in direct contact with a municipality concerning possible settlement there. Some have found housing on their own or through their networks, and others have received assistance from the municipality in finding more long-term housing. In many cases, the settlement process has unfolded in dialogue between refugees (or their helpers) and the municipality, outside the traditional settlement process where IMDi allocates refugees to the municipalities. For a refugee to be formally settled in a municipality (and be entitled to financial assistance and introduction programmes), the municipality and IMDi later makes an agreement about formal settlement. For an illustration of the formal procedures for how different settlement processes were to be carried out, see an illustration made by IMDi (see footnote for link)<sup>23</sup>.

Given these various options for accommodation during the pre-settlement phase, there are multiple paths to formal settlement in a municipality. Here it should be emphasized that legislation concerning the 'Norwegian settlement model' has not been formally changed. However, whereas most refugees in Norway previously followed the 'traditional path' of living in a reception centre until they were allocated to a municipality for settlement through IMDi, the Ukrainians have to a larger extent made use of alternative paths to settlement.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/utvidet-kartlegging-for-bosetting/id2914055/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.imdi.no/planlegging-og-bosetting/slik-bosettes-flyktninger/visuell-framstilling-av-bosettingsprosessene/>

Figure 8: Different options for accommodation pre-settlement and paths to formal settlement in a municipality

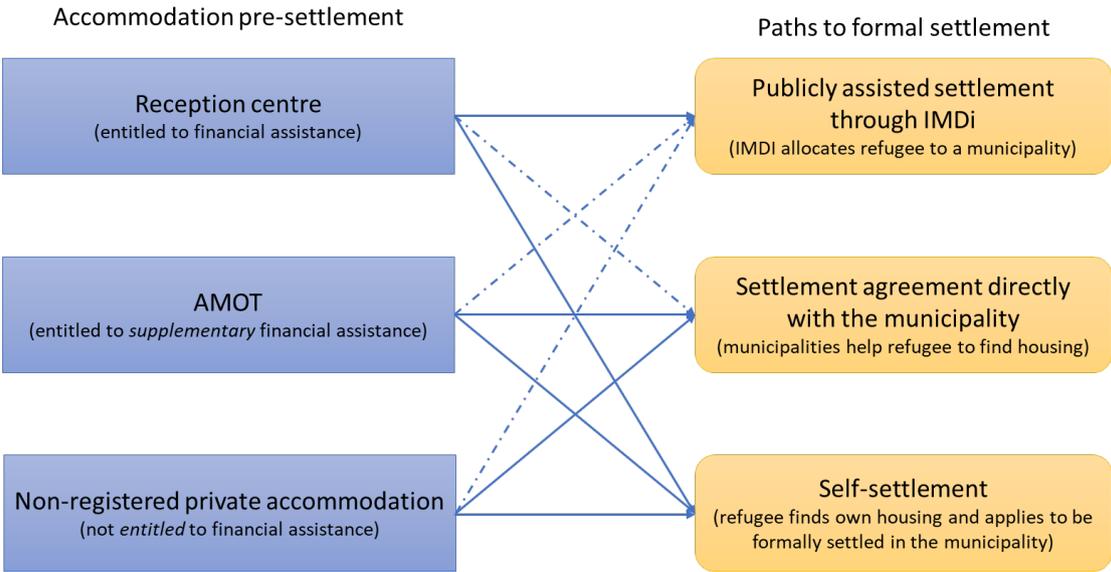


Figure 8 shows the 1) options for accommodation in the pre-settlement phase and 2) various paths to being formally settled in a municipality. It is theoretically possible to combine all types of pre-settlement accommodation with the various paths to formal settlement; however, not all combinations are equally common (marked with a dotted line). Refugees who stay in reception centres generally get publicly assisted settlement through IMDi. Those registered as AMOT during the pre-settlement phase will tend to find their own housing or get assistance from the municipality in which they are registered. Refugees who are living in private accommodation and who are not registered through the AMOT system are entitled to get publicly assisted settlement from IMDi up to six months after their application for collective protection is granted. They may also use the other two paths to settlement. It should be noted that both for settlement agreements made directly with the municipality (where the municipality helps the refugee to find housing) and self-settlement, the municipality must accept the agreement, before the refugee can be formally settled in the municipality and be entitled to financial assistance and the introduction programme.

### 3.6 Introduction programme

Persons who have been granted a residence permit on the basis of an application for asylum, and their family members, have the right and obligation to take part in the introduction programme offered by Norwegian municipalities. This programme has been regulated in the Introduction Act, which in 2021 was replaced by the new Integration Act. A central argument for the new Act was to make the programme better tailored to the needs of each participant. The new introduction programme now varies more in length, being much shorter for persons who have completed education at the high school level, or vocational education (minimum upper secondary level).

Collective protection holders had been listed on the same basis as other protection holders in the target group of the full introduction programme. Following the influx of Ukrainians, it was debated whether Ukrainians should be required to take part in the full programme – even the newly shortened one – on the same basis as other refugees. These arguments focused on the intended temporary nature of their stay, and, importantly, assumptions that they would not *need* the full introduction programme because they could transition more easily into the labour market on their

own. Underlying these expectations were assumptions about the Ukrainians' level of education, their assumed English levels and their closer cultural ties to Norway.<sup>24,25</sup>

In April, the Norwegian government presented a comprehensive proposal for temporary amendments to various pieces of legislation in order to adjust to the influx of Ukrainians. It was still expected that the influx could assume very large proportions. The proposal included amendments to several pieces of legislation (see list in Table 3). Most importantly, there were proposed changes to the Integration Act, to which a new temporary chapter was added. This chapter introduces a series of changes to the scope and content of integration provisions for Ukrainian collective protection holders. Overall, the amendments result in a shorter and somewhat more limited programme, but with more flexible options for Ukrainians than for other groups. Ukrainians have the right to attend the introduction programme, but, unlike the case with other refugees, the legislation does not state that they are obligated to participate. However, Ukrainians in need of financial assistance after settlement may be obliged to participate in an introduction programme in order to be eligible for such financial assistance.

The introduction programme should contain language and work-oriented elements, but the language training is now briefer for Ukrainians (only one year, consistent with the duration of their initial permit). Unlike the case for other refugees, it can also include English language training. Ukrainian refugees have neither the right nor the obligation to attend civics classes, nor must they take the otherwise compulsory empowerment course (*livsmestring*). However, they must complete the parental guidance course (*foreldreveiledning*) if they have children. Unlike the case for other refugee groups, they can complete the introduction programme on a part-time basis; and if they leave the programme, they do not lose the right to come back later, unlike other refugees.

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<sup>24</sup> As the Progress Party members of the relevant Parliamentary committee processing the legislative proposal argue, 'there is no need for the traditional Introduction Programme for Ukrainian refugees. This is a group that should as quickly as possible get out into work or schooling, preferably with unbureaucratic language training adapted to their needs' (Innst. 352L 2022, p. 8).

<sup>25</sup> Dagsnytt, 23 March 2022, 08:00. <https://radio.nrk.no/serie/dagsnytt/sesong/202203/NPUB08008222>

## 4 Who are the Ukrainians who fled to Norway?

Between February and July, about 24 000 persons from Ukraine sought collective protection in Norway. From the current official statistics from UDI, we know the gender and age of the group of Ukrainians who came during this time period (see details in chapter 1.2). About one third were children under 18 years of age. Over 50% are between 18-55 years old, while about 15% are 56 years or older. The distribution between men and women when only accounting for those over 18 years old is 26% men and 74% women. At the time this report was written (August 2022), very little official information was available about other background characteristics and the family situation of this group.

In this chapter, we present descriptive statistics from the survey about Ukrainian refugees' region of residence in Ukraine before the invasion, their qualifications, language proficiency and their network and family situation both in Norway and Ukraine.

We find that a large majority of Ukrainian refugees speak both Ukrainian and Russian fluently, have higher education and were employed in Ukraine before the invasion started. However, very few speak English fluently. Almost half of the respondents came with their children, and one third with their husband or wife. Still, some 25 % have their partner still in Ukraine, and almost all have other close family members remaining in Ukraine. Concerning a pre-existing network in Norway, approximately one third report having family in Norway; about one third had other acquaintances, and the final third had no social network in Norway prior to arrival.

### 4.1 Region of residence in Ukraine before the war

Figure 9: Region (oblast) of residence in Ukraine before the war

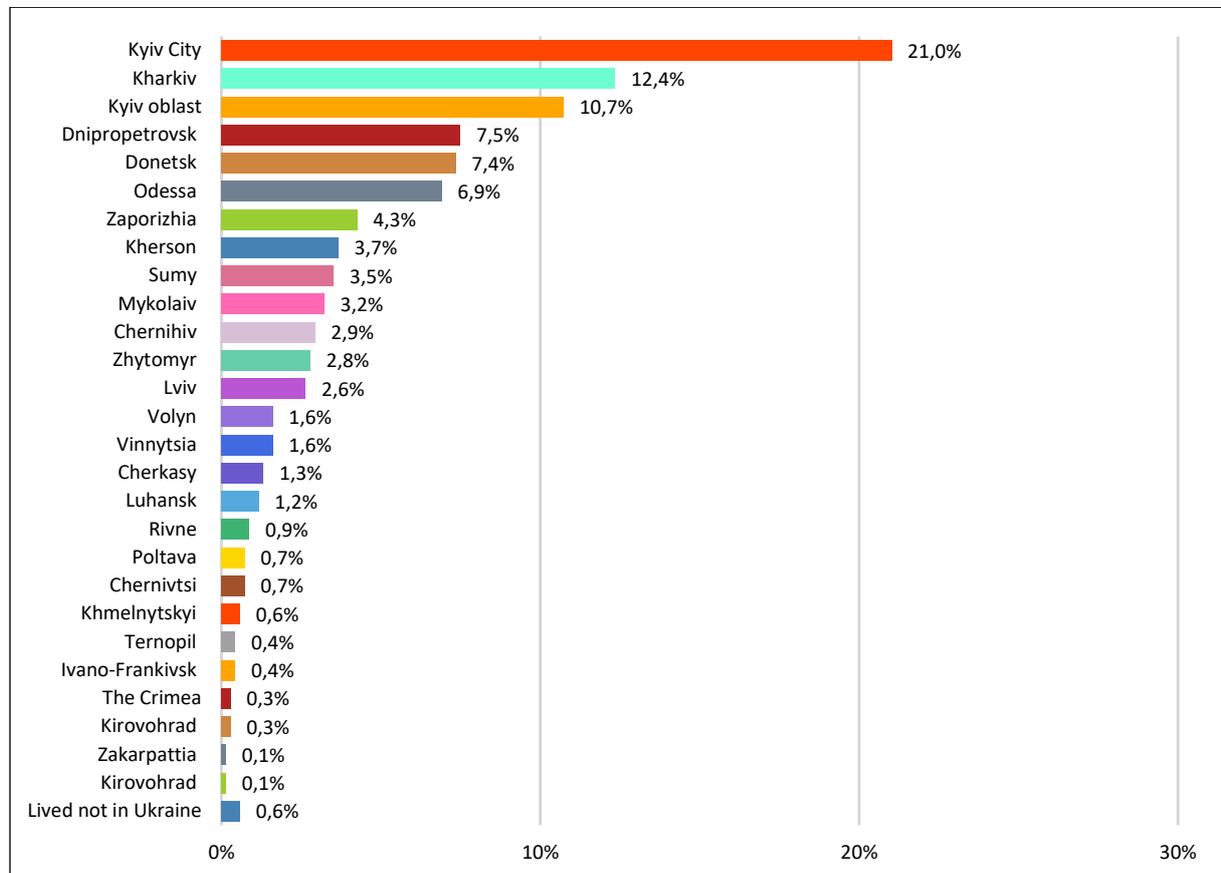
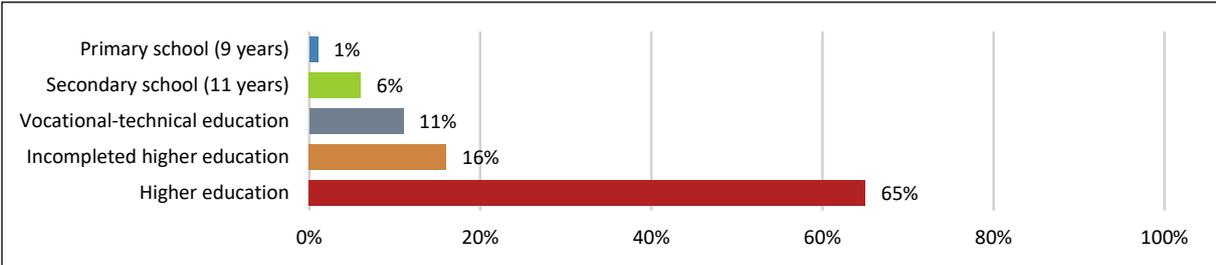


Figure 9 shows in what region of Ukraine respondents were living at the time of the Russian invasion. Only 1% of the respondents were not living in Ukraine at the time of the invasion. About one third were from Kiev city or the Kiev region (*oblast*). Another 30% came from regions that are now occupied, partially occupied, or current war zones, and about half of the respondents were from areas not previously or currently under occupation or attack as of June 2022 (these categories may be subject to change as the war continues).

## 4.2 Previous experience and qualifications

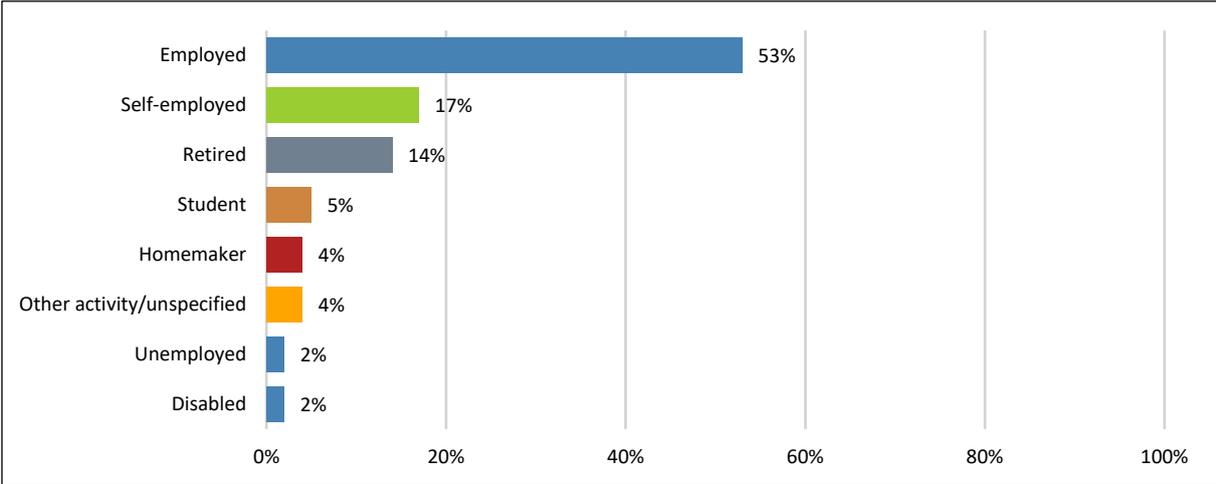
Figure 10: Education level



\*Weighted by gender and age

The educational system in Ukraine operates with nine years of obligatory primary school; completed upper secondary school (high school) means eleven years of formal education (as against thirteen years in Norway). From Figure 10, we see that a large share of Ukrainians refugees have higher education: 65% have completed higher education; a further 16% have incomplete higher education, and about 10% have vocational-technical education. Only 1% of the respondents report having only primary level-schooling. Thus, Ukrainian refugees have higher educational levels at arrival than previous refugee groups in Norway, where the majority have often had primary or other lower levels (Hernes et al. 2022). Crosstabulations of education level with age groups and gender, show that there are few differences in education levels based on these characteristics. The exception is the youngest age group (18–25 years) where fewer naturally have started or completed higher education.

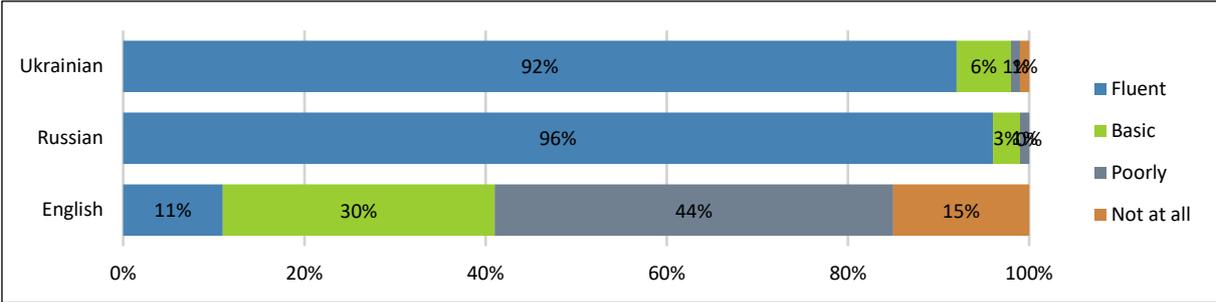
Figure 11: Main activity before arrival in Norway



\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 11 shows the main activity the respondents had before arrival in Norway. A full 70% were either employed (53%) or self-employed (17%) before coming to Norway, and 14% were retirees. About 5% were either students or homemakers, and 2% were disabled or unemployed.

Figure 12: Language proficiency (Ukrainian, Russian, English)



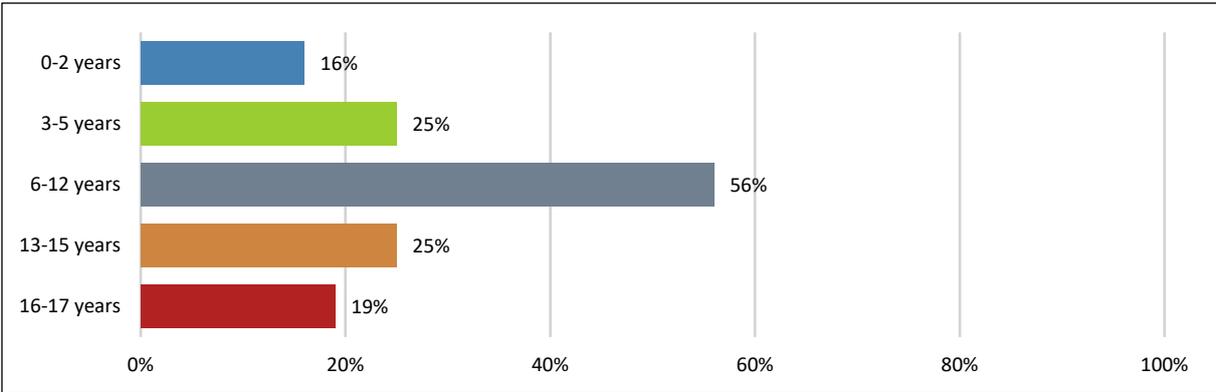
\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 12 shows that most respondents – over 90% – speak both Russian and Ukrainian fluently. Their English levels vary more: only 11% report that they speak English fluently, 30% evaluate their own English skills as basic, and almost 60% report that they speak English poorly or not at all. An additional analysis shows that those over 45 years generally have lower English skills than the younger age groups. Still, among those below 45 years, the share that answers ‘fluently’ is only between 13-19%, so even in this group, very few have high proficiency in English.

### 4.3 Family situation in Norway and Ukraine

The survey shows that 42% of the respondents have children under 18 years, and the vast majority of these parents have one or two children.

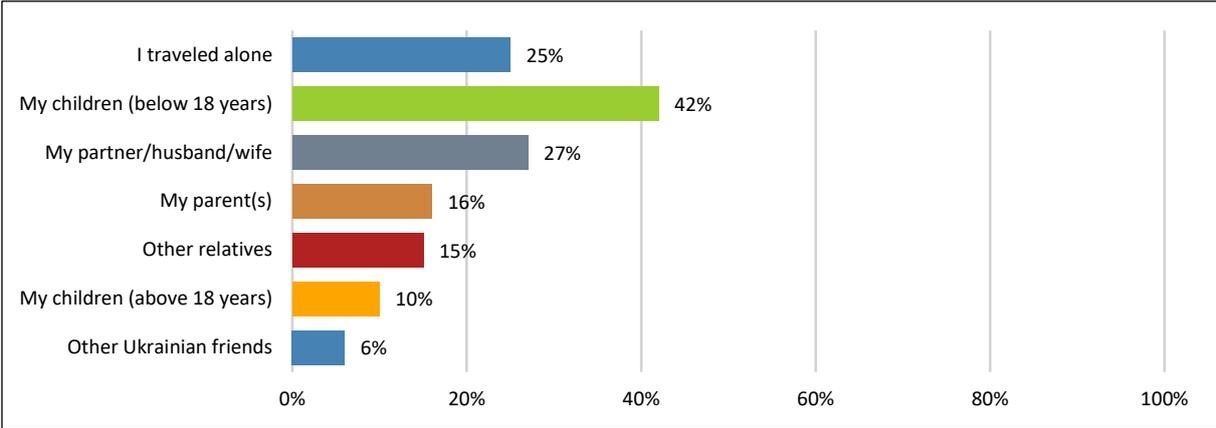
Figure 13: Age of children (multiple options were possible) (N=374)



\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 13 shows in which age groups refugees had children (multiple crosses were possible if they had several children). Of those with children, 40% had children under 6 years of age. The majority had children in the target group for lower elementary school (about 55%). One fourth had children aged 13 to 15, and about 20% have children in the relevant age groups for (upper) secondary school.

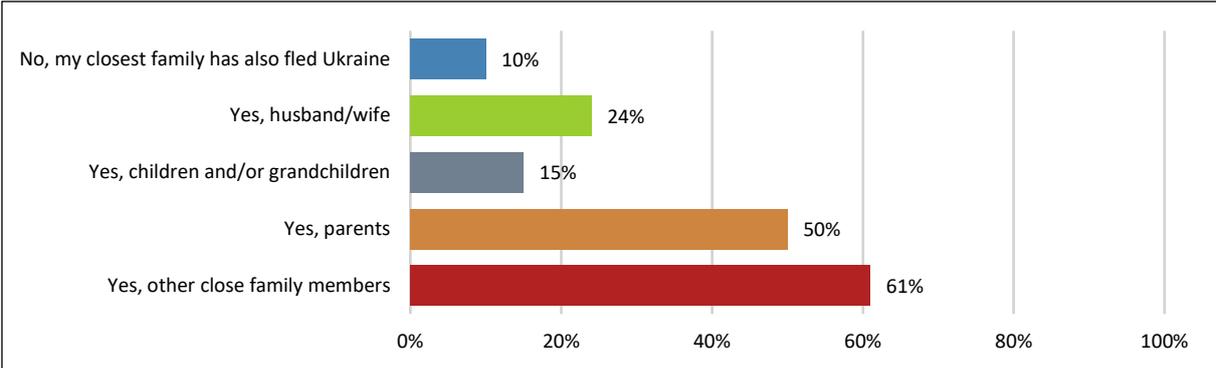
Figure 14: With whom did they travel to Norway? (multiple options were possible)



\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 14 shows that one out of four Ukrainian refugees travelled to Norway alone. Over 40% travelled with children under 18 years and another 10% with children over 18 years; 27% came with their husband or wife. About 15% travelled with parents or other relatives.

Figure 15: Family who stayed behind in Ukraine? (multiple options were possible)

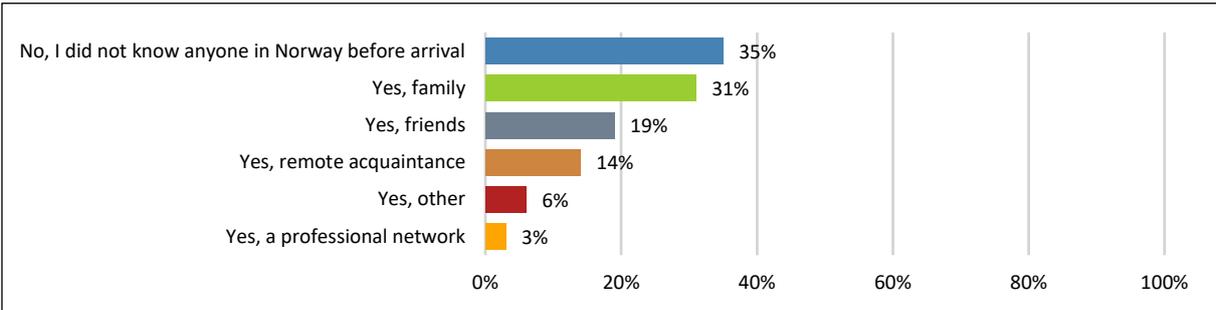


\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 15 shows that almost all respondents have close family members who have remained in Ukraine: only 10% answered 'no' to this question. One out of four has their husband or wife in Ukraine, and about 15% have children or grandchildren. Half of the respondents have parents who remain in Ukraine, and over 60% have other close family members.

#### 4.4 Pre-existing network and reason for coming to Norway

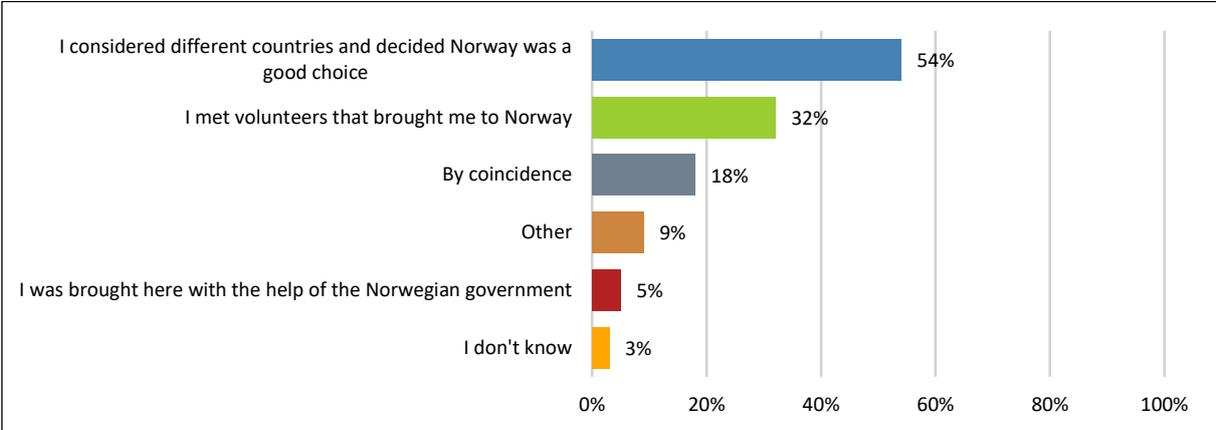
Figure 16: Existing family/friends/network in Norway (multiple options were possible)



\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 16 shows that 65% had some sort of pre-existing network in Norway (family, friends and acquaintances, professional or other). Over 30% had family in Norway and about 20% had friends in Norway. About one third did not have any network in Norway before arrival.

Figure 17: Why did you choose to come to Norway?



\*Weighted by gender and age

For those who answered that they did not have any family or other networks in Norway (N= 251) in the previous question (see Figure 16), we followed up by asking why they had chosen to come to Norway. Figure 17 shows that over half answered that they had considered several countries and decided that Norway was a good choice. About one third were brought here by volunteers. Another 18% say they came here ‘by chance’; and 5% that they were brought here by the Norwegian government.

### 4.5 Ukrainians as a ‘new’ group of refugees

For most Ukrainians who arrived after February 2022, their situation as refugees was something utterly new and unexpected<sup>26</sup>. In May/June 2022, when most of the empirical material for this study was gathered, they had lived with these abrupt changes in circumstances for only a short time. In our focus group interviews with frontliners, several emphasized that Ukrainians in this regard differed significantly from other groups seeking protection in Norway. Refugees from other groups have often spent years in transit before arriving in Norway and may have received information from people from their home country who have already applied for asylum and are familiar with the procedures. Ukrainians, however, had not been in this situation for long and were not aware of the bureaucratic processes that lay ahead: registration, reception, settlement procedure, etc.

Interviews with the ‘frontline workers’ provided examples of how Ukrainians did not accept traditional elements in the ‘normal’ reception and settlement process for asylum-seekers (to which they were subject to in the first weeks). For example, during the registration procedure, some Ukrainians were reluctant to hand in their phones, which is common practice in the regular asylum process. This reluctance was also the case with passports; many Ukrainians expressed concern at not getting their passports back immediately after registration. Moreover, Ukrainians have been in the unique position of being able to choose in which European country they want to seek protection, without the risk of ‘Dublin returns’: thus, in many cases their choice of Norway was a deliberate one. Some Ukrainian indicated that they had expected to be able to select freely

<sup>26</sup> Although the war in the eastern Donbas region had dragged on since 2014, Ukrainians had generally not been entitled to protection abroad, as other parts of Ukraine were deemed safe. However, IDPs in Ukraine numbered almost one million even before the war started ([Ukraine | IDMC \(internal-displacement.org\)](https://www.internal-displacement.org/))

where to stay in Norway (both related to initial stays at reception centres and later settlement in a municipality): however, this is contrary to Norway's standard settlement policy of dispersal. Some Ukrainians have been particularly sceptical to being sent to northernmost parts of Norway, and there have been incidents when people refused to board planes to the far north. They expected to have a say in where in Norway they would stay.

Several Ukrainian interviewees also noted that they struggled with the sudden new 'identity' as a refugee. Some said explicitly that they did not identify themselves as refugees and indicated various reasons why. Some were staying with family and friends in Norway: and being in a familiar social setting made it easier not to feel like a refugee. One interview mentioned that s/he did not feel like a refugee because the kind attitudes of the host community towards Ukrainians had made her/him feel welcome. Others said that they deliberately avoided identifying as refugees because that would have made their war trauma deeper. One interviewee explained that s/he had felt like a refugee when living in a bomb shelter in the Kharkiv region, without access to fresh water and food, but not so much in Norway.

Other interviewees, however, did say that they identified as refugees, even describing this as 'the most painful identity I have ever had'. There was not only the fact that they had felt forced to leave their home country: other reasons included uncertain prospects for the future, the lack of autonomy and independence to do what they wanted, and not being able to take care of themselves (e.g., having to eat the food provided in the reception centres, or being dependent on their family members).

## 5 Evaluation of overall reception, actors and services

After five years of de-scaling Norway's asylum and integration capacities due to the relatively low numbers of asylum-seekers arriving after the large influx in 2015/16, the sudden, high increase of Ukrainian refugees from February 2022 created significant pressures on the national and local actors concerned. But we ask: what are the Ukrainian refugees' overall experiences with their reception in Norway? In this chapter, we first examine the Ukrainians' overall assessment of their reception in Norway, asking whether assessments differ among subgroups (e.g., between age-groups, those staying privately or in reception centres, those with/without networks). We also examine and compare their evaluations of various national, local and non-governmental actors, and various types of services.

We find that Ukrainian refugees in Norway express considerable gratitude towards and – overall - gave very positive assessments how the Norwegian authorities and the Norwegian people have received and welcomed them. Views are also generally positive – although somewhat lower – concerning how the Norwegian reception system has functioned. We also find that there are very few substantial differences among subgroups of Ukrainian refugees in their overall assessment of their initial phase in Norway. Generally, Ukrainian refugees report positive experiences with all the national public actors, and other local and non-governmental actors that they have been in contact with. There are also positive views on various services and procedures, although their assessments of different services and procedures are more variable.

### 5.1 Ukrainians are overall very satisfied with their reception in Norway

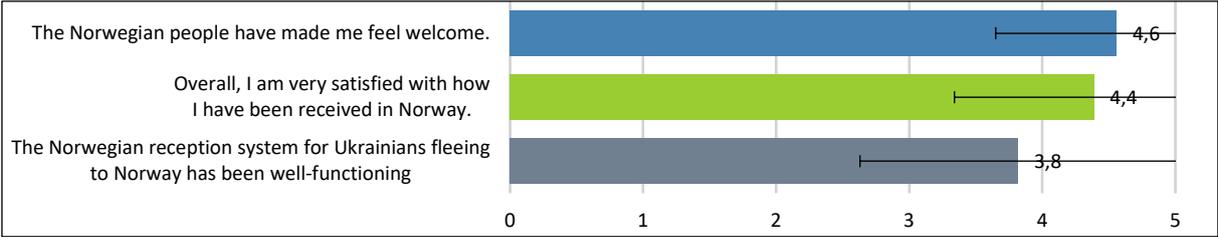
There are so many positive things about the country itself. Let me mention the first meeting with the police - the friendliest officers that I have met in my life! It is safe here, it is super-tidy, it is safe to cross the road in any part of the city, public transport is always on time. Also, a great advantage is that public transport is free for Ukrainians. Another positive aspect is activity cards.<sup>27</sup> And in general, I feel that Norway gives strong support to my country: people are helpful, friendly, and attentive. Also, free SIM cards for Ukrainians. Moreover, we Ukrainians get notified about summer fireworks and drumming, sirens and so on. We appreciate your care! Thanks a lot!!!!!! (Survey respondent).

As indicated in this quotation, Ukrainians in Norway express considerable gratitude towards the Norwegian authorities and the Norwegian people. Almost all interviewees explicitly stated their appreciation for the help they have received. This overall conclusion was also supported by the results of the survey.

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<sup>27</sup> During interviews, Ukrainians mentioned various types of gift cards provided by volunteers and locals for participation in leisure-time activities (for instance, free access to swimming pools, badminton and yoga classes).

Figure 18: Assessment of overall experience in Norway



\*Scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)  
 \*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 18 shows that respondents’ overall experience of their first phase in Norway has been very positive. On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), respondents gave an average score of about 4.5 out of 5 when evaluating 1) how the Norwegian people have welcomed them and 2) how they have been received in Norway overall. As one interviewee put it: ‘Norway has created all the conditions for us to live comfortably’.

Many interviewees also highlighted how they had been made to feel welcome in Norway: ‘They met us with big hugs. We were amazed at such hospitality. We were foreigners in this country, but they received us as their own citizens’; ‘Norwegian people are so kind and empathetic; they are ready to give help and support anytime’.

Generally, respondents also have fairly positive views of how the Norwegian reception system has functioned, scoring an average of 3.8 out of 5. However, this is lower than the general assessment of their overall reception in Norway; moreover, the standard deviation is slightly larger, implying greater variation in responses: some gave high scores, but others gave lower scores. This finding is supported by the interviews, where evaluations differed as to the various element in the reception system (for more detail, see the respective chapters).

**5.1.1 Few differences in assessments between subgroups**

Were some subgroups of Ukrainian refugees more satisfied than others? We conducted regression analysis to see if assessments varied among subgroups concerning their satisfaction with 1) their overall reception in Norway, 2) the Norwegian people, and 3) the reception system.

Table 4: Regression analysis of Ukrainians' overall evaluation of Norwegian reception

	<b>Overall assessment of reception in Norway</b>	<b>Welcomed by the Norwegian people</b>	<b>Assessment of reception system</b>
<b>Gender</b> (ref: female)	-0.0646 (0.154)	-0.00630 (0.128)	-0.0170 (0.176)
<b>Age</b> (ref: 18–25 years)			
26–35 years	-0.0540 (0.129)	0.115 (0.117)	0.0498 (0.152)
36–45 years	-0.257* (0.143)	-0.143 (0.126)	-0.202 (0.163)
46–55 years	-0.0941 (0.138)	0.112 (0.121)	-0.00441 (0.174)
55–65 years	-0.102 (0.200)	0.248* (0.133)	0.108 (0.220)
_65+ years	0.0337 (0.360)	-0.157 (0.367)	0.194 (0.408)
<b>Children under 18 years of age</b>	0.0922 (0.0938)	0.0753 (0.0799)	0.136 (0.110)
<b>Education</b> (ref: Primary/lower secondary/ up to 11 years)			
University	0.691*** (0.218)	0.591*** (0.217)	0.398* (0.230)
Intermediate/Vocational-technical education	0.678*** (0.242)	0.509** (0.236)	0.562** (0.260)
<b>Low English skills</b>	0.0689 (0.0787)	-0.0308 (0.0659)	0.207** (0.0962)
<b>Arrival</b> (ref: before April 2022)			
In April 2022	0.217*** (0.0835)	0.135* (0.0737)	0.417*** (0.104)
After April 2022	-0.138 (0.145)	-0.0852 (0.126)	0.109 (0.179)
<b>Network</b> (ref “No network”)			
Family/friends	-0.110 (0.104)	0.0645 (0.0881)	-0.0734 (0.120)
Other network	0.0764 (0.104)	0.107 (0.0896)	-0.0832 (0.127)
<b>Accommodation</b> (ref: public)			
Private (AMOT)	-0.0603 (0.0896)	-0.0338 (0.0754)	0.142 (0.103)
Constant	3.891*** (0.277)	3.968*** (0.240)	3.151*** (0.303)
N	659	659	659
r <sup>2</sup>	0.0560	0.0620	0.0546
r <sup>2</sup> a	0.0339	0.0401	0.0325

Table 4 shows no significant differences ( $p < 0.5$ ) between traditional background characteristics such as gender, age-group, and those who arrived with children below 18 years, or not. Persons with higher education are more satisfied than those with lower education levels (between 0.4-0.7 scale units on a scale from 1 to 5). Those who have low or no English skills report being slightly more satisfied than those who have basic English skills or are fluent in English (0.2 scale units on a scale from 1 to 5), however this is only significant when we asked for their evaluation of the Norwegian reception system, and the differences are rather small.

We do, however, find that those who arrived in April report being slightly more satisfied than those who arrives before April (0.2–0.4 scale units on a scale from 1 to 5), so there might have been improvements in the reception of Ukrainians after the first two months. The difference is greatest regarding assessments of the reception system. This finding is supported by the qualitative interviews – with Ukrainian refugees and with the frontline workers and volunteers – where several interviewees noted improvements in governmental actors’ activities and efforts. As one frontline interviewee said during the focus group: “Nowadays all procedures are faster than in the beginning. We see how the governmental actors have improved their capacities.”

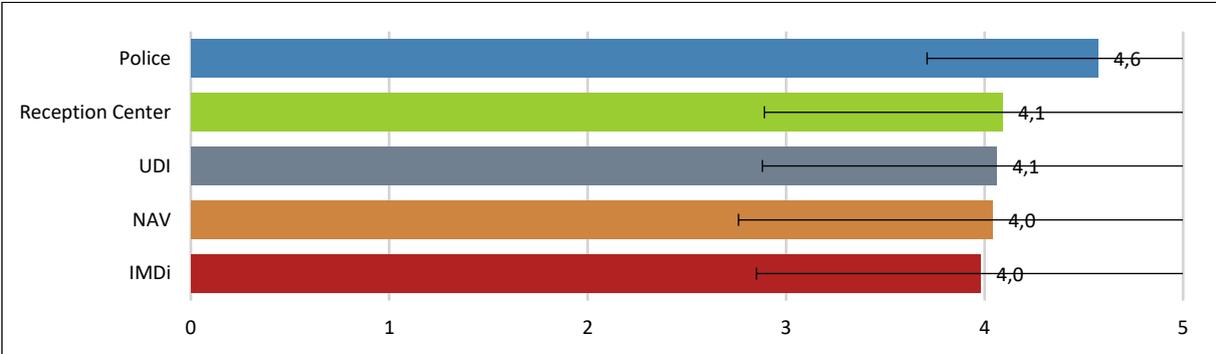
One could hypothesize that those who fled to Norway because they had existing networks here, perhaps particularly those who were able to live with family or other acquaintances, would feel more welcome and be more satisfied with how they have been received in this critical period. However, we do not find any significant difference in the overall assessment between 1) those who had a network in Norway and those who did not, and 2) those who stayed at reception centres and those who had private accommodation.

Overall, we find few significant differences among subgroups, and the differences that are significant are rather small in coefficient size. The explanatory power ( $r^2$ ) of the model is also quite low. Thus, the main finding from the regression analysis is that there are very few substantial differences between subgroups of Ukrainians in their overall assessment of their initial phase in Norway.

## 5.2 Overall positive evaluations of governmental and non-governmental actors

In the survey, we also asked respondents to assess the various governmental and non-governmental actors they may have been in contact with during their initial phase in Norway. Those who responded that they had not been in contact with or had any opinion about these actors are excluded from the estimates.

Figure 19: Assessment of national public actors



\*Scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)  
 \*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 19 shows that, on the whole, respondents report positive experiences with all the public actors involved, with an average score of 4 out of 5 or higher for all actors. The police have a

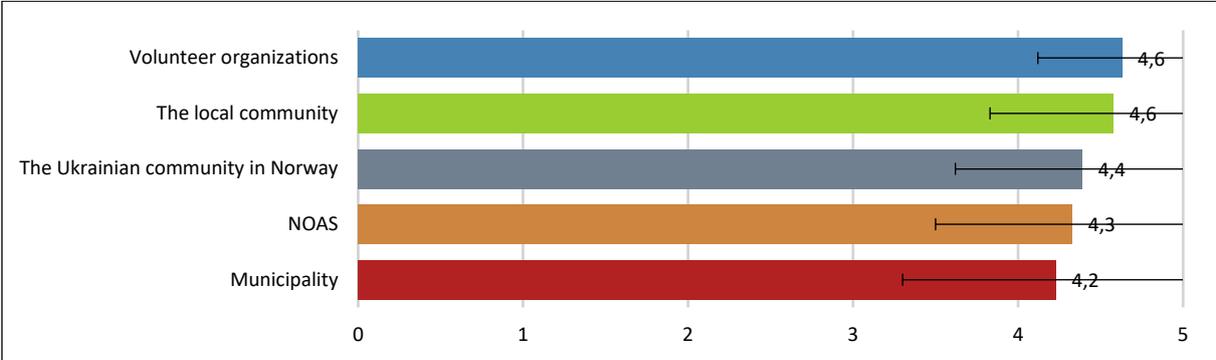
slightly higher score and lower standard deviation than the other actors, but difference are otherwise minimal. Two elements may shed light on the particularly high score for the police. First, several interviewees mentioned explicitly how they had been first met by friendly police officers – for many, this was their first encounter with Norwegian officials. As one interviewee noted:

A lot of positive things, starting from the airport. The policemen and volunteers welcomed us. They helped as much as they could. Norwegians are very kind. They support us, and that is very important.

Second, some interviewees explicitly compared the Ukrainian police with the Norwegian police, using descriptors like ‘unfriendly and strict’ about the Ukrainian police, and ‘friendly and open-minded’ about the Norwegians. Thus, the contrast between their experiences with Ukrainian and Norwegian police officers may have affected their overall assessment of the Norwegian police.

Otherwise, there was little variation in the Ukrainians assessment of other governmental actors – the reception centres, NAV, UDI, and IMDi all had average scores of around 4 out of 5.

Figure 20: Assessment of local and non-governmental actors



\*Scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)  
 \*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 20 shows that overall experiences with various types of local and non-public actors are also decidedly positive, with very minor differences. However, Ukrainians rate local and non-public actors slightly higher than national-level actors.

In the qualitative interviews, many interviewees expressed considerable gratitude towards Ukrainian residents in Norway, volunteers or local activists, stressing their important roles in resolving daily challenges in Norway. As one interviewee explained:

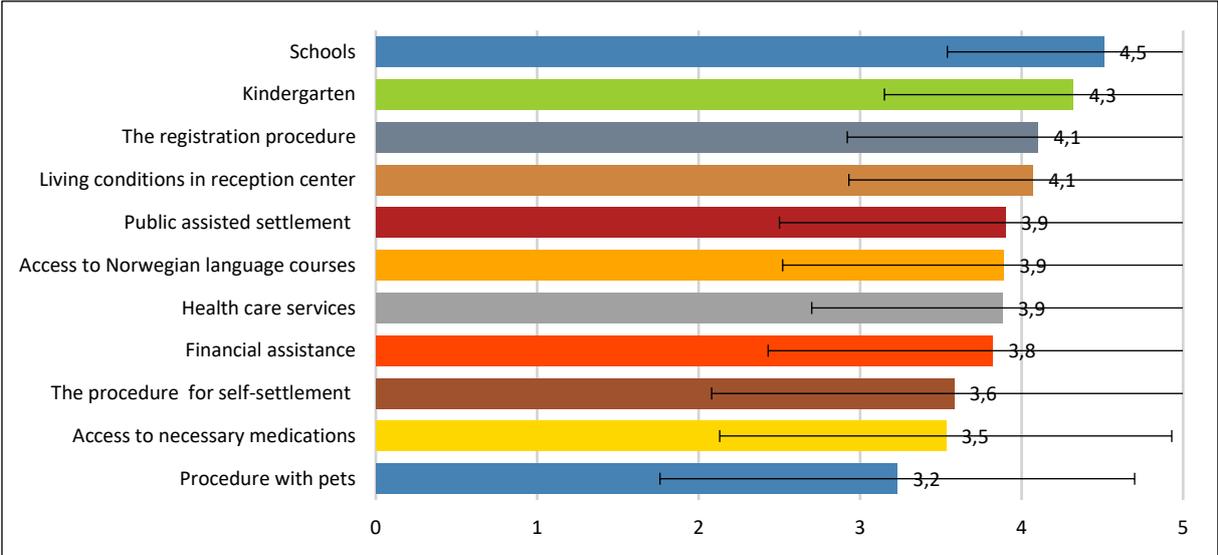
I hadn't expected to be treated so warmly, but everything was at the highest level. Stayed at hotel for 3 weeks. Volunteers came there, we visited museums. They brought us clothes. We were all provided with hygienic products and good second-hand clothing.

We also note that those who had contact with NOAS report positive experiences. This is also apparent in the interviews: ‘I spent more than 24 hours at Råde. Had nice conversations with NOAS. I was recommended by Link to talk to them. There was a man who provided lots of useful information.’

### 5.3 More varied assessments of services and procedures

Further, we asked survey respondents to assess the services and procedure that they may have been in contact with after their arrival in Norway.

Figure 21: Assessment of services or procedures



\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 21 shows that most services and procedures receive high scores. Schools and kindergartens top the list, followed by the registration procedure and living conditions in reception centres, all with scores above 4 out of 5.

Just below (with scores just below 4 out of 5) follow assessments of public assistant settlement, access to Norwegian language courses, health-care services and financial assistance. Refugees were less satisfied with the procedure for self-settlement, access to medicines and lastly, procedures concerning pets, which got the lowest scores. Further, those services and procedures that score below 4 also have higher standard deviations – indicating greater variation in answers on these items.

## 6 Evaluation of information provided by the public authorities

In February 2022, UDI and IMDi went into emergency mode in order to tackle the sudden influx of Ukrainian refugees arriving in Norway. As shown in chapter 3, legislative changes in the following months created an acute need for continuously updated information – not only to the Ukrainians directly, but also to the many other actors responsible for implementing immigration, settlement and integration policies.

What were UDI's and IMDi's main information strategy and measures towards Ukrainians from February to July? Where have Ukrainians actually sought information about their opportunities in Norway? Which sources of information do they trust? How do they evaluate the information they have received about various services and procedures?

In this chapter, we start by presenting the main information strategy and measures employed by UDI and IMDi in this context<sup>28</sup>. We then present the Ukrainians' overall evaluation of the information received during their first period in Norway, and the main challenges that emerged. After an assessment of the available information channels, we turn to the main sources of information on which the Ukrainian refugees have relied and discuss their active use of the social media for information. This chapter concludes by presenting Ukrainians' evaluation of how well informed they have been regarding specific services.

We find that due to many rapidly implemented policy changes since February 2022, governmental actors struggled to provide continuously updated information to Ukrainians as well as other relevant actors. Thus, Ukrainian refugees in Norway experienced lack of information as a major challenge after their arrival in Norway. They point to difficulties with finding the right information, information being unclear or insufficient, difficulties in navigating among the many webpages and actors for relevant information, and that the language barrier had been a challenge. An additional complicating element was their experience with local practises differing, something which led to confusion and an experience of unequal treatment. However, the overall impression is that information has improved with time, particularly as more information has been provided in Ukrainian and Russian language on public webpages.

### 6.1 UDI's information strategy and measures

UDI has a formal 'Contingency plan for an extraordinary increase in the number of asylum-seekers', last updated 5 January 2022 (UDI 2022). In speaking with the UDI communication representative, we were informed that the document had served as an overall guideline – but, as 'all crises are unique', these formalized procedures and guidelines had been adapted. These adjustments were also necessary since UDI had recently reorganized (in January 2022); and new practices of coordination between communication staff in the specialized communications department and communications employees in the other departments were still under development. One important task has been to coordinate communication efforts across the entire organization. Since 1 March 2022, UDI has had a cross-departmental emergency team (*krisesekretariat*) (in accordance with the Contingency Plan), led by the Department of Governance and Legal Affairs and with representatives from the Departments of Communication,

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<sup>28</sup> Here we focus on the direct and indirect information UDI and IMDi has towards Ukrainians, not UDI and IMDi's internal and overall external information strategy and measures. This assignment has not included an overall evaluation of the communication and information strategy of UDI and IMDi.

Reception and Return, IT and Protection. In the beginning of the crisis, this group had meetings twice a week, but it was down-scaled in June due to lower arrivals.

There have also been regular emergency team meetings at the director level, and specifically for communication employees across departments. The frequency of these meetings has been dynamically adjusted to the urgency of the situation. Many of the information and communication measures directed at Ukrainians have been developed with the respective departments (Department of Reception and Return, Protection, etc.). In the following sections, we describe the processes and information measures that UDI has employed in this period, towards Ukrainians and other relevant actors.

### **6.1.1 Information to Ukrainians at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde**

In November 2020, UDI introduced a new asylum arrival process at Råde, dividing the asylum process into five sequential phases, consisting of process steps with specified time and quality requirements. At the National Arrivals Centre, the process had been designed to take place in a certain order, with different steps performed in different rooms at the centre. Information screens in each room displayed information about which step would be carried out in the respective room and what would happen in the next step.

In February and March, when the arrivals of Ukrainian refugees increased rapidly, UDI found it necessary to make several changes to this arrangement. Certain steps were now to be carried out in other rooms than in the traditional process; sometimes the sequencing of the steps had to be altered, and some steps were removed completely, for practical reasons. Consequently, existing information about the process and the steps entailed became outdated and misleading. The order and location of the different steps also changed several times, which made it challenging to provide clear and correct information about the registration process.

Additionally, a waiting area was set up in a tent outside the main building, where applicants had to wait before being admitted to the centre itself. In the initial phase with very high arrivals, applicants might have to stay in this waiting area for several hours. This waiting area was staffed by personnel from the civil defence services and the Red Cross, who were not necessarily familiar with the asylum process or had the language skills necessary for providing information to the applicants. Recognizing the need to create general information about the procedures at NATIONAL ARRIVALS CENTRE and the various process steps, UDI first translated general information in Ukrainian for information screens in these areas in the beginning of March (later adjusted in April and May). Further, in the end of March, UDI also created information leaflets for the waiting area with updated information about the new registration procedure in Ukrainian. The initial information leaflet was created on the basis of feedback from the various actors stationed at National Arrivals Centre: UDI, PU, Link (operations operator), the Norwegian Health Service and NOAS. UDI found it challenging to provide updated information, because routines and guidelines changed rapidly, so the information quickly became outdated. For example, according to the first information leaflet, applicants had to be tested for corona – but by the time the translated text was ready, this testing requirement had already been abolished. Thus, UDI needed to ensure ongoing updates of the information displayed on the screens, in the leaflets, etc.

UDI also had a guidance team at the National Arrivals Centre in the 'tent area', where persons who were staying at Råde resided. The team's tasks have been multifaceted, both practical (distributing clothing packages/hygiene articles, translation/interpreting, arranging for healthcare and other needs, etc.) and giving information and answering questions (e.g., about general matters in Norway, such as opportunities for work and education, price levels, and rules and the settlement process for cases related to collective protection). From the beginning of April, two to three UDI employees – generally Russian-speaking – were present every day from 09:00-15:00. Since August 2022, they are present only two days a week, as it was assessed that the need for physical presence had become less acute: more information was now available online,

regulations had been more firmly established, routines at the centre had improved for all actors, and the newly arriving refugees were generally less stressed than those who had come in the first months.

### **6.1.2 Information about collective protection**

During the registration process, Ukrainians received information about their rights and duties as asylum-seekers, digitally on a tablet. Initially, the Ukrainian refugees received the same information as other asylum-seekers, but from 6 May, applicants covered by the scheme for collective protection received specific information about the process, rights and obligations involved in collective protection.

Ukrainian refugees also receive information about their rights and obligations when they get the decision letter for collective protection. The letter is written in Norwegian, but from 23 March, the decision letter included an appendix with information about the same rights and obligations in Ukrainian and Russian. There are also a link and QR code to a film that conveys the same information as in the letter.

### **6.1.3 Information about the procedure between registration and granted application**

At the request of the police, UDI prepared a letter with information on the time between registration and application decision. This document briefly described the collective protection scheme, the immigration administration's areas of responsibility, and the procedures concerning the application and processing, ID numbers, accommodation solutions, health rights and opportunities for day-care, school and work, as well as information about what applicants should do if they experience violence, coercion or pressure, and whom to contact for help. This document was distributed to Ukrainian refugees as a hand-out at Råde during registration, and the first version was ready 26 March.

In addition, from March, several information letters have been prepared by the Department of Reception and Return, containing practical information for Ukrainian asylum-seekers living in reception centres (these are also sent to other relevant actors, such as the County Governor). The reception centre providers are then responsible for distributing this information to residents:

- Information for those staying at the NATIONAL ARRIVALS CENTRE, emergency accommodation and asylum reception, including information about the arrival centre, emergency accommodation, the asylum reception, kindergarten and primary school, settlement in a municipality, settlement with public assistance, if one opts to move from emergency accommodation/reception before settlement, agreed self-settlement, healthcare, and collective protection.
- Collective protection for Ukrainians in Norway (information from the website and placed in an information sheet)
- Asylum-seekers may not move between asylum reception centres or between emergency accommodation
- Information about moving from the NATIONAL ARRIVALS CENTRE
- Information prior to the settlement interview
- Information on temporary alternative reception places and application portals
- Information for applicants who must register with the police
- Possibilities for emergency accommodation
- Possibilities for accommodation before registration

Information updated as of May 2022:

- Information to residents about moving, in connection with the termination of emergency reception centres.

- Information about violence/exploitation/human trafficking and where to turn for help
- Information on settlement for Ukrainians who have been granted temporary collective protection.
- Information about 17 May celebrations, and the possible firing of salutes in connection with this national day

#### 6.1.4 Information on UDI's website

On 5 March 2022, UDI created its own webpage with information about the situation related to Ukrainian refugees, with a direct link on UDI's front page ([udi.no](http://udi.no)). This information was initially available only in Norwegian and English, but as of 27 April, it was made available in Russian and Ukrainian as well.

These webpages present information about protection and residency while staying in Norway, as well as information for persons wishing to travel to Norway. Information for the authorities and other social actors is also available.

The text about protection and residency (continuously subject to updates and revision) contains information on:

- Collective protection for persons who have fled Ukraine
  - who can apply
  - rights and obligations for permission
  - how to apply
  - what happens after applying
  - what happens after a response to the application has been received
- Apply to live privately (temporary alternative reception place, AMOT)
  - who can apply
  - how to apply
  - which application form to use
  - how to use the form
  - what happens after applying
- Questions and answers about protection (asylum) and asylum reception in Norway
  - Answers to common questions about protection and asylum reception in Norway (protection in Norway, collective protection, living privately, asylum reception and rights).
- Questions and answers about staying in Norway without seeking protection (asylum)
  - Answers to common questions about staying in Norway without seeking protection (residence permit for family, visits, work and other types of residence permits).
- Information for Russian citizens
  - Processing of applications from Russian citizens, and information about, *inter alia*, returning home after the residence permit or visa expires.
  - Information for those wishing to travel to Norway contains information on:
    - Departure and applications from Ukraine
    - Entry to Norway for Ukrainian citizens
    - Information to unaccompanied minor asylum-seekers from Ukraine
    - Information towards those who are experiencing violence, exploitation or pressure to act against your will.

In addition to direct information aimed at Ukrainians, [udi.no](http://udi.no) also provides information for the authorities, volunteers and other social actors, including:

- Answers to common questions related to helping refugees
- Information from UDI to the municipalities

- Statistics on the situation in Ukraine
- Information to (potential) reception centre providers
- Various types of asylum reception
- Living with an asylum reception centre as neighbour
- Links to relevant information from other public actors

### 6.1.5 Social media

In February 2022, UDI had only one active social media account, on Twitter. However, as Ukrainians were very active users of Facebook, UDI established a new Facebook page, '*UDI: Information to refugees from Ukraine*', and the first post with information was published on 18 May. In our interview with UDI, there had been several considerations concerning the set-up and function of this formal Facebook page to reduce the risk of exposing personal information, and also to reduce the amount of personal information shared with a third party. The solution was to create a page where it was not possible for individuals to write comments where sensitive or personal information might be disclosed.

On this Facebook page, UDI spreads information in Norwegian, Ukrainian and Russian on a range of topics. This generally involves a brief description of the topic in the three languages, with a link to other formal webpages with updated information – UDI's own webpages and those of other relevant governmental actors.

### 6.1.6 Information to reception centres

Normally, the reception centres are tasked with providing their residents with an information programme, intended to 'contribute to enabling the residents to take care of their own life situation, know their rights and obligations, make informed choices, and make them as well prepared as possible for settlement or return'<sup>29</sup>. In response to the rapid increase in arrivals from Ukraine this spring, UDI had to establish emergency reception centres (*akuttinnkvartering*). These emergency reception centres have fewer obligations concerning information work<sup>30</sup>. They are not tasked with providing an overall information programme, but still have certain information obligations:

- distribute information from UDI to the residents, either directly or posted on information boards
- provide the residents with information about:
  - the role, responsibilities and confidentiality of employees
  - practical information about conditions in the accommodation, including house rules, cleaning, laundry, waste management, indoor climate, financial benefits, leisure activities, and safety
  - obtaining immediate help, including police, medical and fire services
  - municipal services such as school and medical services
  - the local environment and services, including transport, shops and similar.

UDI informed us that they regularly sent updates to reception centres about new changes – information created by UDI and from other public actors.

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<sup>29</sup> chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.udi.no/globalassets/global/asylmottak/krav-til-ordinare-plasser-01.05.2019.pdf

<sup>30</sup> chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.udi.no/globalassets/asylmottak2/krav-til-drift-av-akuttinnkvartering\_nye-avtaler-mars.pdf

### **6.1.7 Training of new reception staff at emergency reception centres**

As many new emergency reception centres were established, there was a great need for basic training of new staff. UDI developed digital guidance videos (seven videos of 3–5 minutes each) with information on main features and regulations for reception centres.

- Settlement preparatory work
- Role understanding, ethics and professionalism of reception staff
- Work with children and young people and their families at reception centres
- Services for residents
- Confidentiality
- Cooperation with civil society
- Use of interpreters

UDI has also started a project with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Norway, to provide information and guidance to employees and residents about various forms of exploitation and social control. Due to the large number of children and single mothers/caregivers, the Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat), commissioned by The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) and UDI, has developed a scheme to guide reception staff on child-related topics in all regions. UDI has also requested the regional resource centres on violence, traumatic stress and suicide prevention (RVTS) to develop short videos for reception staff, as basic training in trauma and normal psychosocial reactions. RVTS has also organized a full-day digital seminar on the exploitation of vulnerable people with a special focus on Ukrainian refugees. The films and the seminar are distributed digitally to the receptions and are intended for use in training reception staff.

## **6.2 IMDi's information strategy and measures**

### **6.2.1 Overall information strategy – providing information to local service providers**

In our interview, IMDi highlighted that the main target group for their information activities has not been Ukrainians directly, but the service providers and actors who are in direct contact with Ukrainians: municipalities, reception centres, volunteer organizations, private businesses and private helpers. This approach is in line with IMDi's organizational purpose, which is not direct service provision to end-users (like refugee and other immigrants), but indirectly through competence building for public, volunteer and private service providers.

Based on lessons from communication and information work during covid-19, shortly after the outbreak of the war in February, IMDi established a communication crisis management team responsible for coordinating information measures. This 'web editor team' had representatives from various IMDi divisions and was tasked with updating and maintaining the IMDi webpage with information about refugees from Ukraine. However, this webpage is intended, not for direct communication with the end-users (refugees and immigrants), but to provide information to various types of public service providers and private and volunteers actors.

### **6.2.2 Information to municipalities and other relevant actors**

In the initial period after the Russian invasion in February, IMDi received many calls and inquiries for various types of information related to the influx of Ukrainians. Municipalities, volunteer organizations, businesses and private helpers eager to help – all flooded IMDi with questions. Since many of the questions revolved around the same topics, IMDi quickly decided to use the insights gained from these inquiries to develop information on their webpage and used a format of 'Questions and Answers'. They also targeted information to various groups of actors. Thus, at the time when this report was finalized, at IMDi.no, there was specific information directed at: 1)

municipalities, 2) volunteer organizations and private persons, 3) Ukrainian refugees, 4) reception centre providers, and 5) employers.

The information to municipalities includes the following topics (as of June 2022): 1) settlement of Ukrainian refugees, 2) work, training and introduction programme, 3) interpreting, 4) grant schemes, and 5) information to municipalities which have not settled refugees in recent years. The information for private individuals and organizations concerns how to help Ukrainian refugees, as well as information about grants for integration work to voluntary organizations. The information targeting staff at reception centres and emergency reception centres concerns settlement preparatory work, and/or the settlement interview (*bosettingssamtalen*). Lastly, there is information for employers about how to recruit refugees, and integration measure called 'flexible fast-track'.

In addition to the webpages, IMDi have conducted several webinars directed at relevant municipalities and volunteer organizations, later available at IMDi's webpage. They also use their weekly newsletters, an important means of spreading information to relevant actors.

A major challenge has been the huge increase in the number of refugees who do not stay at reception centres during the registration and application process. Although the Norwegian settlement model has not undergone any formal legislative changes during this period, the practice has changed drastically, as many have been settled through self-settlement or through the AMOT system. Thus, also municipalities experienced with settlement had questions about how to proceed, not to mention the many municipalities that had not settled refugees in recent years. Suddenly, there were many alternative routes to formal settlement, all involving different procedures for registration and with different actors. To address this challenge, IMDi developed illustrative process maps for the various pathways to formal settlement – five in total – published on 17 June<sup>31</sup>. These were prepared in Norwegian, with the municipalities and other involved actors as the main target group.

### **6.2.3 Information directed at Ukrainians at IMDi.no**

As mentioned, the main information strategy for IMDi has been to provide information to local actors who are in direct contact with Ukrainians. However, their webpage has included some information directed at the Ukrainians themselves. During our interview with IMDi, we were informed of a technical limitation in their web platform, which did not allow identical web pages to be created in different languages (e.g., where one switches language by pressing different flags). Thus, information provided in other languages than Norwegian had to be created separately.

On the front page at IMDi.no, there is a heading (in Norwegian and English): 'Information for refugees from Ukraine'. IMDi does not have a special website in Ukrainian or Russian, but they have a page in English with information for Ukrainian refugees with questions and answers about the following topics:

- Settlement
- Children's right to education
- Language training
- Introduction programme
- Primary and secondary education for adults
- Employment

This page also provides information from IMDi that is translated into Ukrainian and Russian about the following topics:

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.imdi.no/planlegging-og-bosetting/slik-bosettes-flyktninger/visuell-framstilling-av-bosettingsprosessene/>

- Information about the Introduction programme and language instruction - For persons with temporary collective protection
- Information about Norwegian society
- Conversing via an interpreter
- Practising your Norwegian language skills

In addition, the page provides links to information in Ukrainian and/or Russian from other public actors on relevant topics:

- Information on arrival – applying for collective protection as a Ukrainian national
- Information about rights and obligations related to employment
- Adults preparing for education and employment
- Information about education
- Higher education in Norway
- Pets from Ukraine
- Healthcare for asylum- 'seekers and refugees in Norway
- Subjected to violence or abuse?

Although it does not provide many services that place them in direct contact with the refugees, IMDi does have responsibility for settling those who initially lived privately during the registration process and were not registered as AMOT, but later wished to be settled in a municipality with public assistance. In such cases, the refugees themselves must contact IMDi directly. Before February 2022, there were few such case, and they were handled individually: the refugee filled in a form that was sent to IMDi by post. With the high increase in persons living privately, IMDi made the form digital (on 19 April), and later translated it into Ukrainian and Russian.

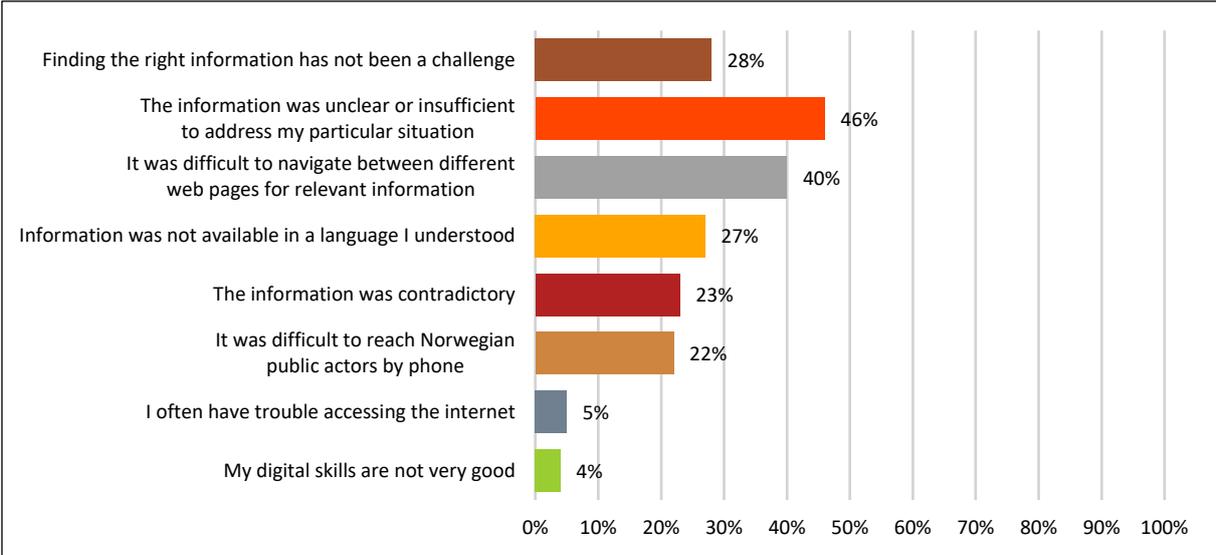
#### **6.2.4 Social media**

IMDi had an active Facebook account as of February 2022. The account is in Norwegian, and is normally used to publish information on research, seminars/webinars, new legislation and regulations, etc., mainly directed at persons working with diversity and integration. Since February 2022, IMDi has used this page to post new information about legislative changes such as the introduction program, information about grants, and information campaigns from other relevant public actors.

### **6.3 Over 70 % experienced information challenges**

What then is the Ukrainian refugees' overall evaluation of the information received during their first period in Norway, and the main information challenges they have faced?

Figure 22: Main challenges for finding information (multiple options possible)



\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 22 shows that only 28% say that it was *not* difficult to find the right information, which confirms that the ‘information gap’ has been one of the most widespread challenges for Ukrainians fleeing to Norway. Respondents mention unclear or insufficient information, and difficulties in navigating between different webpages for relevant information. One third mention the language barrier, and about one fourth of our respondents found information to be contradictory, and that it was difficult to reach public actors by phone <sup>32</sup>.

## 6.4 Main information challenges

### 6.4.1 Initial information vacuum with rapid policy changes

In the first weeks and months after the Russian invasion, several policy changes were rapidly implemented concerning the asylum, reception and settlement of Ukrainian refugees in Norway. As described in chapter 3, governmental actors struggled to provide continuously updated information to Ukrainians and public actors. In this period, many experienced what they referred to as an ‘information vacuum’. However, the overall impression is that information has improved with time, particularly as more information was translated into Ukrainian and Russian on public webpages.

It is indeed challenging to providing continuously updated information in multiple languages during a crisis where policies change rapidly, and it is natural that some processes took time. However, there are other contextual factors involved in the information gap that Ukrainians experienced. The interviews revealed the main information challenges for Ukrainians: navigating multiple information sources and governmental actors, different regional or local practices, media and private helpers, and the type and format of the information available.

<sup>32</sup> To explore if there were any differences between sub-groups concerning how they evaluate if it had been a challenge to find the right information, we conducted a regression analysis with the statement «Finding the right information has not been a challenge» (Yes/No), and the same background variables as in chapter 5.1.1 (gender, age groups, English skills, education level, network, month of arrival to Norway, accommodation, children). The regression analysis finds no significant differences between different subgroups, except for one variable: A slightly higher share of those with lower education levels than university levels answered that it had *not* been a challenge to find the right information.

#### **6.4.2 Navigating multiple information sources and governmental actors**

As described in chapter 3 the field of immigration and integration involves a multitude of different governmental actors – nationally, regionally and locally – in addition to non-governmental actors. Our interviews with Ukrainians show that many of them have found it difficult to navigate between different actors, and to understand which actor is responsible for which processes and services. The focus group interviews with frontline workers and volunteers also revealed that the many legislative changes enacted during spring 2022, also made it difficult for public actors to stay updated about new rules and practices. For example, initially the police and the UDI at Råde did not know much about the procedures that followed *after* registration and could not help the asylum-seekers on this point.

Our interviews with Ukrainians revealed several instances where people had been sent from one public actor to another in their search of answers. There were examples of people contacting UDI, which referred them to IMDi, which referred them to the municipality – which then referred to the police. One recurrent situation concerned confusion about where/how Ukrainians could get their passports back, after the registration procedure. Many thought that UDI had their passports – in fact, they were with the police. Further, some Ukrainians experienced that when they contacted the police, it was the wrong police district – so they were referred back to UDI. Moreover, police districts and municipalities differed in their practices: this created additional confusion as Ukrainians in Norway often share and compare information in social media channels (see also section 6.5).

Overall, Ukrainians generally noted the need for more coherent information about the overall process and its various steps, preferably available on one webpage. As one interviewee explained:

I understand that the process is long – but it would have been very helpful to have a webpage – even in Norwegian language – describing in detail all the different stages of the process that you have to go through. What are we supposed to do? We lack a full understanding of which step follows another one. There are so many different sites with information, and when you try to put this information together it does not always make sense. There should be a paper/booklet – in any language – which explained: the first step is like this, the second step is like this, etc. And it would be best if there could be some indication of how long the various stages could take. The uncertainty – that's the big problem – not knowing what will happen tomorrow. When there is a plan, things are easier, you can understand the aim and you are moving towards that aim. When there is no plan, it is very difficult to understand what to do next. I think having a clear plan would have helped a lot of people.

#### **6.4.3 Misinformation and expectation management**

The lack of coherent information led to many rumours and misunderstandings that affected not only the refugees but also the work of governmental and local actors involved. According to some frontline workers, individual stories in the media sometimes contributed to spreading inaccurate information to family, friends or others who tried to help the Ukrainian refugees. For example, some thought that 'collective protection' meant the Ukrainians would be ready for settlement within few days. Also, other private helpers did not want to take the refugees to Råde to register because of negative media reports about conditions there.

One main observation is how inaccurate (or lacking) information led to unrealistic expectations, which again influenced the Ukrainians' experiences of the procedures and services they encountered. In the interviews and the observation at National Arrivals Centre at Råde, there were several examples of how lack of information – or misinformation – worsened the experience

of the refugees. Several complained that there was no or little information about the procedures they were about to go through, and what would happen at different stages and locations. As one interviewee put it: 'At Råde, no information about the procedure – just one more room, then another room....'

There were also several examples of refugees who were given unrealistic estimates concerning how long the procedure would take. For example, it was indicated that the whole registration process at Råde would take about 3-4 hours, but it took substantially longer. Some interviewees noted that they understood that such processes could be lengthy, particularly in the initial period with high pressure on capacities: however, they added, the mismatch between the time estimate they were given, and the actual time involved created unnecessary frustration.

#### **6.4.4 The informational format**

As shown in Figure 22, only 28% reported having had no difficulties in obtaining necessary information, whereas almost half found the information to be unclear or inadequate. Many frontline workers experienced that the refugees had read the information on formal webpages, but still had questions regarding their own situation. Similarly, in our interviews with Ukrainians, we found that people experience that their own situation often did not fit the general descriptions on the webpages. Some complained: 'The UDI page does not give any details - just some common phrases'. Other said that even though they got information about their rights, it was unclear to them how to *use* these rights.

Similarly, several interviewees stated that they would have preferred to talk to a person, instead of searching for information online – if there had been such an option. They explained that in Ukraine, they are more accustomed to being able to talk to public officials directly to get their questions answered. As one interviewee explained:

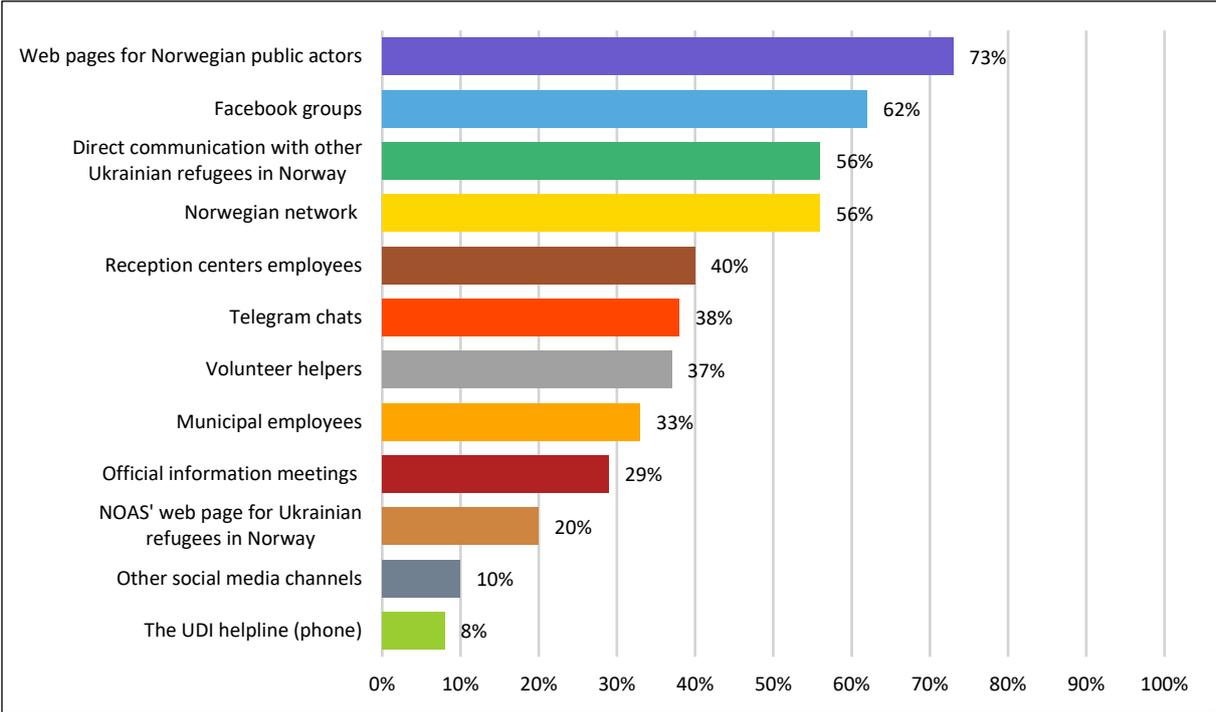
There is a lack of information about settlement. There is an employee [at the reception centre] who communicates with IMDi. But there is no live communication with IMDi, this employee asks questions and enters information into a register.

However, some interviewees say they were quite satisfied with the information provided on the official webpages of UDI and IMDi: 'We didn't have information meetings here: you had to find out everything yourself. I got information – quite detailed information – on the official websites of UDI and IMDi.'

## **6.5 Webpages, social media and social networks as essential sources**

In general, Ukrainians are very active users of social media, and this also applies to their communication and information-seeking practices in Norway. Both our interviews and the survey show that Ukrainians have actively used social media to share their own experiences and to find answers to questions regarding their stay in Norway.

Figure 23: Usage of different sources for information



\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 23 shows various sources Ukrainians have consulted to find information. About two-thirds report having used the webpages of Norwegian public actors. Facebook groups are the second most used sources of information, closely followed by direct communication with other Ukrainians in Norway and the Ukrainians’ Norwegian network. Thus, Facebook groups and the Ukrainians social network ‘compete’ with official Norway as sources of information. Reception centre staff and volunteers have also been important providers of information. Further, 20% of the respondents have used the NOAS webpage for information, and 8% the UDI helpline.

Although the main sources of information have been various public webpages, as described above, several Ukrainians found that these failed to answer questions pertaining to their specific situation. Then they often turned to social media.

Ukrainian refugees actively use Facebook groups, such as ‘*Ukrainske flyktninger til Norge – info / Біженці з України в Норвегії*’, ‘*Ukrainians in Norway (Українці у Норвегії)*’, ‘*Допомога біженцям у Бергені / Hjelp til ukrainske flyktninger i Bergen*’, and ‘*Help Ukrainian refugees*’. One interviewee described how these Facebook groups provide opportunities for exchanging information:

People encounter the same problems. We talk to each other because what is written [on formal web pages] is not always what is happening. So, we exchange information in Facebook groups via personal communication with other Ukrainians there.

Refugees visit these groups for various purposes: to clarify information that is difficult to understand; to get advice on how to solve different problems; to ask for various kinds of assistance. However, despite the widespread use of social media, our interviewees saw Facebook groups as less reliable sources of information. As one put it, ‘Everyone says different things’.

Moreover, Ukrainians are accustomed to using communication apps – Viber, WhatsApp, and Telegram – also in Norway. Many Ukrainians had a group chat for all residents staying at a

reception centre, where important information was shared. Our interviewees described such information channels as the most important and efficient way of staying informed at the reception centres.

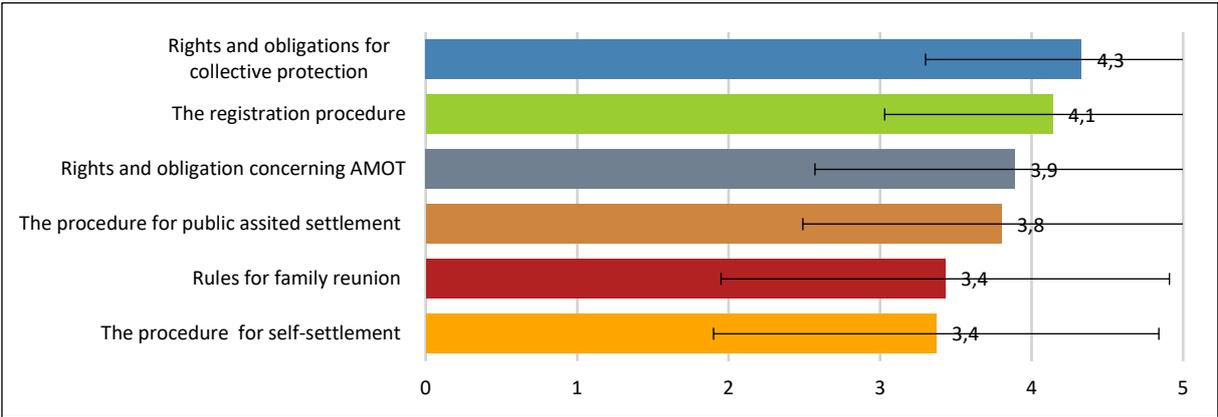
However, it should also be noted that many elderly Ukrainians are not so experienced in using social media or apps for communication and information. In the survey, we see that persons above 55 years have lower shares that use webpages, Facebook and Telegram compared to the younger age groups. One elderly interviewee complained that s/he did not have the Viber and Telegram apps on his/her cell phone, which meant being left out of the information stream at the reception centre and missing important announcements.

## 6.6 Varying assessments of information about specific services

The introduction programme has not started as far as I know. It is a bit difficult with information – it comes in bits and pieces. So, things are not that clear. But as far as I have understood, the programme has not yet started.

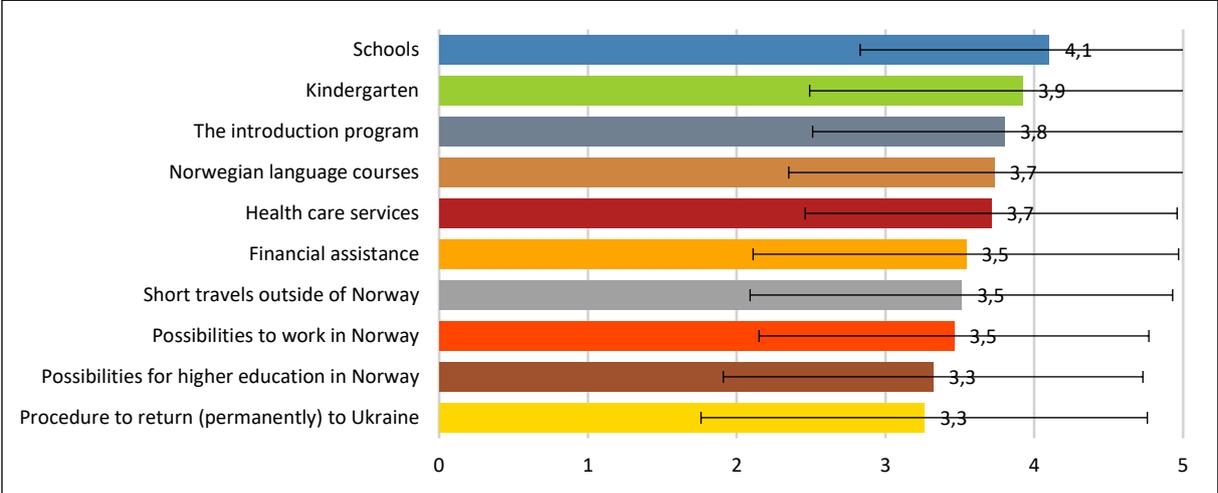
In the survey, respondents were asked if they agreed with the statement that they had received sufficient information about rules and rights concerning the various procedures or services encountered in Norway.

Figure 24: Evaluation of the information on various services (1)



\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 25: Evaluation of the information on various services (2)



\*Weighted by gender and age

As shown in Figure 24 and Figure 25, Ukrainians generally agree that they have received sufficient information about their rights and obligations concerning collective protection, the registration procedure, schools and kindergartens. All these categories are services that most respondents already have experienced (if relevant). For example, when Ukrainians receive their collective protection, UDI sends information letters with details about collective protection and their rights. Our overall impression from the interviews was that Ukrainians are aware of their general rights related to the status of collective protection.

However, Ukrainians are less satisfied with the information regarding services or procedures that they encounter *after* collective protection has been granted, such as the possibility to make short-term visits to Ukraine, possibilities for higher education and work in Norway, and the procedure for return to Ukraine. Even in cases where people know about their rights (e.g., the right to work), there are often misunderstanding or uncertainties about how to *realize* those rights, as mentioned in the interviews:

- **Right to work:** Some interviewees expected to receive additional permission or documents confirming their right to work in Norway; they did not understand that this right comes automatically with collective protection status.
- **Financial support to return to Ukraine:** Some had questions about financial support for travel expenses if/when they decide to go back to Ukraine.
- **Temporary visits to Ukraine:** Several interviewees wanted to pay a temporary visit to Ukraine soon (if they considered it safe), in order to visit their spouse, other relatives and/or to collect items from their homes (documents, other valuables, etc.). They were, however, unsure about their rights and procedures for such travels: Whom should they inform? How long could they stay in Ukraine without losing their rights in Norway? What would happen to their accommodation in Norway during this period? Would they still get financial support? Are there any prohibitions in this regard?

## 7 Registration for collective protection

After arrival in Norway, Ukrainians seeking protection had to file applications for asylum. Since November 2020, all registration of asylum applications has followed a unified procedure at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde (see closer description in chapter 6.1.1).<sup>33</sup> The process at Råde was divided into five subsequent phases, which took place in a given order and in different rooms at the centre.

From the end of February 2022, when the sudden influx of Ukrainians started, the National Arrivals Centre at Råde was put under pressure. While in previous years the centre had been set up for receiving up to 30 applicants per day, during winter/spring 2022, the daily arrivals at the centre sometimes exceeded 200. According to UDI, it became necessary to change how and where at Råde the various steps in the procedure were carried out in order to adjust to the new circumstances. The previous procedure – and information about the process – had become outdated and misleading.

In this chapter, we ask: What did the process at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde entail for the Ukrainians, and how did they experience it? (here we discuss only the *registration procedure* at Råde; in 8.2, we discuss Råde as a place of temporary accommodation).

We begin with an overview of the actors and facilities at Råde, then describe the process, drawing on our two observations there in May and June. Further we present Ukrainians' experiences at Råde, in particular, the confiscation of passports from persons arriving soon after the Russian invasion. As the government opened up for registration at other police districts from March onward, we also present Ukrainians' experiences with registration at these police stations.

We find that the fact that the actual registration procedure was 'still in the making' is clearly reflected in our interview material and observations. The Ukrainian refugees noted two main challenges with the registration process at Råde. First, there were long hours of waiting, which often differed from the time estimate they had been given at the beginning of the process. Second, there was frustration about the lack of information about the various steps in the process at Råde. From 12 March, it became possible to register in other police districts in Norway. Generally, Ukrainian who registered in other places than Råde were very satisfied and described the registration there as unproblematic.

### 7.1 Actors and facilities

The National Arrivals Centre at Råde was established in 2015 as a reception centre, during a period of high asylum arrivals. In 2017, the Norwegian parliament decided that the centre should be further developed. Through the PUMA-process – a cooperation between UDI and PU which was implemented in November 2020 – it was decided that most asylum seekers should undergo the whole application process at Råde, where applicants would also undergo the asylum interview with UDI. The aim has been that, under normal conditions, 70% of the asylum-seekers will complete the whole asylum application procedure (registration, asylum interview, etc.) and get a decision in the course of 21 days. Råde is open 24/7 and registrations are made 24 hours a day, meaning that with high influxes, some refugees will experience being brought to Råde and registered during the night.

These following actors were represented at Råde:

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<sup>33</sup> See more information on the webpage of the Norwegian police: <https://www.politiet.no/om/organisasjonen/sarorganene/politiets-utlendingsenhet/ankomstfasen-asylsokeres-mote-med-politiet/#undefined>

- The police: responsible for registering asylum applications.
- UDI
- LINK – a private company, with responsibility for all the practical aspects of running Råde – food, sleeping facilities etc.
- NOAS are present in the indoor tent space
- Medical area for scanning for tuberculosis (under the Østfold County Hospital)
- Medical aid (under the municipal health services)
- *Politiets sikkerhetstjeneste* / the Police Security Service (PST)
- Cleaning staff
- Janitor services
- Securitas
- Representatives of the Red Cross and Save the Children are often present

Råde is located about one hour outside of Oslo. There is a McDonald's next door to the centre and a Kiwi grocery store nearby. It is possible to get there by train or regular bus services, but people also arrive by car or with buses from Oslo specially organized for transporting asylum-seekers.

At National Arrivals Centre at Råde, which was once a large grocery store, there is a big fence surrounding the building, with a security guard at the main gate. The barracks outside the main building were set up during the corona pandemic to isolate persons who had covid. These barracks are used now for asylum-seekers with special needs, those who are ill, or have pets. On the second floor, the UDI and the police have offices and spaces that are used for conducting asylum interviews. There is also a canteen for employees.

The largest space inside the building is a room with indoor tents where asylum-seekers can sleep ('teltsalen'). There is an adjacent canteen and a medical centre where staff attend to medical needs and take X-rays of applicants to check for tuberculosis. NOAS has an office, and LINK has a reception area. There are ping pong tables in one corner of this large room, and a cafeteria in another corner. In front of the building there is an outdoor area with playground facilities and a tent for exercise. During our observation, we experienced the atmosphere as pleasant, with many children running around and playing.

Asylum-seekers can come and go between 8:00 and 23:00. On leaving the premises, they deposit their key card ('flytkort') with a security guard, for safekeeping until they return. This practice enables staff to maintain an overview of the number of asylum-seekers present in the facilities at any given time.

In contrast to the decentralized registration centres (described below), Råde is also a registration point for all ordinary asylum-seekers. Further, not all Ukrainians may be registered for collective protection under §34 if the conditions are not met. In that case they must register as ordinary asylum-seekers under §28. Thus, at Råde there are different processes (or flows) for different groups of asylum seekers. In our observation described below, we followed the process for Ukrainians who were most likely to be eligible for collective protection.

## 7.2 Observation at Råde: steps in the registration process

The steps during registration at Råde have changed in response to changing numbers of arrivals. We made two visits to Råde, in May and June, during a period when the levels of arrivals had decreased substantially. Here, we describe the steps in the procedure as they appeared at that time.

**Step 1 - security check:** The first step when entering the large building at Råde is to go to a luggage scan room, which resembles the security check at an airport. Securitas guards go through the luggage and search for illegal items, such as weapons or alcohol.

Adult asylum-seekers get a handwritten band around their arm with a number as part of a queue system. There is also a number indicating whether the individual is alone or part of a group, and a letter indicating whether the person will be staying at Råde or at a private location.

In the same area as the security check, there was – at the time of our visits – a waiting area with two tents. These are mainly used when many applicants arrive at the same time and the room at step 2 is too full. In one of the tents, there were beds, for applicants who needed to rest while they were waiting. The tents are also used to accommodate applicants who come during the night. During the most hectic period, the police worked throughout the night as well, but otherwise they often wait until the morning if applicants arrive in the evening or during the night. In the other tent, there were tables where LINK served food if the applicants were hungry. Outside the tent, there were toys for children.

The group of asylum-seekers with whom we spoke during our first visit had already completed this step when we came. They had in fact arrived only moments before us, so step 1 did not take much time. During our second visit, the first applicants in the morning passed quickly through this area as well, but a group who arrived later that day had lunch in the tents before completing the rest of the procedure.

A poster displayed information about NOAS, with QR code that applicants could scan to get more information. There were also posters with information about the registration procedure and the stay at Råde in English, Russian and Ukrainian. Such information can be assumed to be very useful for asylum-seekers; however, we did not see it posted anywhere else, and it seems likely that many do not notice it, because they immediately interact with staff and hand over their luggage etc., as described above.

**Step 2 - asylum registration:** Ukrainian applicants undergo a simplified registration procedure. We were told that the police ask about the travel route to Norway, where in Ukraine the applicants are from, family relations, and whether they have families or friends in Norway. If the applicants are from Donetsk, Luhansk or Crimea or the more recently occupied territories of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, from where they also are likely to have travelled to Norway via Russia, the UDI or the police might undertake an additional interview with them at Råde, within one or two days. The intention here is to map and uncover potential activities related to the war in the occupied areas, particularly in regard to Ukrainians who might have pro-Russian attitudes, as that might affect whether they are granted permission to stay in Norway. There may also be other facts in an applicant's migration history that trigger the interest of the police, resulting in an additional interview.

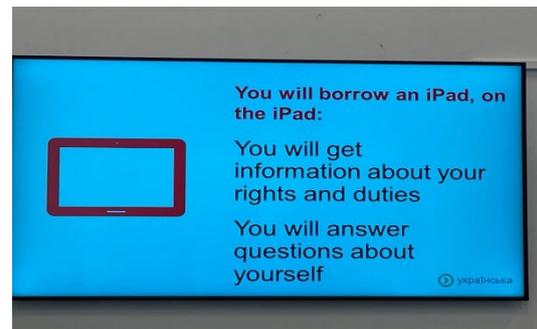
One major difference between Ukrainians and other asylum-seekers is that the great majority of Ukrainians have passports and other ID documents with them; some even have biometric passports. During the registration, the police collected and checked their passports (e.g., looked at stamps in the passport etc.) and made a copy. The applicants received the passports again at the end of the procedure, unless they had come from the occupied regions, in which case we were told by police officers that they would get their passports back after about a week.

Before they spoke with the police at Step 2, applicants received an Ipad and filled out a 'START' form. This information is first used by PU to assess whether the criteria for collective protection are met, and then later by UDI if they have to carry out further proceedings in the case.

The application form contains questions about citizenship and personal information such as date of birth, name and marital status, phone number, email. It also asks about the journey to Norway – date of arrival, place of residence prior to arrival in Norway, and whether the applicant has been granted residence in any other country. Asylum-seekers are also asked if they ever have been sentenced, or if they have contributed to war crimes or have been witness to such. The information provided in this form is also used by UDI to determine whether an individual asylum interview is required.

The application form also provides information on rights and duties when applying for protection, including what the police might require in connection with the registration process (to hand in certain documents, phone etc.); also, that some belongings might be temporarily confiscated. Applicants are also warned that they may be punished if they do not fulfil these obligations. Information is provided on how their personal data and replies will be treated, and about the procedure of processing applications for collective protection.

In this room, there were large information screens on the wall which presented information about the procedure (in Ukrainian):



In addition, there were QR codes that asylum-seekers could scan, which would take them to the UDI webpage or to the webpage 'asylinfo'.

On the tables in the waiting area, there were five stapled pages of information in Russian and Ukrainian about the asylum procedure for those seeking temporary collective protection in Norway. This information was also posted on the wall in the waiting area. It provided useful information about the governmental actors with whom refugees will be in contact in Norway – the police, UDI and IMDi – and their areas of responsibility. This information included 'commonly asked questions', such as: who is entitled to temporary collective protection? What is needed in order to apply? How do I apply for temporary collective protection?

Step 2 in the procedure involved the most waiting during our first visit: we were there with the applicants for three or four hours. On our second visit, applicants proceeded through this step somewhat faster (around one to two hours). One applicant went straight to Step 4, as sometimes happens if there are no police present at Step 2. In such cases, the police can conduct both the asylum registration and take fingerprints at Step 4.

**Step 3 – the Råde “white card” (flytkort):** At one point, LINK staff came and took some members of the group to the next step, where LINK staff produced cards that applicants could use at the Råde facilities, also referred to as ‘the white card’, according to our guide from UDI. Previously, all applicants received such cards, because all were staying at Råde. Now, only those applicants who are staying at Råde (and not privately) receive this card (however, a few weeks earlier, we were told, all applicants received the card regardless of whether they were staying at Råde or had private accommodation).

LINK staff explained that the cards were important to enable LINK to know who was present in the buildings at Råde – for instance, in case of fire. On leaving the facilities, applicants had to leave their cards with the security guard until they returned.

Among some applicants with whom we spoke on our first visit, there was some uncertainty surrounding these ‘white cards’. In group 1, half of the members had received a white card, while the other half had not, and they did not understand why. They appeared somewhat confused and frustrated, as they did not understand what the white card entailed and why everyone did not receive it. We assume there must have been a misunderstanding in communication with LINK about whether or not they were staying at Råde. In fact, they were all going to leave immediately after registration, and so they would not need the white card. The group was split up at this step;

those who had not received a white card were invited to the next step, while the other applicants went to another waiting area nearby, where they waited for about an hour.

**Step 4 – fingerprinting and asylum application card:** In the next step, the police took fingerprints of the applicants and measured their height. After that, they waited again until the police provided them with asylum application cards with a D-number, needed, for example, in order to open a bank account.

During our first visit, there were hardly any police present in this area when we arrived. For about 40 minutes there was nothing going on. We were told that there probably was a change of staff as it was around 3 pm. After a while, one or two police officers arrived. For much of the time, they did not interact with the applicants, but appeared to be working on computers.

After receiving the asylum application card, the asylum-seekers were either free to leave Råde and go to their private accommodation or were transferred to a reception centre to await the asylum interview that would take place within a day or two.

**Step 5 – clothes and other necessities:** There is a separate room where asylum-seekers were provided with clothes and hygiene articles. LINK was responsible for providing clothes and other necessities, according to the needs of applicants. Notes were posted around Råde, informing that clothes could not be exchanged after one had received them. LINK staff reported that providing people with clothes was very time-consuming. There was no activity in this area at the time of our observation.

**Step 6 – health check:** Applicants who stay at Råde undergo compulsory screening for tuberculosis. Staff and X-ray equipment from Østfold hospital are present. A negative tuberculosis test is required before they can move to another place. For those staying in private accommodation, this screening is to be conducted in the municipality where they live.

### 7.3 Ukrainians' experiences with the registration procedure at Råde

Our interviews and our observation at Råde revealed two main obstacles in connection with the registration process: long hours of waiting, and lack of information about the various steps in the procedure at Råde.

During our first visit to Råde, the registration procedure took between 5 and 7.5 hours for the group of applicants whom we followed. As there were relatively few applicants at Råde at this time, it was difficult to understand why the procedure should take so long. We had arrived early, and there was only one group of 5 or 6 applicants ahead of 'our' group, so they could hardly have constituted a bottleneck for our group. Moreover, the asylum-seekers spent only a short time in actual interaction with staff at each station. Most of the time they simply waited, without talking to staff or doing anything related to the procedure. During our second visit in June, we did not follow a group throughout the process. However, it appeared to be quicker, especially for one of the applicants, who skipped step 2 and completed both registration and fingerprints at step 4. For another applicant, the whole procedure took 3.5 hours.

The Ukrainians with whom we spoke generally showed understanding for the procedure and accepted that they had to wait. They said that the personnel at Råde were friendly and helpful. Only towards the end did some show signs of frustration, especially because of confusion regarding the white cards that had been distributed.

One interviewee who had come to Råde only to register, as she lived privately, described her experience as follows:

In Råde, there are unnecessary steps – I waited three hours in order to get my things checked even though I had not brought much; and I had to stand in a queue to get a card that would let me stay at Råde. I was too late to get any transport back to where I live, so I had to spend the night at Råde. First, there was one queue to check my things, then a queue to take a photo for the card that I did not need because I was not going to live at Råde. I arrived at about 9 in the morning and finished around 9 in the evening – and that was with a 1.5 year-old child.

Another interviewee told us that she had been to Råde after arriving in the beginning of March. However, after waiting for a long time outside, she was told by a security guard to contact the police in Oslo to get an appointment for registering at Råde. On returning to Råde to register she found the process long:

Did you get any information about the procedure?

No (laughing)! We went from one room to another, each time we hoped this would be the last room, but there was yet another.

You interacted only with the police? How was it?

The people were very nice, very helpful – it was just the procedure, it was only being developed, many people were arriving. I cannot say it was bad, the people themselves were very nice, but the procedure was not very clear, and it was lengthy.

While some interviewees explained the long time needed for registration by referring to the numbers of people seeking protection, others did not understand why it should take so long: *'It took 12 hours. We filled in the papers quickly – and then we were just sitting there.'*

During NIBR's observation at Råde in May, the researchers noted that arriving refugees were misinformed as to how long the procedure at Råde would take – it took twice as long as they had been told, and much of the time they just sat, waiting. Lengthy waiting periods could be expected with high numbers of arrivals, but on the days of NIBR's observation, there were not many. Nevertheless, the applicants had to wait long at each station. It was unclear why the waiting periods at each step of the process were so long, and also why there were so many steps.

In the interviews, the refugees often described the actual tasks conducted at each step of registration as unproblematic – e.g., concerning the form to be completed, the questions were clear, and it was possible to respond in Russian and Ukrainian. However, several interviewees noted the lack of information about the different steps in the process.

No one explained anything at Råde – that night was a difficult one. We filled in forms – everyone was stressed, all with different situations. First the police, then those forms... We were taken to a different room, we had to wait, just sitting there after all this moving about – at two o'clock in the morning. The kids couldn't sleep, and we didn't know anything about what would happen...

Thus, several interviewees mentioned how, after each step, they never knew if there would be yet another step before the process of registration was over. They had no general idea of the whole process they had to undergo, and no idea as to when it would be completed.

Many Ukrainians do not stay at Råde but come in only for registration. NOAS is responsible for providing information about the asylum procedure to applicants. As our researchers noted when conducting their observation, NOAS has an office in the tent area of Råde. However, applicants who solely come to register their application, and then leave, do not go to this area, and they have fewer possibilities to be informed by NOAS directly.

From our interviews and observations, we found indications that the registration process at Råde had become more effective over the period from February to June. From the interviews, we have examples of persons who spent over 12 hours completing the registration process in March. During our observation in May it took 6-7 hours, and in June it took about 3.5 hours for the applicants with whom we spoke. However, as we have not conducted a systematic analysis of the duration of the registration process at Råde, these observations are merely indications that the process has become more effective. That is also logical, as there have been fewer arrivals since May, the pressure at Råde has also lessened. Moreover, as we elaborate on below in section 7.4, it became possible to register also in other police districts.

### **7.3.1 Confusion about returning passports for persons who registered early**

In the normal asylum procedure, the police collect the passports of the applicants. Ukrainians registering at Råde shortly after the Russian invasion encountered this standard procedure (it was later changed). Several interviewees who arrived during the first month of the war – regardless of which region in Ukraine they were from – had to turn in their passports at Råde. At the time of our interviews in May 2022, several interviewees had not yet got their passports back, or had done so only recently:

My parents still haven't got the cards that confirm their residency (oppholdstillatelse). Two weeks ago, they got a letter saying that protection had been granted. But they still haven't got their passports back.

For unknown reasons, our passports were taken away from us. Some people got their passports back right away, but not us. For some reason, we are in the second month without passports.

They did not feel that they had received an explanation for why their passports had been confiscated, nor information on how their passport would be returned to them. Some interviewees had been granted collective protection but were still waiting for their passports; and others happened by chance to learn of the possibility of collecting their passports at the police office. People felt uncomfortable at being unable to travel in case they needed to. One interviewee reported having been in contact with people who would already have returned to Ukraine if they had been able to get back their passports. Others were planning to go to Ukraine – at least for a short trip – when they got their passports back.

Here in Stavanger, they register people in only one hour. They scan the passport and give it back right away. To get our passports back we have called and called – the police in Stavanger say they don't understand why our passports were taken at Råde.

The practice of confiscating passports for an unlimited period of time was later changed. To our knowledge, most Ukrainians (as of June 2022) get their passports back at the end of the registration procedure, after the police have made copies for their files.

### **7.3.2 NOAS**

NOAS is responsible for providing information about the asylum procedure to applicants. Their office in the tent area at Råde is open every weekday from 9,00 to 16:30. Since Ukrainian asylum-seekers receive collective protection, the procedure is much simpler for them than for other applicants. Most importantly, they know that they most likely *will* receive protection (unless there are very special circumstances). According to the Immigration Act, NOAS is not required to provide individual counselling to Ukrainians who are likely to be granted collective protection. However, they are offered general guidance. Several of the NOAS staff members who worked at Råde at the time spoke Russian; one of them also spoke Ukrainian.

When LINK shows new asylum-seekers around Råde, they always stop by the NOAS office, and explain that they can go there for further information. NOAS organizes group information meetings for Ukrainians who arrive at Råde, as well as individual counselling, if requested. NOAS also visits other asylum reception centres in the Oslo region to provide information to asylum-seekers.

In view of the simplified asylum procedure available to Ukrainians, access to information from NOAS is probably less important for them than for other applicants, for whom the procedure is longer, more complicated, and with a less certain outcome. NOAS staff told us that Ukrainians are more concerned with what happens *after* they receive their permit. Ukrainians have many questions that lie beyond NOAS' actual mandate. We were told that Ukrainians frequently ask about matters such as how much time it will take before they receive their permit, about health issues, economic support, kindergarten, AMOT, self-settlement vs. assisted settlement, the introduction programme, work, education, the possibility of travelling back to Ukraine etc. In other words, many of the questions NOAS receives concern matters that are not related to the asylum procedure as such. IMDi would probably be in a better position to answer many of these questions. According to some interviewees, IMDi was in fact present at Råde for a short time, but, as described in chapter 6, IMDi communicates primarily with municipalities and other public actors, not directly with asylum-seekers/refugees.

As many Ukrainians stay in private accommodation, they do not have access to as much information as those who stay at Råde or in other asylum reception centres. NOAS has an office in the tent area at Råde, but applicants who only come to register their application and then leave do not go to this area. We asked NOAS whether they have considered being present in the waiting zone so they could provide information to applicants who do not stay at Råde. They replied that in the waiting areas they have QR codes that take applicants to the NOAS information page, and that they believe applicants already receive considerable amounts of information in the course of the registration procedure.

## 7.4 Registration in other police districts

On 12 March 2022, it was announced that registration would be possible in eight police districts around the country: thus, Ukrainians staying in other parts of Norway would not have to travel to Råde in order to register. This new practice lessened the pressure on Råde and was good news to Ukrainians residing far from the National Arrivals Centre. In general, those who have registered other places than Råde have described the registration procedure as quite swift and completed within an hour or two:

In the evening, they took us straight to a hotel. In the morning, we started by going to the police. They had told us that there would be registration with the police in Kristiansand. The second day in Norway, we registered with the police. I had no problems with registering. My son understands English, and he translated. There was a form on the I-Pad that we filled in – and that form was in Ukrainian. They took our fingerprints and photos. They returned our documents immediately on the same day. They did not check our phones or computers.

The possibility to register in other police districts was in late spring 2022 widened to include all 12 police districts in the country<sup>34</sup>. Moreover, in April the preparations for a new registration centre at

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.politiet.no/tjenester/opphold-i-norge-og-asyl/ukraina/slik-soker-ukrainske-borgere-kollektiv-beskyttelse-i-norge/>

Gardemoen started with the aim to facilitate for effective registration of Ukrainians who most likely will be granted collective protection.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.politiet.no/aktuelt-tall-og-fakta/aktuelt/nyheter/2022/04/06/nytt-registrerings-senter-etableres-pa-gardemoen/>

## 8 Where and how did Ukrainians live during the first phase?

Since February 2022, Norway has made several changes in the general system for accommodation and settlement for Ukrainians seeking protection (see detailed description in chapter 3). Previously, most asylum-seekers in Norway lived in reception centres or decentralized reception centres (Søholt & Holm 2010), – with very few options for living outside of the public reception system without losing rights to public (financial) assistance. On 16 March, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security loosened the criteria for Ukrainian refugees to find other accommodation than reception centres in the pre-settlement phase, through *temporary alternative reception placement* (AMOT). The latter created additional opportunities for Ukrainians to settle with their family members, relatives or friends, or to find their own accommodation in the location in Norway they preferred.

In this chapter, based on the survey, we first document how many Ukrainians took advantage of this new opportunity as opposed to accommodation in reception centres (before formal settlement). Thereafter, we discuss experiences and potential challenges with both types of arrangements (and a combination of the two) from the perspective of both Ukrainians and frontline workers.

We find that about 50-60% lived at either Råde or reception centres during the registration and application process. Evaluations of reception centres differ substantially. In our interviews with Norwegian frontline workers, participants criticized the conditions at some reception centres. They reported examples of critical standards of accommodation and services that had not been met. However, our overall impression is that the Ukrainian refugees generally were satisfied with how they were met and treated at the reception centres. In some cases, the conditions even exceeded their expectations, e.g., concerning the facilities, food and local hospitality. Still, some experienced problems with information, because the presence and approach of the reception centre representatives and employees differed substantially. One source of frustration were the perceived differences in treatment across reception centres. Some interviewees pointed out that it would be easier if they could know what information and services to expect from the reception centre staff.

We find that around 40% used the new possibility to live with family, friends, other network or to find their own accommodation. Those who lived privately were very pleased to have the opportunity to decide freely where and how to live, and appreciated the help received from their networks in Norway. Although our interviewees noted many positive aspects of being able to live privately, this was not always unproblematic. Several frontline workers found that Ukrainians living outside reception centres were often poorly informed, and they also voiced about living conditions and the risk of exploitation of those in private accommodation.

### 8.1 Accommodation during different stages after arrival

How many Ukrainians used the opportunity to not live in reception centres, staying with family, friends, other acquaintances or renting an apartment? From chapter 4, we know that over 60 % of the respondents had an existing network (family, friends, professional and/or other acquaintances) in Norway before arrival. In the survey, we asked where the respondents lived during different stages of their initial phase in Norway before formal settlement in a municipality. From the interviews, we found out that some Ukrainians moved between different accommodations, e.g., that they lived at reception centres first, but then found private housing, or vice versa. Thus, in the survey, we distinguished between three stages: the period before they registered for collective protection (pre-registration), the period between registration and

approved application (application process) and the period between approved application and formal settlement in a municipality (pre-settlement).

Figure 26: Accommodation before formal settlement

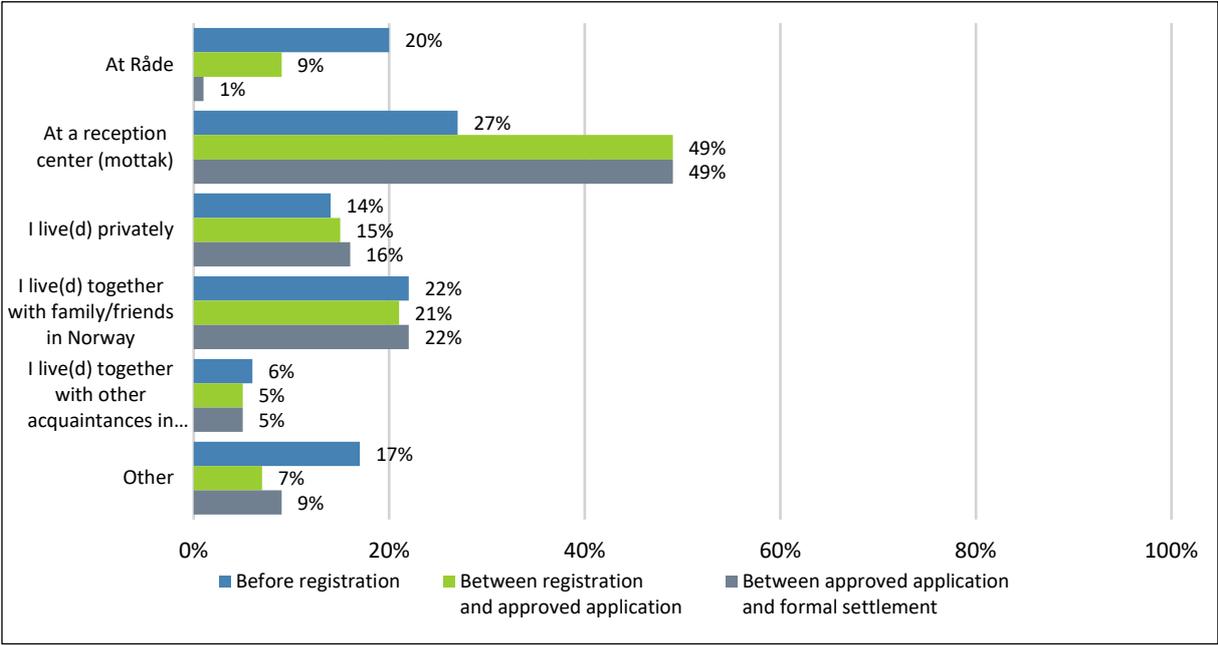


Figure 26 shows that there is a rather stable pattern across the three stages. About 50-60% have lived at either Råde or reception centres during the pre-registration, application process, and pre-settlement process. The percentage that has not stayed in reception centres during the three stages – either privately (e.g., rented own accommodation) or staying with family, friends or other acquaintances – is also very stable: about 15% lived privately, around 20% lived with family or friends, and between 5-7% lived with other acquaintances.

Among our interviewees, there were people who had first stayed with family or friends for a few days before moving to a reception centre because the housing of their family members/friends were not suitable for housing them on a long-term basis. In additional analyses, when adding together those who stayed either privately, together with family and friends or acquaintances, the survey shows that about 15% of the respondents moved from a private accommodation before registration, and then lived at a reception centre after registration. In the qualitative interviews, there were examples of people leaving the reception centre after being invited to stay with people with whom they had become acquainted in Norway, but the survey show that this change was less common, with only 4% moving from a reception centre to a private accommodation in the period before settlement.

## 8.2 Initial accommodation at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde

People who had not arranged long term private accommodation or who were not brought to other temporary reception centres at arrival, often spent several days or even some weeks at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde. Several of our interviewees stayed at Råde in the beginning of March when the daily influx was very high, and the centre was put under pressure.

On the fourth [of March], we registered. 11 days we were there at Råde – in the huge hangar in tents. Two floor beds. There was noise. Many children and

adults got Rota-virus and many got Covid 19 or other illnesses. I am grateful for the help we got, but there were some difficult moments.

How was the information there?

There were no interpreters there – there were people from Hero [probably Link] that knew our language – some Lithuanians etc. But they did not know answers to all our questions.

The general impression from the interviews is that people perceived the facilities at Råde as ok concerning the circumstances. Interviewees noted that they were provided with sufficient food and that the facilities at Råde were clean and that they were free to enter and exit the premises: “Even Råde - they were helpful. To sleep there was not that comfortable, but you could go out at any moment and the bed sheets were clean.”

What many people pointed out as uncomfortable was the lack of information on what would happen to them next and when. Some interviewees reported that they got the feeling of being forgotten at Råde. They explained that people who arrived at the same time as them, were leaving for other reception centres, while they still remained without further information on why. Others had heard that some buses that were transporting residents to reception centres were coming, and they asked to join these buses (no matter where they were going) in order not to remain at Råde. In several interviews, interpreters were reported only to be present during the first conversation with the police during registration, and seldom elsewhere at Råde. Thus, people with no or few English skills had to rely on second hand information from other residents.

There were lists with busses – someone did not know about these lists. It was not very orderly arranged with these lists. Some said we ought to wait for lists – others said if you wait, nothing will happen.

If our Ukrainians [other Ukrainian refugees] had not told us [about the bus lists] then we could have been sitting there for several days.

The system of how people were distributed to different reception centres was unclear to the interviewees, and the perception of whether they could influence where they were going next, varied. One of the employees at Råde confirmed that at one point, asylum-seekers could, in fact, influence where they were sent, because LINK staff needed to fill up the buses and walked around the tent, announcing e.g., “25 spaces available to Bergen”. This is not the normal procedure, but it was necessary at a time when about 300 Ukrainians arrived each day. When the premises at Råde were filling up, Råde staff had to transfer people as quickly as possible to other reception centres.

There are some examples that people seem to have been able to speed up their departure from Råde by taking proactive steps:

11th of March we arrived in Oslo. 11th – 12<sup>th</sup>, we registered in Råde. Saturday and Sunday there was nobody there. People were just asking each other. We spent the night - we started to understand that there are some lists, that there are busses. (...) Then, there was a bus from the Red Cross – I was not very eager to stay there [at Råde] long – there was no info. My daughter went to the Red Cross, and she asked if all could go with those busses. And they said yes.

While some noted that they were happy to leave to a different location, others reacted negatively to not being informed about where they were sent until they sat on the bus on their way there. Interviewees that had been sent to the north of Norway by plane claim to have been informed about their final destination in the bus on their way to the airport, and this had created strong reactions among people who were sceptical of going far north.

## 8.3 Living privately – new procedures, many questions

New regulations expanding the right for AMOT has given the Ukrainians more options, with the possibility to live with family, friends, other network or to find their own accommodation, and still be entitled to public assistance. The overall impression is that the newcomers are quite satisfied with the opportunity to freely decide where and how to live. During individual and group interviews, Ukrainians evaluated the option to live privately as an inclusive approach that has helped them to overcome some of the uncertainty of being in a new place. As an elderly couple noticed: “We are so happy to stay here with our daughter. If it was not for her – we would never have left Ukraine. She managed everything for us and takes care of us now».

In order to become part of AMOT, people had to formally apply to get into the system. Representatives from NAV mentioned in the focus group interview that they had a routine where they registered all Ukrainians living privately so that they could follow up the procedure with formal settlement with IMDi, but it was unclear whether this was done in a consistent matter in different municipalities. It is also not clear whether most Ukrainians who lived privately actually were formally registered as AMOT or if they just lived privately without being formally registered.

Norwegian front liners working in the municipalities accentuated that Ukrainians not living in reception centres were less informed – and often misinformed. During individual and focus group interviews, some refugees living privately expressed that they were worried that they were missing out on important information about their rights and opportunities. While people living at reception centres might have the opportunity to ask questions to staff or sometimes even to representatives from public agencies and NGOs that visited the centres, refugees living privately had to rely on their own capability and the capability of their private helpers to retrieve the necessary information.

### 8.3.1 The “double-edge sword” of private helpers

Ukrainians living privately often had resourceful “helpers”, either Ukrainians who had lived for a long time in Norway, or their spouses, social or professional contacts, or other Norwegian acquaintances who contacted the authorities on their behalf: asking questions, requiring information and advocating their rights. Private helpers assisted with interpreting, made phone calls, arranged meetings with schools and other institutions. In our interviews, there were several examples of private helpers playing an active role even in forming local policy and attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees.

Interviews show that private helpers have significantly influenced registration and settlement processes. Some private helpers communicated directly with the municipality or state agencies to solve challenges:

My sister actively communicated with the municipality, visited the mayor. The apartment we live in, she found via Finn website, and she contacted them for us. It was a very individual process; it is important to be helped by people living here.

The Norwegian husband of my sister helped us – tried to find information. He wrote in the newspaper about the need to register people locally – and then they arranged this registration in [city]. We went to the police.

Despite mainly positive feedback of private helpers’ assistance, some interviewees reflected on their total dependency on the people hosting them (financially and because they heavily rely on these helpers due to language barriers).

Norwegian frontliners working in the municipalities and in NGOs raised some concerns about Ukrainians living in private homes: what living conditions they had, and the risk for them being exploited. One woman shared that she previously lived at Råde but became friends with a local man and moved to his apartment. She was not sure if she was regarded as this man's friend or girlfriend. The high level of trust to strangers in this vulnerable position might include the risks of being exploited or becoming overdependent on others. One of the frontline workers was of the opinion that some Norwegian helpers patronized Ukrainians and thereby placed them in the role of helpless victims.

Even though it was positive that people were engaged, representatives of public agencies stressed that it demanded a lot of resources to answer questions and inquiries from helpers. Some of them wondered whether it may be harder to obtain correct information when you rely heavily on others and remain outside the "system".

## 8.4 Accommodation at reception centres

Reception centres differ substantially, as they are run by different actors and located in different geographical areas and types of buildings. Whereas in some reception centres, people are served three meals a day, in others, people are provided with kitchen facilities and money to buy food to cook for themselves. In some reception centres, people may share a room with three persons they did not know prior to their arrival in Norway, in others they get separate rooms for their family. The increased use of emergency accommodation (*akuttinnkvartering*) in this period also make the differences between reception centres larger.

### 8.4.1 Standards of accommodation

During our first group interviews with Norwegian front liner workers, NGO representatives criticized the conditions at some reception centres. The research team was also independently contacted by volunteers who wanted to report critical conditions at certain reception centres. People reported examples of objective standards of accommodation and services that had not been met, e.g., regarding fire security, access to sanitary products (e.g., toothpaste, sanitary pads and diapers) and the location had sometimes been inappropriate for children. One interviewee among the frontline workers also mentioned that there are many people with special needs (disabled people, deaf, autistic children, children with Cerebral palsy) that were not always well enough accommodated for when they were sent to reception centres (or settled). During one of the focus group interviewees, participants shared a story about a reception centre with no water access and inappropriate sanitary conditions. NGO representatives and media reported on the situation, and UDI checked the conditions and decided to close the place. The Ukrainians had then been brought to a reception centre with appropriate living conditions (according to the Ukrainian interviewees' evaluation). The Ukrainians interviewees expressed understanding that such an incident could occur in a situation where authorities and private actors had limited time for preparing accommodation for a large group of refugees, and they appreciated "being heard".

One interviewee also noticed different problems and challenges caused by the reception centres being overburdened due to constant arrival of new groups:

We live in a transit camp in "mottak". Initially, it was very cold, the heating did not work very well. There were 44 of us in 3 buildings, and hot water was enough, the boiler worked well. Now there are 200 of us and the hot water is not enough, you can «catch» hot water if you get up at 07 o'clock.

Thus, not all reception centres capacities were ready to host the amount of people that arrived in the beginning. Despite these challenges, the overall impression is that people were generally

satisfied with how they were met and treated at the reception centres. In some cases, the conditions exceed people's expectations:

It is much better than what could have been expected. We are living in rooms that were probably made for students. Everything is clean. Good standards. Better than a 3-star hotel. Here are all facilities. They feed us well – better than in many sanatoria. The food is a bit uniform – there could have been more variations. Bacon, cheese, brown cheese. There are always many vegetables.

Another interviewee expressed that:

I did not expect to be treated humanely, but everything was at the highest level. Lived in the hotel for 3 weeks. Volunteers came there, we went to museums. They brought us clothes. We were all provided with hygiene products and clothes - good second-hand.

Some interviewees reported that there had been representatives from IMDi and UDI and other authorities (a nurse, the police) at their centre to provide them with information. Visits by representatives of IMDi and UDI were presented as most welcome and needed:

On Friday there were representatives from IMDi here – those who settle. But I think it was UDI – one of the heads from Råde –who told us what we wanted to hear one month ago: what is happening here, who, where, when? The questions we were not able to get answers to from people at the reception centre.

#### **8.4.2 Experiences with reception centre providers and staff**

The extent to which people have felt well-informed have affected how people thrive at the centres. Several Ukrainians reported of regular information meetings at their reception centres, while others did not. The presence of the reception centre representatives also seemed to differ a lot. In some centres, there was a reception they could turn to every day within certain hours. At other centres, reception centre providers would be present only a couple of days a week. In several interviews, the Ukrainians expressed that the responsibilities of the reception centre providers were not clear to them. Some also experienced that reception centre providers were unable or unwilling to answer questions.

Some interviewees emphasized that it would be easier if they knew what information and services they could expect from the reception centre providers. One woman said that they only understood what Hero [a private actor who runs reception centres] was when a representative from the municipality informed them. This representative had explained that “there is the state, and there are refugees, and in between them, there are the private actors Hero. And the state allocates money – a lot of money to them for refugees”. After getting this information about Hero, they had started to demand services that they had heard that residents at other reception centres were provided. For instance, they found out that they were entitled to pocket money. No one had told them before. As we will describe in more detail in chapter 10, there were some instances where people had not gotten any pocket money before they found out themselves that they were entitled to them. They had found out from other Ukrainians in one of the social media groups for Ukrainians in Norway, or by reading official information at the website of UDI. Interviewees also noted other differences across centres in terms of what necessities or services people were provided free of charge.

There were also a few complaints about the way in which they received help. A woman had problems getting enough food for her baby and was shocked by the way the reception centres handled her request. However, she did not have such experiences when she was transferred to another reception centre:

I do not need much. I needed just that my child has somewhere to sleep, something to eat. I was shocked when they gave me seven spoons with milk substitute in a garbage bag. In <city where she lives now> they gave us everything immediately, they gave us good food. Here everything is good. How they received us before and after registration – very different.

There were also some examples of people being directly misinformed by reception centre providers. The worst example of such misinformation was when a representative of the reception centre provider claimed that getting Norwegian sim-cards was illegal and could affect people's legal status in Norway negatively. This incident, however, looks like a problem with an individual member of staff at the reception centre.

There were also examples of positive interactions between reception centre staff and the Ukrainians. People were quite satisfied with the food they were provided at the reception centres, and they were often happy to cook by themselves when this was possible. At reception centres that provided food, refugees usually got three meals a day with a variety of fruits, vegetables, dairy and meat products. However, Ukrainians were not accustomed to Norwegian food habits:

Many had problems with the type of food. The children did not eat. The food was too spicy. But the hotel was helpful [...]. There was a cook, and he adjusted the menu – was willing to make something else. They made soups, more vegetables. They tried to help.

The Ukrainians often actively communicated with administration representatives and agreed upon changes in the menus when possible. Several interviewees noted that cooks at the reception centres demonstrated a great willingness to adapt and were willing to provide porridges and soups – more common types of Ukrainian food. Overall, Ukrainians expressed gratitude for this understanding and cooperation.

#### **8.4.3 Interaction with volunteers and the local community while at reception centres**

Our interviews suggest that the Ukrainians' contact with the local community has depended on the location of the reception centre. In more remote areas (e.g., at hotels far from a town or city), Ukrainians have had less opportunities for interaction with the local community or to participate in different activities, and some have felt more isolated. People residing in more central areas, report of very active lives thanks to the efforts of NGOs and other local actors. NGOs and other volunteers have arranged excursions for the Ukrainians and events at the reception centres. They have also held language course and helped Ukrainian children with their homework. In several interviews, the Red Cross and the Salvation Army were mentioned as very active. These efforts were much appreciated.

In some interviews, Ukrainians reported about difficult interactions between volunteers seeking to help them and staff at the reception centre. Whereas in some centres, the reception centre had helped providing solutions and space, for example for the distribution of donated clothes, at other centres, volunteers had not been able to provide this help directly. At a large reception centre, Ukrainians had difficulties getting access to necessities. Hero had collected lists of what people lacked and needed, but the necessities were still not provided. When the Ukrainians then got acquainted with some volunteers willing to donate a lot of clothes and other humanitarian aid, Hero tried to prevent it, according to their account: 'Due to this, Hero got angry – we were only supposed to talk to them – but when we asked them for help, nothing happened. They threatened that we could be deported because of this.' It has not been within the scope of this assignment to interview the respective reception centres and get their response to these statements. Thus, we do not know why there has been such instances and if these instances were just rare exceptions caused by misunderstandings or by malpractice from one or a few employees.

Others also describe a lack of willingness of reception centres to accommodate help from volunteers:

In the beginning there were volunteers - they brought everything, and they were bringing a lot of things. They say the head of the reception centre is not so happy about the volunteers and that she has forbidden the volunteers to come often. But I do not know. I do not have the language skills to find out everything.

What did create irritation and frustration among some, however, was the perceived difference in treatment across reception centres. Many Ukrainians have kept close contact with other Ukrainians applying for protection in Norway after their arrival. In this way, differences in conditions and services were easily noted.

## 9 Settlement

Norway has had a publicly steered settlement model, where refugees are allocated to municipalities based on agreements between the state and the municipalities (for details about accommodation options before formal settlement and various paths to settlement, see chapter 3.5). However, as many Ukrainians did not live in reception centres during the registration and application process, the proceeding settlement process was also affected. Many Ukrainian refugees have been settled through direct agreements with the municipality (this arrangement was then formalized later between the municipality and IMDi). Further, in the normal asylum procedure, questions of settlement normally arose only *after* the application for residence permit had been granted. With the rapid application processes for Ukrainians seeking collective protection, the question of settlement arose much earlier, and several paths to formal settlement complicated the picture.

Most of our interviews were conducted in May and June, at which time only some of the interviewees were about to be or had just been settled. Many were in an ongoing process. Thus, our findings represent a snapshot of the situation in May/June, and not a broader evaluation of how refugees who actually had been settled evaluated the process in hindsight.

In this chapter, we will start by addressing the information challenge with these new settlement procedures. We then turn to how the Ukrainians who lived in reception centres experienced the settlement process, which boiled down to two main questions: *Where* and *when* will I be settled? Further, we present how refugees who lived privately experienced the formal settlement process after being granted collective protection.

We find that questions about settlement have been a concern for many Ukrainian refugees. For those who had stayed at reception centres and would be settled with IMDi assistance, the main concern has been uncertainty about *where* in Norway they would be settled, and frustration at not being able to influence the decision to a greater degree. When we conducted interviews in May and June, many interviewees also worried about *when* they would be settled. Frustration often arose when they compared how other Ukrainians were settled, both in other countries and within Norway. Those who lived at one reception centre for a longer period of time – especially those with children – worried about having to move to another part of the country after being integrated into the local community where their reception centre was located. For those who lived privately, there was also a shortage of information about their rights. However, many got help from their family and network, and the municipalities were often flexible in finding solutions and formalizing the settlement.

### 9.1 New practices: many paths to formal settlement

In the normal asylum procedure, questions of settlement normally arise *after* an application for residence permit has been granted (which often takes several months). During this waiting time, the reception centres are obliged to provide information about how the settlement process in Norway functions. After applicants are granted protection, the reception centre is responsible for conducting a settlement interview, where the applicant is asked 24 questions that help IMDi to find a suitable municipality for settlement. After IMDi has made an agreement with a municipality that will settle the individual, the municipality will often need some time to prepare (find appropriate housing, etc.) before the individual can move from the reception centre to the municipality.

During a normal asylum process with individual assessment of each application, the various steps of registration, application, and settlement usually take several months. With collective protection, the application process is accelerated, and most applicants receive a response within a few weeks. Moreover, as Ukrainians have visa-free access to the Schengen area for 90 days, they do

not have to register immediately upon arrival in Norway, unlike the case for most other asylum-seekers. Also, many Ukrainians stayed with their families or acquaintances, or got help from their network to find housing outside reception centres (at least in the first period after arrival). All these factors challenged the traditional steps and procedures in the normal asylum and settlement process and made questions of settlement relevant from the time of arrival in Norway (and sometimes even before that).

Although the formal rules concerning settlement have not changed (the municipality in question must still make a formal agreement with IMDi, in order for the refugee to be entitled to financial assistance and the introduction programme), practice has changed. The number of asylum-seekers who made agreements directly with the municipalities increased. Such self-settlement had previously been a rather small-scale practice, and IMDi told us that even municipalities that had settled refugees for many years had questions regarding the many different paths to formal settlement.

In our interviews with the frontliners – NGO, municipalities and persons working at Råde –, several mentioned the shortage of information about the settlement process in general and the options available to Ukrainians. This was confirmed by our interviews with Ukrainians.

## 9.2 Two main questions for those staying in reception centres: settlement where and when?

### 9.2.1 Where will I be settled?

One main concern for persons who lived at reception centres during the registration and application process and who would get publicly assisted settlement through IMDi was *where will I be settled?* As described above, the Norwegian settlement model normally implies that refugees who need help to find housing, the refugees themselves cannot decide in which municipality they will be settled.

Many interviewees were frustrated that there so little they could do to influence where they would be settled. Normally, the settlement interview conducted at the reception centres includes 24 questions about health, employment, special needs, network etc. At the time of high arrivals in March, the settlement interviews became an administrative bottleneck in the settlement process, and in early April, the Ministry decided to reduce the questions in the interview from 24 to three questions: 1) do you have family or network in Norway? 2) do you have pets with you? 3) do you suffer from medical conditions?

At the time of our interviews, most interviewees had not yet been notified where they would be settled, which created uncertainty. However, the question they had answered about family or network in Norway gave them some hope that family relations would be taken into account by IMDi in looking for a municipality for settlement:

I try to think positively regarding where we end up. We have friends in <Norwegian city>. We hope that they will send us there – but it is like roulette. The representative said she would request for us to be sent somewhere close to our friends. We hope they will hear our wishes and that we can be settled somewhere near our friends.

Several interviewees, however, expressed frustration about the limited mapping, and that they were not given the opportunity to provide IMDi with what they considered essential information which they felt should influence their settlement process, such as details of their education and job experience:

We (...) thought they would ask about some things, but there was only a short questionnaire on a tablet. We thought it would be possible to explain why and where we wanted to go, but it was not.

My daughter would like to start working – she got to know someone that could help her with work. She was unhappy that she was not able to add that information to the forms that we filled in.

Many were frustrated at not being able to speak directly with IMDi staff about settlement. As they had heard that IMDi was responsible for settlement, they were frustrated that the brief settlement interview was conducted by a reception centre employee and that they could not be in direct contact with IMDi to influence the decision. As one interviewee noted:

There is a lack of information about settlement. There is a reception centre staff member who communicates with IMDi. There is no live communication with IMDi, this person asks questions and enters information into a register. This is a reception centre staff member, not an IMDi employee. In practical terms, this person does not have time to do everything well, because there are so many of us. In other reception centres, where there are fewer people, things are different. He [the staff member at the reception centre who conducted the settlement interview] explained that the dialogue box in the IMDi form was very small, and it wasn't possible for us to enter all the information we wanted in the form. He noted down information about the child with disabilities, but not about our other needs. They sent us to a village. But we are a family, we need to live and work.

As the arrival of Ukrainians decreased, from 25 May the Ministry of Employment and Inclusion decided to expand the brief settlement interview with two more questions: about work experience and education. Our interviewees who had such interviews said they were pleased to be able to provide this additional information.

### **9.2.2 When will I be settled?**

The second concern Ukrainians had about the settlement process was the question of *when* they would be settled – a concern shared by the municipalities and NGOs as well. During our focus groups interviews with frontliners in early May, representatives from municipalities and NGOs expressed frustration that the settlement process took too long. Municipalities that were prepared to settle Ukrainians had not yet received any refugees. The municipalities were also worried that many would arrive there during the Norwegian summer holidays in July which could complicate the local process in the municipalities.

For the refugees, frustration often arose when they compared how the issue of settlement was dealt for other Ukrainians, in other countries and within Norway. One interviewee had the impression that in other countries people were settled faster: 'When we have talked with people in other countries, like Germany or Poland, we find they have always been settled. And we are still waiting.'

Others compared their situation with that of other Ukrainians in Norway or at the reception centre where they stayed, and found examples of others who had been settled more rapidly:

A big problem, some people who arrived later have been settled already, but we came three months ago, and we are still here. We have already adapted, been socialized here. It will be very hard to move again.

There is no timeline for when we will be settled. Some are already being settled, they arrived later than us. They have already been sent to Narvik.

Those who lived at a reception centre for a longer period – especially those with children – worried about having to move to another part of the country after being integrated into the local community where their reception centre was located (starting at local schools, participating in local activities, etc.):

For those who are staying in 'mottak' [reception centre] for a long time as we are – almost three months, it is better to be settled in the area nearby, because we have already found friends here, adapted to the area and social environment.

### 9.3 Many questions from those not living in reception centres

For those who did not live at reception centres during the registration and application process, many questions arose, such as: Will I be guaranteed to be settled in the same municipality where I've been staying privately? Can I find a new flat in another municipality/city district than where I stayed during the application process? What kind of rental contract will the municipality or NAV approve of? What apartment size and rent will be covered?

Many Ukrainians who had stayed in private accommodation relied on the help of their networks (family, friends, others) to find out about their rights and to communicate with municipal representatives about settlement:

<Name of person> – with whom we live – has contacted everyone. We can stay here and be settled in this municipality, but we do not have collective protection yet and that is why they cannot settle us formally.

It was very difficult to talk with the municipality – but since my sister could speak with them in Norwegian, she managed to help me.

Ukrainians were eager to be settled as close as possible to their existing network of family and friends. Some of our interviewees had already been settled, or were waiting to be settled soon, after having stayed with family or friends. All of them had been settled close to their network:

We got good help. My sister actively communicated with the municipality, visited the mayor. The flat where we live, she found online at Finn.no. She made the contract. It [settlement] is a very individual process; it is important who helps you.

Our interviews also provided several examples of municipalities which had showed flexibility and found local solutions in order to accommodate refugees' wishes to continue staying with their family:

We are living in a big house. We are renting the house – the two of us – the sister of my husband and their family and we [respondent with children]. And we made an agreement with the municipality that we pay half the sum through the municipality. I filled in everything – what we pay in electricity etc., and NAV will look at it.

Before we came, our relatives lived in a different place (...). When we came, they contacted <municipality> because they had heard that they accept refugees. The municipality helped them [the relatives] find this house so that they would be able to receive us when we arrived.

In another municipality, a woman who was staying with her Norwegian boyfriend explained that the municipality was paying as if she were renting a room in his flat; and in this way, she contributed to their livelihood.

Two interviewees said that their housing after settlement was inconvenient, being located far from grocery stores and other services and with no or very limited access to public transport. In both cases, the Ukrainians were negotiating with the municipality as to the possibility of moving somewhere more central [within the same municipality]. Whether they would be provided with more central housing was not clear at the time of our interview.

Our overall impression is that the municipalities have often searched for solutions to accommodate refugees who have existing networks there. However, the financial support and necessities provided to refugees who were staying privately have differed considerably across municipalities, as will be elaborated on in chapter 10.

### **9.3.1 Potential risks for persons living privately**

In the interviews with NGOs and the municipalities, some interviewees were concerned that those who lived privately and had not registered into the AMOT system might 'fall through the cracks'. These refugees have to contact IMDi themselves to initiate a formal settlement process, but they may not be informed about this procedure and their rights for publicly assisted settlement. Representatives from one NAV office explained that they had routines for registering all refugees who were living privately so that they could follow up their case with IMDi, but it is unclear whether this is also true of other municipalities and to what extent the municipalities have an overview of all Ukrainians staying in private accommodation in their municipality.

## 10 Financial situation

As described in chapter 3.4, asylum-seekers have traditionally been required to stay at reception centres before formal settlement if they wished help with accommodation and financial assistance (with a few exceptions for those eligible to apply for AMOT). With the extended AMOT system, and the fact that Ukrainian asylum-seekers often have family members or other network in Norway, many have opted to stay elsewhere than in reception centres before formal settlement in a municipality. Importantly, those not staying in reception centres must be registered as AMOT, in order to be entitled to public support from the municipality during the pre-settlement phase. Asylum-seekers whom the municipality does not accept for AMOT may be referred to a reception centre for financial and other assistance. Those registered as AMOT are entitled to financial support to cover necessary expenses. However, such financial benefits are subsidiary: if the person is able to support him-/herself, the benefits shall be wholly or partially forfeited. That such financial assistance is subsidiary, or needs-based, provides the municipalities with discretion to evaluate the need in each individual case. Lastly, the local autonomy of Norwegian municipalities implies that although minimum standards may be regulated by the national government, the municipalities may provide residents with additional support or services through the Norwegian Welfare Offices (NAV) and the Act Related to Social Services, where there is substantial discretion: municipalities may provide extra services or financial assistance even if they are not legally obliged to do so.

Given these rules, local practices may differ. Also, refugees may differ as to their need for financial assistance. How have Ukrainian refugees financed their initial stay in Norway? Where have they received help? How have they experienced the public financial support system?

In this chapter, we first document from where the Ukrainians have received financial support (if any). We first discuss challenges for Ukrainians who resided at reception centres. Thereafter, we discuss the different practices for financial assistance across municipalities for those who lived privately. Lastly, we point out examples of unanswered questions Ukrainians had concerning future financial assistance.

We find that the financial assistance provided to Ukrainians refugees has differed significantly. Some received financial assistance from reception centres or the municipality even before registration, but the majority lived on their own funds during this initial period. The share who report having received financial assistance increases during the application process and the pre-settlement phase. Some who stayed at reception centres did not get the financial assistance (pocket money) to which they were entitled to during the first months, and struggled to buy medication, food, sanitary items, etc. UDI is now mapping the scope of this malpractice and for whom it applies and will reimburse those who did not receive what they were entitled to. Moreover, those staying at reception centres who did receive pocket money lacked information about 1) what they were entitled to (and the criteria behind the payments that could explain possible differences), and 2) what services or products the reception centre was obliged to provide in addition to the pocket money.

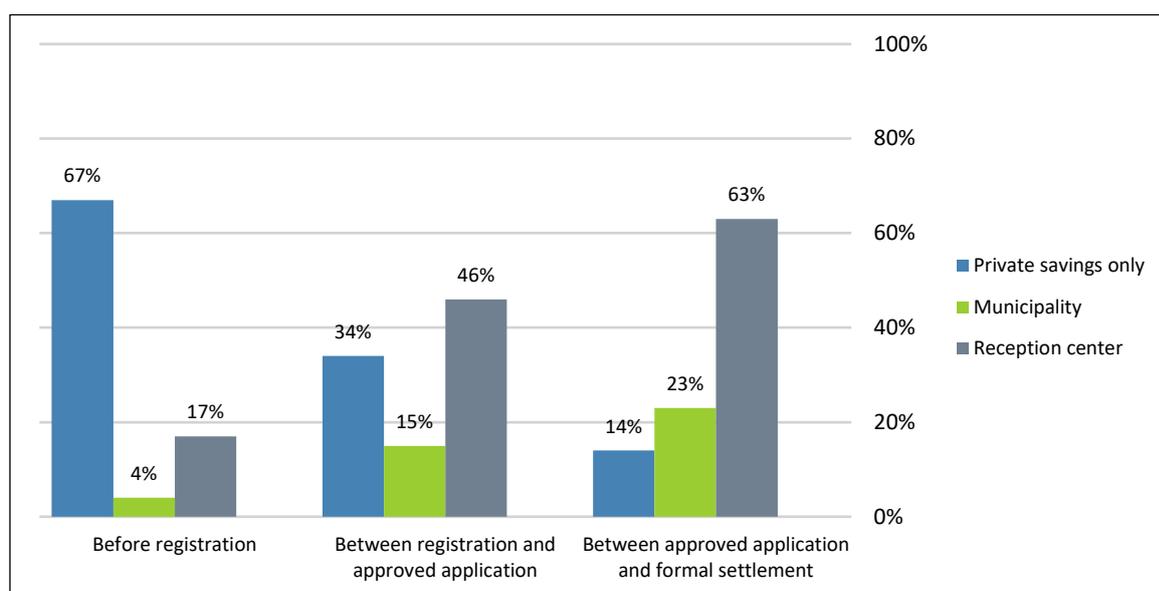
We find that municipalities have had very different practices as to when they start providing financial assistance to Ukrainians not staying in reception centres, and in what form. Many Ukrainians became aware of these different local practices for financial support through networks and social media, which created both confusion and frustration as this was experienced as unfair. Lastly, several Ukrainians noted that they needed more information about the possibilities for financial assistance after settlement and after being enrolled in the introduction programme.

## 10.1 Differing pre-settlement practices for financial assistance

In the survey, we distinguished between those asylum-seekers who stayed at Råde or other reception centres, and those who stayed with family/friends, through other networks or independently before registration, between registration and approved application (application process) and between approved application and formal settlement (pre-settlement). Further, we asked whether they had received financial assistance from various actors during the different stages, or if they had lived solely from private savings.

### 10.1.1 Financial assistance for those residing at reception centres

Figure 27: Financial situation for persons living at Råde and other reception centres



\*Weighted by gender and age

\*Multiple options were possible, and assistance from family/friend and other are excluded from the table

Figure 27 presents the responses from those who stayed at reception centres. As noted, reception centres are responsible for providing pocket money to residents. The majority – two-thirds – lived on private savings before registration; the proportion receiving financial assistance increased in the ensuing two stages. Also, some respondents living at reception centres answered that they had received financial assistance from the municipality after being registered. The share of those asylum-seekers who report having received public financial assistance (from the reception centre or municipality) rises to about 60% after registration, and to 85% after collective protection has been granted. However, it should be noted that our respondents might have difficulties in distinguishing among the various public actors involved. Several of our interviewees initially did not receive pocket money – or even information that they were entitled to it. In our focus group interviews with frontline workers in early May, a UDI staff-member confirmed that some Ukrainians living in emergency reception centres had not received pocket money. This had led to a number of well-founded complaints, as some refugees had struggled to buy medications, food, sanitary items, etc. In mid-July, UDI informed the County Governors that they were aware that many Ukrainian refugees had not received pocket money for their entire stay at emergency reception centres, because of the high number of new arrivals, the start-up of many new emergency reception centres and a general lack of payment cards. Since then, UDI has been working to map the scope of this malpractice and to whom it applies. UDI also informs that

those who did not receive what they were entitled to will get the outstanding amount reimbursed.<sup>36</sup>

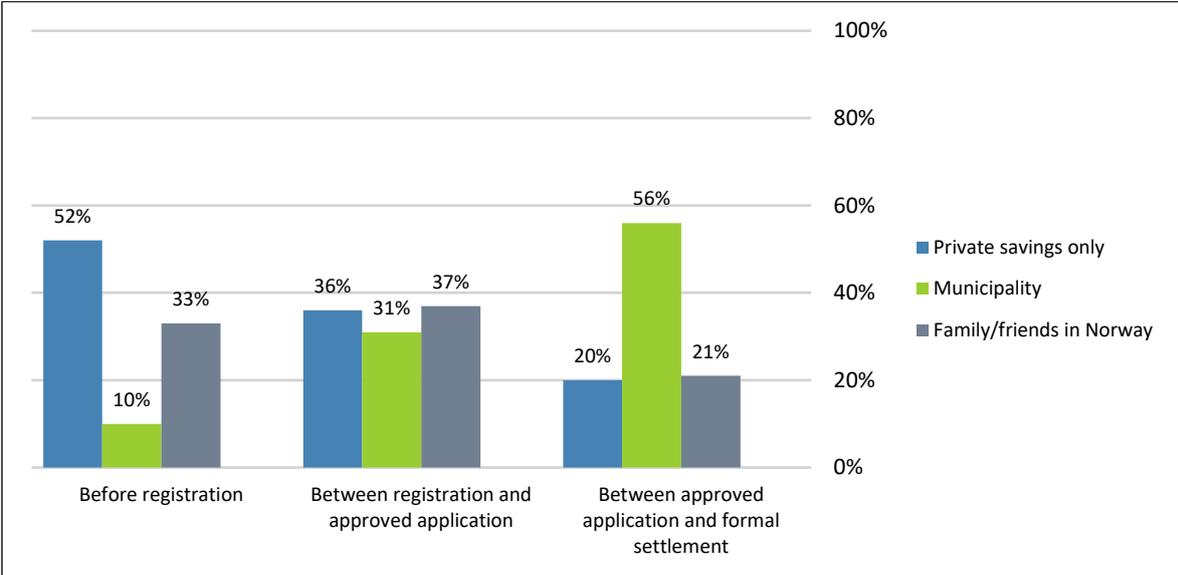
Another concern for those staying at reception centres who did receive pocket money was that the sums often differed – without sufficient explanation. Our interviewees claimed that people in similar situations (for instance, with the same number of children) were given different amounts. Further, for many, it was unclear what services and/or products they could request and what was to be covered by the pocket money.

Moreover, one interviewee mentioned how the overall level of the pocket money provided was insufficient to get ends to meet. They had turned to the local church for food assistance:

<Reception centre> is a container building where builders used to live. I am very glad that I can cook myself because there is a stove in each room. It's more convenient because I have my own diet. At first, we were given products. Then they started giving us less food, but they started issuing coupons for use in the Kiwi grocery stores. But then they took away these coupons. After 1 May, we get NOK 1,000 per adult and 1,600 per child per month. Before, we had 6,000, and now it is 2,000 NOK less. Now we also receive food from the church as humanitarian aid.

**10.1.2 Financial assistance for those staying outside reception centres**

Figure 28: Financial situation for persons living privately



\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 28 shows that, of the respondents who reported not staying at reception centres, about half lived solely on private funds before registration, whereas about one third received financial assistance from family and friends. The share of those relying on private savings decreases in the following stages. Most relevant here are the results concerning financial assistance from municipalities: it is evident that municipalities differ as to when they start providing financial assistance. In a supplementary analysis using cross-tables, we find that respondents living in

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/8Qr8yw/ukrainske-flyktninger-fikk-ikke-penger-de-hadde-krav-paa-udi-maa-etterbetale; E-post fra UDI til mottak, datert 13.07.2022>

small towns or rural areas received financial assistance from the municipality more often compared to those who resided in cities.

Our qualitative interviews confirmed the prevalence of diverging local practices concerning financial assistance to persons living privately. Through network and social media, many asylum-seekers became aware of these differences. They experienced these inequalities as unfair; some interviewees noted that they were surprised to encounter such practices in a country like Norway:

I know that in <other city> – from what I hear – everything is just great. And therefore, these unpleasant feelings arise – that there [in that municipality], they do everything to help. A refugee who was living in a private home asked for money since he did not want to live off his friends — and the next day, they [the municipality] sent him a card with money. And they even apologized because it was not that much. From what I read on the internet, people have very different experiences and evaluations of their reception. Some people in my situation, staying privately, get €500 a month even before they are granted protection. And I get nothing. I did not expect to find such inequality in Norway. Every municipality is like a little kingdom of its own. Some have everything, others have nothing.

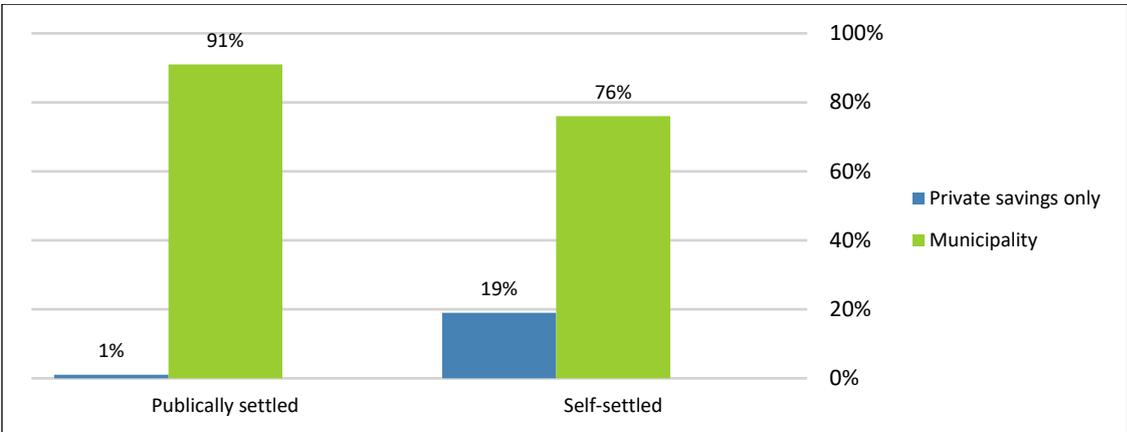
One interviewee, who was living with family members in Norway, said that it was unpleasant to feel that these family members had a hard time making ends meet, with four additional people in the household.

If you go to a reception centre, they will give you food and everything you need. My sister’s financial situation was not that good, she had just finished her studies and started working. In April, she got her first salary. I saw that it was tough for them financially, so I went to NAV and asked if they could help at least with nappies and food for the child... But they said no – you are living privately and are not entitled to any help.

## 10.2 Financial assistance after formal settlement

Practices for financial assistance have differed during the various stages prior to formal settlement – but how is the situation after formal settlement in a municipality?

Figure 29: Financial situation after settlement, by those who settled through public assistance or self-settlement



\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 29 shows that, at the final stage of formal settlement in a municipality, the majority receive financial assistance from the municipality: over 90% of those who were settled with public

assistance and about 75% of those who self-settled. Here it should be noted that not all Ukrainian refugees are necessarily in need of financial assistance, so the fact that they report living on private savings does not automatically imply that they have not received the assistance to which they are entitled e.g., if they are employed or could live on their own funds.

### 10.3 Unanswered questions about financial rights

In the qualitative interviews, several respondents mentioned that they lacked information about their possibilities for financial assistance after settlement and after being enrolled in the introduction programme. Would they be expected to pay for the rent for a flat from the 'salary' they get when enrolled in the introduction programme? Is there extra support for those with small children? Will kindergarten fees be covered, or not?

Some interviewees were also afraid of losing social support during the introduction programme if they started working:

I have trained as a cook. If I start working, I will lose the social benefit? I would prefer to work, but I wouldn't be able to afford the flat. It would have been better for me to work – but I cannot because they will take my housing. I would like to work and pay taxes ... maybe things will change...

Thus, they wanted more information earlier in the process about what type and level of financial assistance they could expect after formal settlement.

## 11 Interpreting services

Although many Ukrainians who arrived in Norway in winter/spring 2022 had family or other acquaintances in Norway, based on the survey, we know that only 0.4% spoke Norwegian fluently, and 1.2% answer that they spoke basic Norwegian. In the initial period, many assumed that Ukrainians generally had good English language skills<sup>37</sup>. English skills may be of good use in a country like Norway with a population holding very high proficiency in English<sup>38</sup>. As noted in chapter 4.2, however, only 11% of the Ukrainians in our survey reported that they speak English fluently, 30% evaluated their own English skills as basic, and over 60% reported that they speak English poorly or not at all. The language barrier has thus been a significant – and perhaps underrated – challenge for Ukrainian refugees in Norway, and many have needed interpreters. As one interviewee explained: ‘At my reception centre with about 40 people, only three of us could communicate in English. Now we are 200 here and only five or six can speak English.’ That said, many Ukrainians are bilingual. In our survey – over 90% reported that they speak both Russian and Ukrainian fluently, making interpreting from Norwegian to both these languages possible.

In the initial period, access to qualified interpreters in Ukrainian and Russian became an immediate challenge for several public actors. As of March 2022, there were only 13 registered Ukrainian-language interpreters and 129 registered qualified Russian-language interpreters. There were calls in the media from public actors for more Ukrainian interpreters specifically, and as an immediate measure, OsloMet – which trains qualified interpreters – launched a special programme for interpreters in Ukrainian (starting in May 2022), OsloMet also carried out bilingual testing of potential interpreters (Tospråktesten), as well as a short course in the responsibilities of interpreters and a one-year university level interpreter training program. Through these efforts, the number of qualified interpreters in the National registry of Interpreters had reached 84 for Ukrainian by August 2022.

In January 2022, Norway’s new Interpreting Act entered into force. The aim is to ‘safeguard due process and ensure the provision of proper assistance and services to persons who are unable to communicate adequately with public bodies without an interpreter and ‘ensure that interpreters meet sound professional standards’. On 23 May, IMDi issued an online guide for managers and employees in municipalities concerning interpreting services to refugees from Ukraine.

In this chapter, we first present Ukrainians’ needs and perceived access to interpreting services, drawing on the survey results. Then, their evaluations of the quality of those services are accounted for. Further, we discuss concerns raised by a few Ukrainians concerning the extensive use of the Russian language and interpreters with a Russian background.

We find that about one third of the Ukrainian refugees did not need interpreters, either because it was possible to communicate in a language they know, or because they got assistance from their networks in Norway. Another third had been provided with an interpreter whenever necessary, but the final third had been provided with interpretation only on some occasions; and 6% answered that they had needed interpretation, but not received any help at all. The large majority of those who had been provided with interpretation held that the quality had been good or excellent. For some Ukrainians, the use of interpreters with a Russian background – or, indeed, the usage of the Russian language as such – is a polarized political issue. In our interviews and survey, we did not find that this was a widespread problem: however, actors who work with this group should be aware of this debate and the views held by some Ukrainians.

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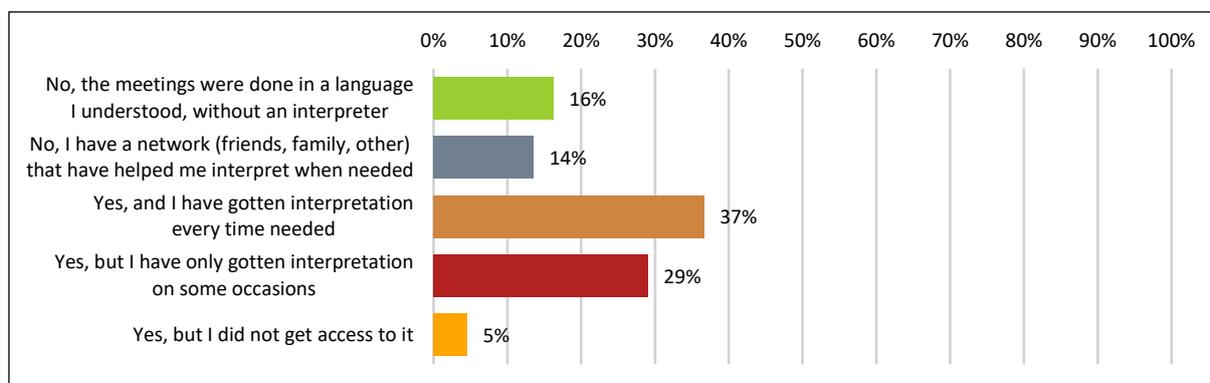
<sup>37</sup> <https://www.ao.no/ber-om-eget-opplegg-for-ukrainske-flyktninger-vi-kan-ikke-bruke-den-samme-oppskriften/s/5-128-271068>;

<sup>38</sup> Norway is top 5 in a global ranking. <https://www.ef-danmark.dk/epi/>

## 11.1 Varying access to interpreting services, but good quality

In the survey, we asked the respondents if they got interpreting when needed.

Figure 30: Need for and access to interpreters



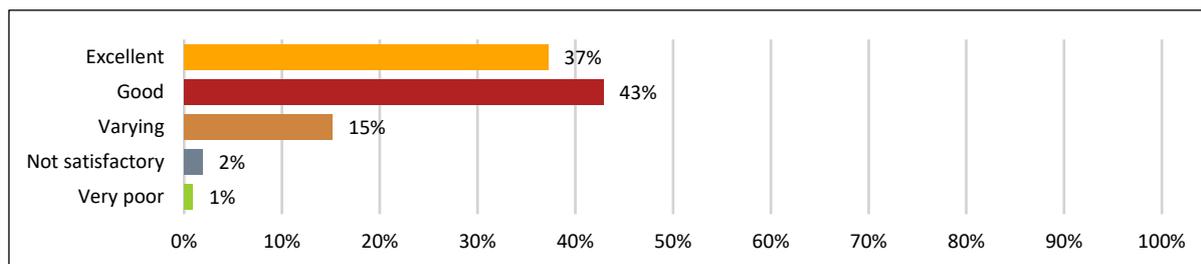
\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 30 shows that only 16% of respondents report that they *did not* need an interpreter because it was possible to communicate in a language they knew. Another 14% reported that they did not need interpreting because they got assistance from their networks in Norway. The remaining 70% report having needed interpreters. Of those, 5% had not had access to interpreting at all, about 30% were provided with interpreter assistance only on some occasions, and 37% report having access to an interpreter every time they needed it.

Our interviews show how Ukrainian refugees have used various strategies for overcoming the language barrier when interpreters have not been available. Firstly, they have asked for help from other Ukrainians. English-speaking Ukrainians were often responsible for communicating with the administration at the reception centres and translating information to others. However, this arrangement could lead to misinformation, and important details might get lost in translation. The second strategy was to use Google Translate, as was the case for one interviewee in her communication with a NAV representative. The NAV representative wrote an SMS in Norwegian, and this refugee replied in Russian. She said that this arrangement worked quite well; however, other interviewees complained about faulty results with Google Translate. Otherwise, several participants were quite satisfied with their experience using a licensed interpreter through the telephone. This was used primarily on connection with medical consultations, but also in other types of contact with the authorities. One interviewee explained: 'I liked it, because they took great care with the details. We understood everything clearly.'

However, some reported negative experiences – for example, that the interpreter had not been prepared for the topic of the conversation and therefore was not able to provide meaningful translation. Some interviewees also reported difficulties in reaching interpreters via phone calls, or interpreters who commented on and/or added redundant information during interpreter-mediated meetings.

Figure 31: Evaluation of interpreting services



\*Weighted by gender and age, \*\*N= 435, \*\*\*Alternative "I don't know" not portrayed (3% answered this)

The overall impression is that Ukrainians have been very satisfied with the skills and qualifications of interpreters in interpreter-mediated meetings. Figure 31 shows that the majority of those who were provided with interpreting – 80 % evaluated it as good or excellent, 15 % answers that the quality has been varying and only 3% were not satisfied.

## 11.2 Usage of Russian language and interpreters of Russian origin

In the focus group interviews with frontline workers, some Ukrainian volunteers and Ukrainian interpreters questioned the use of interpreters with a Russian background, given the circumstances. They held that Ukrainians might not trust these interpreters to convey information correctly: indeed, some mentioned instances of interpreters, who were perceived to be of Russian origin, mistranslating. Whether mistranslation occurs more often among interpreters with a Russian background than among those without has not been ascertained.

In the qualitative individual and focus-group interviews with Ukrainian refugees, however, no one mentioned distrust or problems with the use of interpreters of Russian origin. To check if this was a widespread concern among Ukrainian refugees, we included a question in the survey: 'Have there been any issues or concerns with the interpreters/use of interpreting in your contacts with the public services in Norway?' To this, 80% responded having experienced no concerns or challenges, and 7% 'Don't know'. The 13% who answered 'yes' to this question were further requested to describe the problems. Half of the written responses mentioned the lack of access to interpreting in Ukrainian, as many had been offered only interpreting in Russian.

In seven open answers, respondents noted that they found it difficult to talk with interpreters of Russian origin, whom they identified as representatives of 'the enemy country'. For example;

Russians are our enemies. Norway does not understand that these enemies are destroying our country. We faced bullying and mobbing from Russian interpreters. Russian translators said they had been allowed to inspect our personal belongings.

The main problem is that many translators are Russians by nationality, and they are representatives of the occupying country, which does not support us. Such communication is very stressful.

In addition, five respondents also noted that there could be a risk of mistrust. They were afraid that the Russian interpreters sometimes 'distorted the words', and doubts arose about the accuracy of the interpreting. However, they were not able to prove anything. Such concerns raised could not be confirmed or refuted in our study: in this report we can only note that such concerns about the use of interpreters of Russian origin were raised by very few of the Ukrainians who participated in our surveys (12 out of 680 respondents).

One interviewee who worked at Råde said that when they asked Ukrainians whether they considered interpreters of Russian origin to be problematic, they responded that no, they did not consider it to be a problem. Another interviewee working at Råde said that it might have been different if Ukrainians had to undergo a formal asylum interview where sensitive information could be disclosed. One of the interviewees who worked as a Ukrainian interpreter proposed a pragmatic solution: that Russian-background interpreters should not be used for assignments involving sensitive information or where the subject was war experiences, but that they might well be used for more administrative assignments where sensitive information was not involved. Explicitly mentioned was interpreting for the National Criminal Investigation Services (KRIPOS) about war crimes as an example where it was important *not* to use interpreters of Russian origin – but where they had in fact been used. However, in connection with registration at Råde, at schools etc., it would be less problematic, according to this person.

In the qualitative interviews, a separate issue was raised concerning the quality of Ukrainian interpreters. Some said that they preferred to use Russian-speaking interpreters because they considered the interpreting to be of better quality than what they had experienced with Ukrainian interpreters. One interviewee mentioned that a Ukrainian interpreter had forgotten standard Ukrainian and used *surzhyk* (a common term for dialects/sociolects mixing elements of standard Ukrainian and Russian). Feeling that this made the translation less accurate and understandable, this interviewee for future meetings preferred to use Russian-speaking interpreters instead.

Here it is important to recognize that the debate over Russian and Ukrainian language is a highly polarized political issue, in Ukraine and among some Ukrainians in Norway. There has for instance been opposition from some Ukrainians in Norway to presenting information to Ukrainians on webpages etc. in the Russian language (in addition to Ukrainian) here in Norway. However, others have stressed that some Ukrainians do not speak Ukrainian well, and that there is a need for interpreting and information in both Ukrainian and Russian. In the current situation, however, the fact that most Ukrainians have a good command of both Ukrainian and Russian, as shown in this report, has been a great advantage when it comes to ensuring their provision of interpreting in a situation of high demand of interpreters. Interpreters are subject to clear regulations in the Interpreting Act which state that interpreters are obliged to act impartially, not to misuse any information gained through the act of interpreting and make sure that interpreting may be provided in a responsible manner.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See further information about the Interpreting act in Norwegian language: <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2021-06-11-79>

## 12 Other public services

The main purpose of this project has been to examine how Ukrainian refugees arriving in Norway have experienced the procedures of initial registration, reception, and settlement, and areas under the responsibility of UDI and IMDi. In the course of data collection, we also gained information about other public services, including schools, kindergartens, health services and practices regarding pets.

### 12.1 Schools

As shown in chapter 5.3, Ukrainian refugees say they are very satisfied with the Norwegian schools (which scored an average 4.5 out of 5). This positive evaluation was also supported by the qualitative data. Refugees appreciated the possibilities for their children to get enrolled quickly in Norwegian schools, which they view as an important arena not only for learning but for socialization and leisure activities as well. Additionally, they were keen to send their children to school after two years of pandemic, lock-down and online teaching. Many were able to start school very quickly, whereas others had to wait for a month or more: there appeared to be local differences in this regard. One issue that was raised during the interviews with frontline workers in the municipalities and NGOs was the unknown share of school-aged children who followed online education from Ukraine. In some cases, parents had refused the municipal offer to send their children to Norwegian schools because they wanted them to complete the school year in Ukraine through online classes. Some expressed hopes of returning to Ukraine in late summer 2022 in order for their children to continue their primary education there in the autumn. Yet others sent their children to Norwegian school during daytime, but they followed Ukrainian classes in the evening.

### 12.2 Kindergarten

Kindergartens also got high scores, with 4.3 out of 5 (see chapter 5.3). Our interviewees did not elaborate much on the quality or service provision of kindergartens, although the issue of access to kindergartens was raised several times. Some said that their children could get enrolled in kindergarten shortly after their arrival; others, however, were still waiting at the time of our interviews. In the focus groups with Norwegian frontliners, some municipal participants emphasized the urgent challenge concerning the shortage of available places in kindergartens – a general problem several places in Norway. Some interviewees were particularly worried that this could cause difficulties when the parents were to start the introduction programme. Such concerns were also voiced during individual and focus group interviews, but this varied between municipalities. Some parents also worried that not getting kindergarten places for their children could hinder their further integration:

I can't attend' Norwegian classes because I have no one to leave my child with. We are waiting in a queue for kindergarten...

I had hoped to find work here in Norway – if only there were a kindergarten place for my child...

### 12.3 Health services

In the survey, about 20% reported that the healthcare services had not (yet) been relevant during their stay in Norway. For those who had been in contact with the healthcare services in some way, the services received an average score of 3.9 out of 5 points, while 'access to medicines' scored somewhat less, 3.5. The interviews provide examples of varying experiences among the

refugees, and also of differing practices across reception centres and municipalities as regards financial assistance for medical aid and help to access medical care.

### **12.3.1 Screening for tuberculosis**

All Ukrainian refugees are to be checked for tuberculosis during the registration procedure. This screening was normally conducted at Råde when asylum-seekers were staying there. Because many Ukrainian refugees did not stay at Råde during the registration period, this procedure was altered. Those staying at Råde were to be screened for tuberculosis at Råde, whereas those who were staying privately were to be checked in the municipality. In the survey, 86% reported that they had been screened for tuberculosis after their arrival in Norway.

### **12.3.2 A medical ‘culture crash’?**

Ukrainian refugees have experienced various cultural differences in their encounters with the Norwegian healthcare system. Several interviewees experienced that the threshold was lower in Ukraine for seeking help from the doctor or taking medicine for milder diseases, compared to the practice in Norway:

For Ukrainians, medical help is difficult here in Norway. Things work differently. When my child was running a temperature, they said that it was normal to drink a lot of water and not provide any medicine. My sister had stomach problems – they recommended drinking Coke. We thought it was a joke. But when a lot of people started to ask, they said the same thing – ‘drink Coke’.

Some of those staying at reception centres complained that they had to be very persistent in order to receive medical help:

If you are not ill enough, they will not help you. One woman did not get help. ‘Come to me when you are about to die’, was how she perceived the staff reaction at HERO. Not all were satisfied with the help they got.

There were also complaints about long emergency room queues for treatment. One interviewee said they spent the whole day at the emergency room when her daughter broke a toe and got to see a doctor only in the evening.

Others, however, reported being positively surprised about their encounters with the healthcare system. One man said that he got a very good impression from his communication with a local doctor: ‘The attitudes were fantastic; I met the chief doctor of the institution. Medicine was prescribed – and it worked. The level of competence is excellent.’

### **12.3.3 Varying access to (free) medical services**

Difficulties with accessing medical services arose first and foremost in the period before the refugee got approval for collective protection. Those who had not yet received a personal identity number generally had to rely on emergency rooms for access medication/prescriptions etc.

The interviews revealed that practices varied across municipalities. Some interviewees reported that they had received help immediately and that the treatment was for free, whereas other municipalities provided only paid services. Some refugees had been informed about the possibilities of applying for healthcare before they were granted collective protection, whereas others were informed that they would get healthcare services (other than emergency care) only after being granted protection.

From our first days in the municipality, there was a special department working with Ukrainians. We received information where we could get clothing, healthcare, and info about the Red Cross...

In some cases, those staying in reception centres who were taking medicines for permanent medical conditions were told that they would receive such medicine only after settlement had been arranged:

Before the war, I bought enough medicines for three months. I arrived in <Norwegian city> and I went to the doctor. I got some of my medicines, but others they would not give me. They said that I would have to wait until I was settled in a municipality. Then a specialist would examine me and decide about medication.

Most complaints were related to access to dental care. Many noted, 'They say that when you are settled in a municipality, then they will arrange it [dental care]'. However, also here there have been differences across reception centres and municipalities: 'I had some problems with my teeth. I went to the administration – and they arranged an appointment for me. I did not have to pay'.

Several refugees reported needing dental care after arrival in Norway; several instances concerned people with braces that require regular follow-ups. Generally, it has been unclear to most of them what dental services they may get for free and what they will have to pay themselves.

## 12.4 Pets

Quite a new challenge for Norway is the additional 'refugees' that Ukrainians bring with them. Previously, pets were not allowed in reception centres; moreover, as many refugees had long and complicated travel routes, it was often not an option to bring pets. With increasing numbers of asylum-seekers arriving with their pets, new procedures were put in place. Pets must be checked by the Norwegian Food Safety Authority and remain in quarantine for one to three months – however, the costs are covered by the Norwegian state. Additionally, UDI has invested administrative resources in coordinating these services and on reuniting owners with pets that had been placed in quarantine in another location in Norway.

However, among all services experienced in Norway, Ukrainian refugees were least satisfied with the procedures with pets (see also chapter 5.3). This point also has the highest standard deviation, which means that the responses varied substantially. During the qualitative interviews, we spoke with two interviewees who had brought their pets. They both had quite positive experiences. One noted that a staff member had even sent her a photo of her dog while in quarantine, to assure her that everything was all right. However, some also mentioned that they did not feel that they had been informed well enough about the procedure for pets on arrival:

My dog was taken away at the airport for 6 weeks. That was unexpected, we were not ready for it. She was tested for rabies and was then returned. Oh, she was in good condition, no complaints.

Irrespective of the actual services in question, low scores here could be explained by the psychological stress that refugees felt at being separated from their pets for a long time in a vulnerable situation, not least because this was a situation they had not been prepared for.

Another interviewee described problems with the prohibition against having pets in the hotel that functioned as an emergency reception centre where they were staying. This interviewee asked the responsible person from UDI to keep the dog in the shelter, where the pet was quarantined until the time of settlement.

They could send us the dog after six weeks, but it is not allowed to have dogs at this hotel. We can send the dog to somewhere nearby – but this hotel will close for us on the 6 June, for the tourist season. I had an interview with IMDi (...). I suggested waiting [to be reunited with the dog] until we were settled.

Thus, we see that the Ukrainian pets have created new challenges for the authorities, and in some cases, concerns for the refugees who are temporarily separated from them during quarantine.

## 13 Future prospects and integration

The previous chapters have examined how Ukrainians refugees have experienced their reception in Norway this far – but what are their thoughts and prospects for the future?

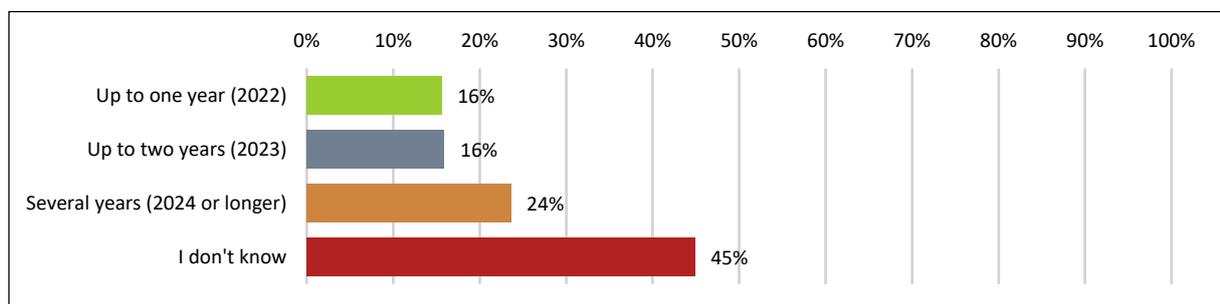
In this chapter, we start by presenting how long the Ukrainians think the war will last, and their thoughts about a future return to Ukraine. Further, we present their prospects for integration and employment in Norway. These two topics are naturally heavily interrelated, since how they think about the war and a possible return to Ukraine may heavily influence how they think about investing in integration activities in Norway.

We find that most Ukrainian refugees in Norway think that the war – and their stay in Norway – will be more long-term. When asked if they wanted to return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends, only 26% answered 'yes'. Not surprisingly, when faced with this general statement, over 50% were unsure; but 19% answered directly 'no', they would not want to return. Our interviews indicated that whether people wanted to return might depend on what region in Ukraine they came from, as well as other background factors. Further, a majority stated that they would not consider moving to a different part of Ukraine than their hometown if only selected areas of Ukraine were considered safe, and that they would rather continue living in Norway, than restarting their life in a new place in Ukraine. About one third answered that they planned or hoped that additional family members would come to Norway; one third answered 'no', and the last third was unsure. In light of these views on future prospects, it is hardly surprising that almost all respondents want to participate in the introduction programme and learn Norwegian, in order to start their integration into Norwegian society. The large majority hope to be employed or self-employed if their stay in Norway becomes long-term.

### 13.1 Thoughts about the war and potential return to Ukraine: indications of a long-term perspective

Expectations about the duration of the war in their home country may influence how refugees accommodate to life in a new country. In our survey, we asked respondents how long they thought the war in Ukraine would last. As prospects for the future may change with time, it is important to bear in mind that the results from the survey give a snapshot of Ukrainian refugees' estimations as of June 2022.

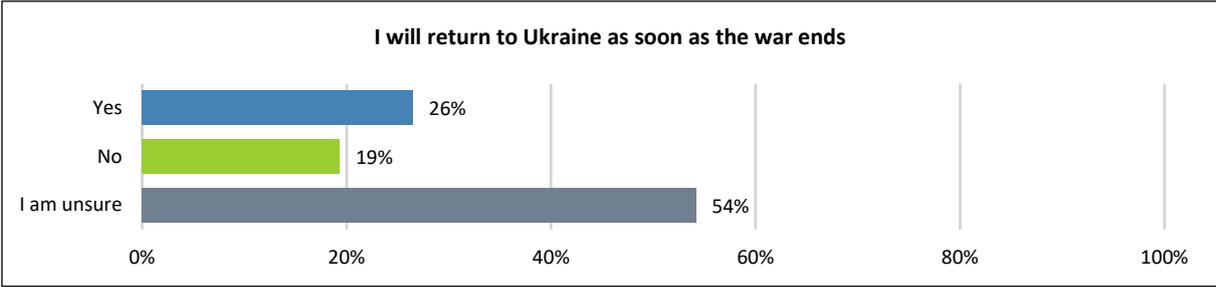
Figure 32: Ukrainian refugees' estimation of the duration of the war



\*Weighted by gender and age

Unsurprisingly, Figure 32 shows that 45% answered that they were unsure when the war would end. However, it should be noted that only a small minority (16 %) thought that the war would end within this year (2022): that is important background information for understanding how respondents evaluated their future life situation in the following statements.

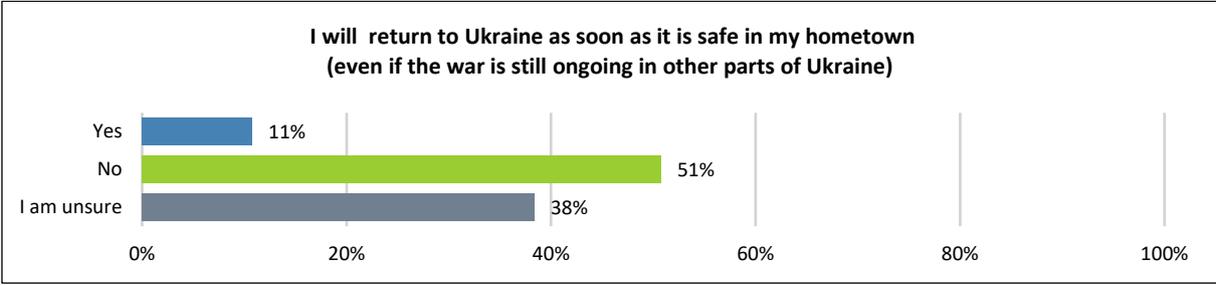
Figure 33: Statement: “I will return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends”



\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 33 shows that only one fourth of our respondents answered that they would return to Ukraine as soon as the war ended. Over half were unsure; and 19% answered directly ‘no’: they did not plan to return immediately after the war. Drawing on the interviews, we developed some more nuanced statements in order to explore the scenarios that many refugees may face in connection with return to Ukraine.

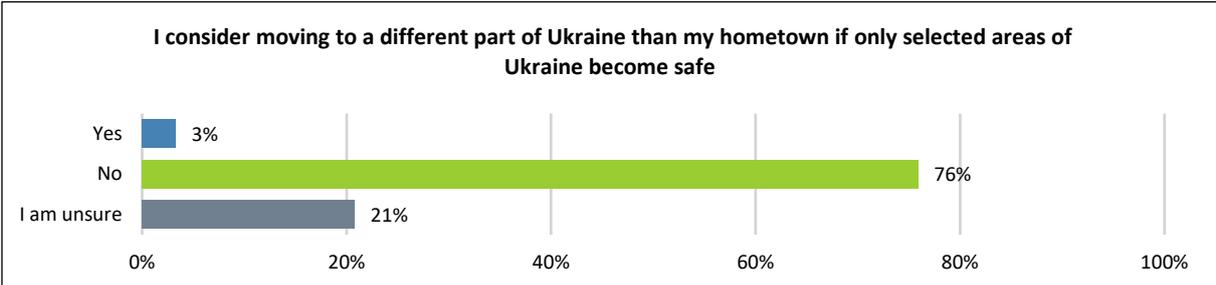
Figure 34: Statement: “I will return to Ukraine as soon as it is safe in my hometown



\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 34 shows that very few were sure that they would return to their hometown if the war were still ongoing elsewhere in Ukraine: only 11% answered a direct ‘yes’. Over half of the respondents did not consider this an option, while about 40% were unsure.

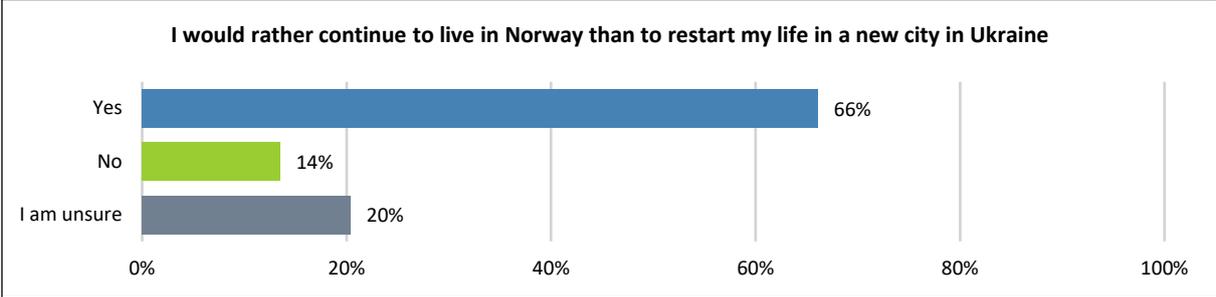
Figure 35: Statement: “I consider moving to a different part of Ukraine than my hometown if only selected areas of Ukraine become safe”



\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 35 shows that only 3% would consider moving to a different part of Ukraine than their hometown if only certain areas of Ukraine were safe. The large majority answered directly ‘no’ to this question, and about one fifth were unsure.

Figure 36: Statement: “I would rather continue to live in Norway than restart my life in a new city in Ukraine”



\*Weighted by gender and age

We then followed up by asking if they would prefer to continue living in Norway rather than re-starting life in a new city in Ukraine. Figure 36 shows that 66% answered ‘yes’, and only 14% answered directly ‘no’, whereas one-fifth were unsure.

In additional analysis, we examined whether the refugees’ future prospects for return to Ukraine differed depending on whether they had family remaining in Ukraine (partner, children, grandchildren, parents), and whether they had travelled with family to Norway (partner and children under 18 years). Cross-tabulations of their views on future prospects (statements presented in Figures 30–33) and background variables showed generally minor differences related to family ties in Ukraine and Norway, except one background factor: whether one’s partner had remained in Ukraine or not. A greater share of those whose partner had remained in Ukraine answered that they wanted to return. By contrast, of those who had travelled to Norway with their partner, a higher share felt sceptical about returning, and wished to stay in Norway. We also noted another minor difference: those who had networks in Norway prior to arrival were slightly more inclined to stay.

The qualitative interviews shed light on how the refugees’ views as to future prospects have changed. Several interviewees noted that their perceptions of how long the war would last have changed since their arrival in Norway. When they fled Ukraine in February or March 2022, many thought the war would end quickly. Now they had realized that it was unclear when the war would end, and this affected their views as to the future. They are increasingly re-orienting towards integration in Norwegian society instead of planning to return to Ukraine as soon as possible:

In the beginning there was apathy, I really wanted to go home. Now I have taken control of myself, I needed to get used to the situation. In the future, I would like to start taking courses in professions that are more relevant here, to become integrated in the labour market. I would like to know what professions are in most need here - maybe Internet design or landscape gardening.(...)

Of course, I want to go home – I’d thought the war would be over by the end of May. If there is a programme for learning Norwegian, I will attend, because it is not clear when the war will end.

Future prospects are also considerably related to the home region in Ukraine. Refugees from the Russian-occupied territories see no possibilities of returning there soon. Some interviewees said that they could think of going back to Ukraine to settle in another part of the country – but not all were eager to start a new life in a new location in Ukraine:

I love my country and my home. But when there will be victory is unclear. The war may last for a long time. I’ve already lived with this for 8 years. (...) I know that in my home region there will be problems for a long time. I am tired of sitting in basements. It is stressful for my child. Maybe to Kiev and Kharkiv it

will soon be ok to go, but to Donbas, no. ... I would have liked my husband and son to come here to Norway. I think it is possible to live here and work like normal people.

Until the war ends, I have no place to return to. I wouldn't go to a dangerous city with no work or anything. To go to Ukraine to another city – also difficult. Shelter and food and work cannot be provided for everyone. When the warfare started, we all hoped that it would take just a week. Now I can't see the end of it. It may take another month; it may take a couple of years before the war stops completely and my city is free. I have no place to go.

Generally, respondents could be divided into three categories depending on their future plans: 1) confident returners, 2) those willing to stay in Norway, and 3) those 'lost in-between'. The *confident returners* primarily explained their desire to come back by the necessity of taking care of relatives, or because they had qualifications or job experience difficult to apply in Norway. Interviewees over 50 or 60 years of age doubted that they would be able to find work in Norway. Moreover, some refugees have elderly relatives who are not willing to leave Ukraine, so they would like to return as soon as possible:

We see our future in Ukraine. We could never have imagined that this would happen. After the victory, we want to go home. My mum is in Ukraine. Although she is taken care of, I can't sleep at night. She is 94 years old.

I want to go home. Norway is a nice country, but I have my home in Ukraine, my mother, other relatives. I want to go home.

We are here temporarily because it is dangerous to return now. A bomb hit our house. We are waiting for the opportunity to return when it is safe. My work is connected to language, and there are no opportunities for that in Norway. I am ready to study here.. but not to be a burden.

Second, motives vary among those 'willing to stay' in Norway. Respondents from the Ukrainian-held territories that have been hit hardest by the war felt uncertain about when it would feel safe to go home – even after a Ukrainian victory. One woman explained that their region has been so heavily mined that it would take years not only to rebuild all the damaged infrastructure, but to clear the region of dangerous mines and other remnants of the war:

I would like to stay in Norway. I cannot understand how I can return because the border is very close to us – and I am not sure when and how this Russian interest in attacking us will stop. Right now things are a bit calmer, but I don't want to be there when a bomb falls. Another problem is that there are mines everywhere. The airplanes have spread a lot of boxes that can explode. I would be afraid that my little boy might find some explosives and get hurt. I am afraid that in Ukraine, it won't be possible to go anywhere because of the mines. I do hope for our victory, but I think that for the next two to three years as a minimum, it will not be safe – and I would not know where to start in Ukraine.

Several interviewees had lost their jobs or their business due to the war, and now wondered how to make a living if they returned to Ukraine. Some said that they might prefer to stay in Norway if they could learn the language and find work. Especially those from areas close to the Russian border realized that if they went to Ukraine, the situation might again worsen in their area, and they might have to leave the country once again. Those people did not believe that a potential Ukrainian victory would necessarily bring a stable peace:

I lost my job because of the war. The factories were closed – the international brands found factories in other countries. No one knows when the war will stop. I've started to learn Norwegian. I want to participate in the introduction programme and look for work at the same time. If I could work in addition, that would be preferable. I have some experience with logistics and an international company. Yes, I would like to work.

A quite common motivation for staying in Norway is the desire to give the children a good education, and awareness of the differences between the Ukrainian and Norwegian educational systems. Some recognize the potential challenges involved in re-adaptation after going to school in Norway – or they would simply prefer for their children to be educated here:

I want to study the language. My daughter is now in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, maybe she will graduate here. The school systems are very different. If you leave Norway and go back to Ukraine, it is all very different, you may need to start all over again.

I want the children to study here, they really like it here. My friend tells me: 'you will not return home. You will like it here so much that you won't want to return.' I plan to study and work here.

We plan to stay, my son is in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, he wants to go to <Norwegian city>. We expect to be here another year. Relatives from eastern Ukraine are staying in our house. We will be here for a year.

One interviewee with a child with disabilities noted that, after the war, there would probably be no possibilities to continue intensive medical therapy in Ukraine. Conditions in Norway would be better:

I will try to integrate. We plan to stay here until the war and the uncertainty end. One year, or two, we will be here, and then we'll see. There are more opportunities for us here. If we return home, we will have no opportunities. The rehabilitation centre does not work. There are no jobs for us there either.

Third, some interviewees could not offer clear answers as to how they viewed their future: they were more 'lost in-between'. They cited arguments both for and against a possible return to Ukraine, and noted the challenges involved:

My brother was killed in the war. I wanted to return – it's where my business and my friends are. I know that I am in Norway now, and I will have to start doing something here. I'd like to open my own business if the war continues. My child has already started speaking Norwegian. He has started to communicate here – and then in a year, if I bring him back [to Ukraine], maybe it will be stressful for him. It's very difficult to say whether I would like to stay here or not.

The feeling of being 'lost in-between' is quite widespread among Ukrainian refugees in Norway. As noted above, more than half were not sure that they would go back to Ukraine as soon as the war ended. The share of those who are 'lost in-between' is indeed high: 54% were "unsure" about returning, as against 26% willing to return and 19% not willing.

However, we consider the question about the future plans to be one of the most sensitive questions in the interview guide and the survey, and we cannot always expect to get clear, or truthful, answers. People might feel ashamed to express their desire to stay in Norway instead of returning home, fearing possible 'social condemnation' from the researchers. That is why, in the survey, we also used a projective question, to provide interviewees with the possibility of choosing whether they would rather continue to live in Norway than re-start life in a new city in

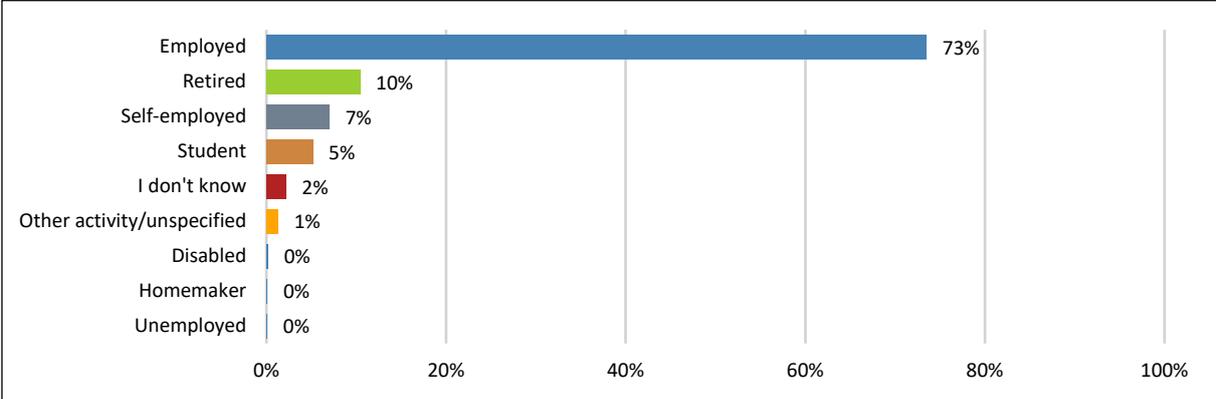
Ukraine. As shown, 66% answered 'yes' to that question, and only 14% answered a direct 'no'. From this, and the arguments stressed by our interviewees during qualitative interviews, it seems likely that a large share of the 'lost in-between' group will probably transit to the category of those who wish to stay in Norway, rather than becoming confident returners. Such a prognosis will need to be checked in future studies.

### 13.2 The majority aim to find work in Norway

As the previous section showed, the majority of Ukrainians think the war will be long-lasting, and they have a more long-term perspective on their stay in Norway.

In the interviews, Ukrainians linked their gratitude to Norwegian society with a desire to be useful for the country that has received them. Some interviewees explained that they did not want to be 'passive receivers' of benefits; they are eager to contribute to their host society. Most interviewees expressed a desire to work or study in Norway, so they could cover their basic needs without state support: 'I want to be useful to the society that has sheltered us. We feel deep gratitude.' Results from the survey support these statements.

Figure 37: Aspirations for future main activity in Norway



\*Weighted by gender and age

Survey respondents were asked what main activity they saw for themselves if their stay in Norway became long-term. Figure 37 shows that almost 80% hope to work if their stay in Norway becomes long-term; 7% of this share hope to become self-employed. 10% see themselves as retired, and 5% as students.

If we compare these aspirations in Figure 37 with what the Ukrainians did before the Russian invasion (see Figure 11 in chapter 4.2), we find a larger share who aspire to work in Norway if their stay becomes long-term (80%), compared to the share of those who had worked in Ukraine before the invasion (70%). Before the invasion, 4% were homemakers, and 14% were retired; however, we see in Figure 37 that no-one selected 'homemaker' and only 10% selected 'retired'.

The eagerness to work is also clear from the interviews. However, while some refugees were quite optimistic regarding their prospects of finding work in Norway, others spoke of the challenges involved:

I had hoped to find work here in Norway if I get a kindergarten place for my child. But from what I hear from my friend and others, it is very hard to find work. Even for cleaning you need a certificate. Now I understand that I first must learn the language and then search for work, because here there are no small businesses where you can work. In Ukraine, you can open your own business in one day and then you work. It is difficult to create your own working place here. And you can only apply for work in big companies here,

and the competition is crazy. You need an MA degree ... I just don't know what advantages I will have when applying for work.

### 13.3 'Everyone' wants to attend the introduction programme and Norwegian courses

As described in chapter 3.6, the Norwegian government has made temporary changes to the introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees. The political process with a public hearing was initiated in April, and the new law entered into force on 15 June 2022.

#### 13.3.1 The introduction programme and Norwegian courses: initial misunderstandings and rumours

In May/early June 2022, when the majority of our interviews were conducted, the legislative processes of changing the introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees were still underway. Understandably, several respondents said that they lacked clear information about their rights to an introduction programme and what an introduction programme would entail for them:

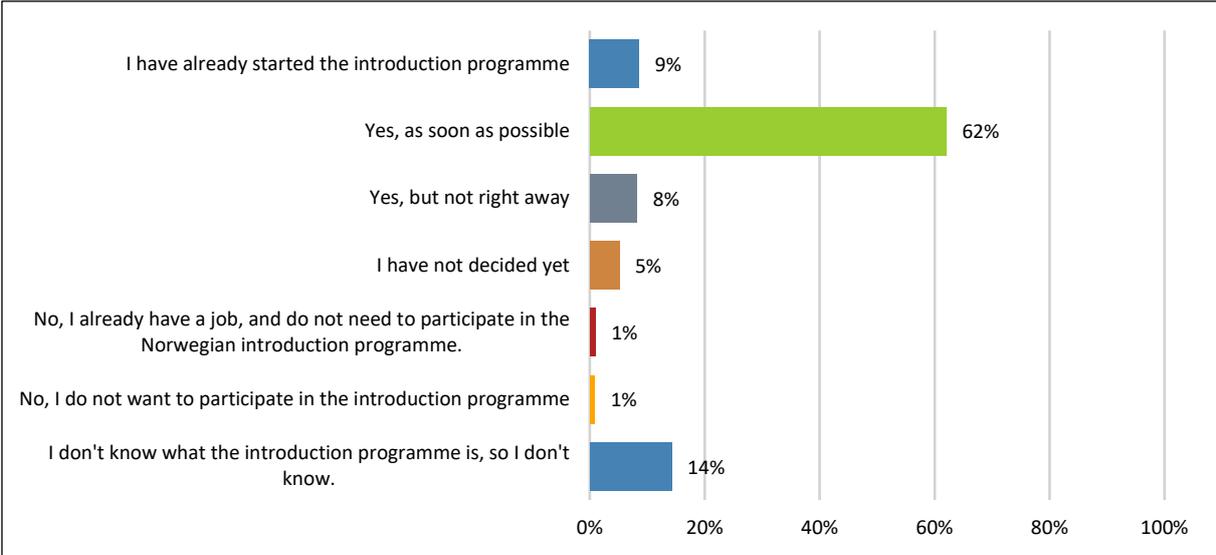
I know nothing about the introduction programme. I know about it through my friend who attended Norwegian courses when she moved to Norway. There were refugees from Syria, and they told my friend about the programme. I have heard that will make the programme shorter for Ukrainians. For Syrians, it was one year, and I have heard it might be 6 months for Ukrainians. That's what I read in Facebook; I haven't seen any official confirmation of this.

In the course of the ongoing policy process, several misunderstandings and rumours flourished among Ukrainians (e.g., in Facebook groups). For example, there was a broad perception that the introduction programme would start 'for everyone' in August, and that refugees who got employed might lose their entitlement to Norwegian training if you got employed. Many interviewees also had the impression that the introduction programme and entitlement to Norwegian classes are the same thing. This misunderstanding was particularly connected to what rights one would have on becoming employed. One interviewee said that she had been told by the caseworker in her municipality that since her husband had a job, he could not attend the introduction programme; she was afraid that he would not get access to Norwegian language training.

#### 13.3.2 Almost everyone wants to participate in the introduction programme

Despite uncertainty about the details concerning rights and obligations for Ukrainians because of the ongoing policy process, in the qualitative interviews, *all* respondents stated that they wanted to participate in the introduction programme. Most of them emphasized that they would like to start as soon as possible. Similarly, all interviewees said they wanted to start Norwegian courses 'as soon as possible'. Our survey supports this finding from the qualitative interviews and shows that Ukrainians are generally keen to start the introduction programme and Norwegian courses.

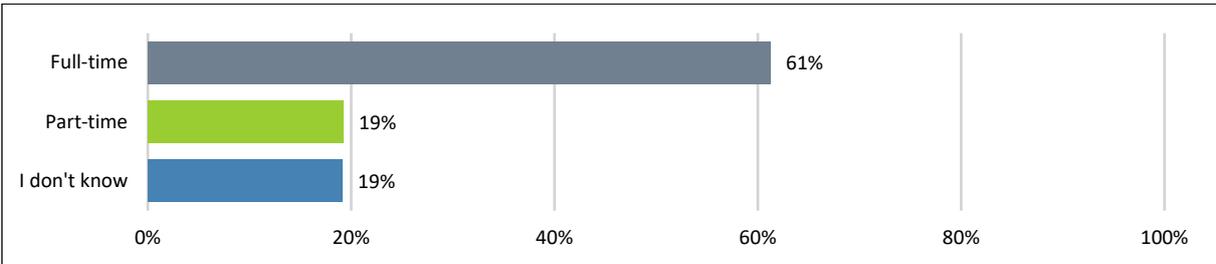
Figure 38: Participation in the introduction programme



\*Weighted by gender and age

As participation in the introduction programme is voluntary for refugees (although financial assistance is linked to participation), we asked our survey respondents whether they thought they would want to participate in the introduction programme. Figure 38 shows that they were indeed eager to participate in the introduction programme. At the time of the survey (mid-June 2022), about 10% said that they had already started the introduction programme,<sup>40</sup> and 62% wanted to start as soon as possible. Only 1% answered directly 'no', that they did not want to participate, while 14% said they did not know (as of June 2022) what the introduction programme. Of those 14%, the majority were elderly refugees (above 65 years) and persons who had only recently arrived in Norway (in June 2022) and might not have had time to be informed about the programme yet.

Figure 39: Full-time or part-time participation in introduction programme



\*Weighted by gender and age

Another policy change is that Ukrainian refugees may choose to participate in the program part-time – normally, participation in the introduction programme is full-time only. Figure 39 shows that the majority of Ukrainians want to participate in the introduction programme full-time; however, 20% want to use the new possibility in the temporary legislation for part-time participation; and 20% reported not having decided yet.

Why are Ukrainian refugees so eager to start the introduction programme? First, as noted in the previous chapter, many see their stay in Norway as long-term; indeed, many indicated that they

<sup>40</sup> From the interviews, we know that many Ukrainian refugees think that Norwegian courses and the introduction programme are the same thing, so it is not clear whether 10% have started the actual introduction programme, or only the Norwegian courses.

would like to stay in Norway also after the war ends. They saw the introduction programme as a key factor for integration into society, learning the language and getting access to the Norwegian labour market. Second, our qualitative interviews showed that people were motivated to participate also because financial assistance is dependent on participation, and the integration benefit they would receive is higher than the current financial support provided by the municipalities or reception centres. Third, some interviewees saw the introduction programme as a way of becoming part of a social environment that they have lacked in Norway.

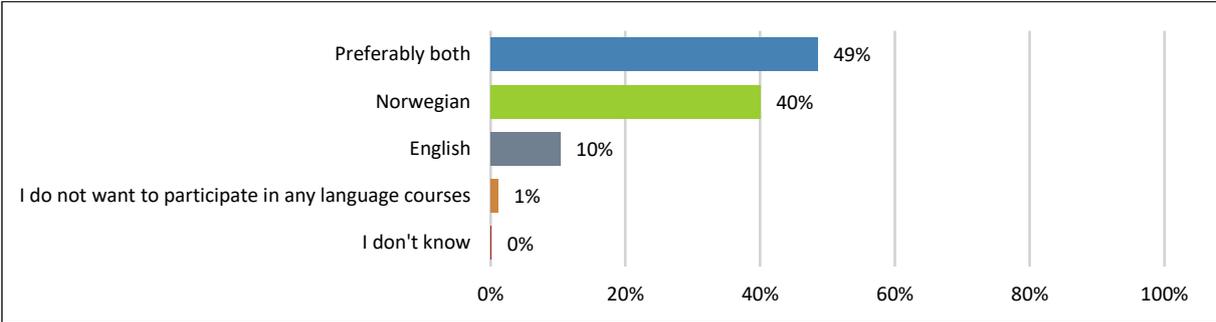
The overall impression is that Ukrainians recognize the importance and usefulness of the introduction programme. One interviewee explained that s/he had come to Norway after hearing about the introduction programme:

If it weren't for the introduction programme, we wouldn't be here [in Norway]. It was a chance to take, because I need to take care of the child. This was the main reason why we decided to come here. I spent two days researching sites and looking for information.

**13.3.3 Norwegian language courses**

The temporary integration act for Ukrainian refugees provides them with options for learning English as well. In the survey, respondents were asked whether they preferred to learn Norwegian, English or both languages.

Figure 40: Preferred language courses: Norwegian, English or both?



\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 40 shows that a considerable majority wanted to learn Norwegian – about 90%, when we combine those who stated that they wanted to learn Norwegian only and those who stated both Norwegian and English. Only 10% preferred to learn only English, if that were possible. About 50% wanted to take advantage of the new legislation that makes it possible to study English as part of the introduction programme, in combination with Norwegian. This eagerness to learn English could be explained by the fact that about 60% of the refugees studied speak English poorly or not at all, and 30% declared a basic level of proficiency (see Figure 12). 40% indicated that they wished to learn only Norwegian.

Some respondents had already started Norwegian classes at the time of our interview, either online or physical courses arranged by the host municipality or NGOs. Others were keen to start. Local practices differed also in this regard, as some locations had been more active in providing free language courses for Ukrainian refugees even before the start of the introduction programme. Such an approach was much appreciated:

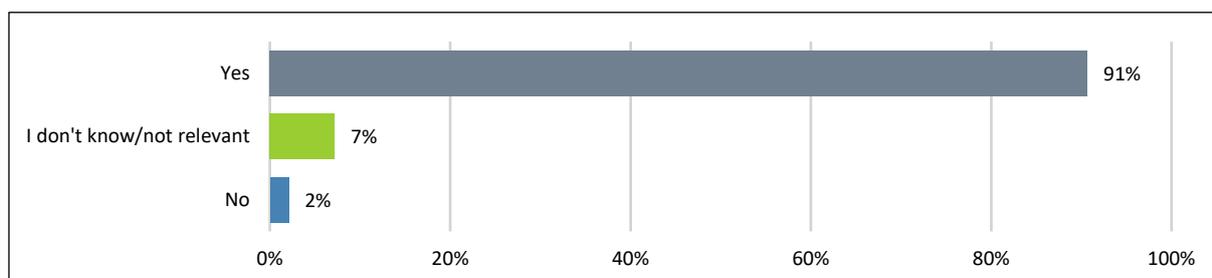
The municipality arranged a meeting every Friday where we talked about the needs of the Ukrainian refugees. After three weeks they started these courses. They have invited employers there. This is not the introduction programme, as I understand it. The introduction programme will start from August on – like the

school year. They ask who would like to participate. My parents are glad to participate.

We started to go to classes that the municipality organizes. This is not the introduction programme, but we study Norwegian four times a week.

We also asked survey respondents would still want to attend the free language courses if they were employed in Norway.

Figure 41: Participation in Norwegian language courses if employed



\*Weighted by gender and age

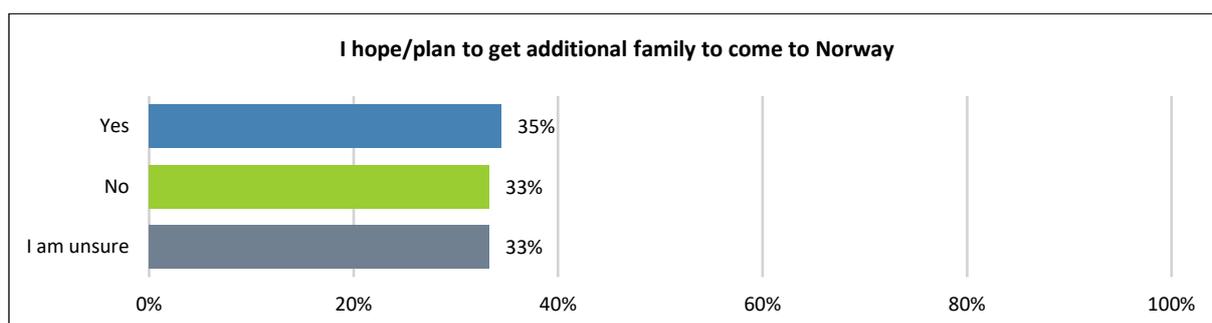
Figure 39 shows that nearly all respondents wanted to learn Norwegian even if they should already have found employment. Only 2% explicitly said that they would not want to learn Norwegian if they got a job.

One interviewee stressed the importance of providing the opportunity to combine employment and Norwegian language courses: 'Ukrainians can work and study at the same time. We want the responsible authorities to understand this fact. We are studying Norwegian now.'

## 13.4 Family reunification

We also asked survey respondents if they had thought about getting additional family members to Norway.

Figure 42: Plan/hopes for family reunion



\*Weighted by gender and age

Figure 42 shows that about one third answered that they planned or hoped to get additional family members to come to Norway; one third answered 'no' and the last third 'unsure'.

Supplementary analysis shows that an overweight of those who answered "yes" are persons who had their partner, children and/or grandchildren remaining in Ukraine.

## 14 Cross-cutting reflections and recommendations

Our overall research question has been: *How do Ukrainian refugees experience the initial phase after arrival in Norway: registration, reception, settlement, and initial integration?* As described in chapter 5, Ukrainian refugees report being generally very satisfied with their experiences with the Norwegian reception system and the Norwegian people. However, as we have also documented, there have been many challenges during those first months, with instances of procedures and services that did not function optimally.

In this chapter, we seek to combine insights across the previous chapters and discuss cross-cutting issues and dilemmas. From these reflections, we present recommendations for addressing the challenges that have arisen in this specific situation, and offer more general recommendations or lessons for future situations with high influxes of protection seekers. We also make suggestions for future evaluations and research beyond the scope of this report.

### 14.1 Challenges with existing procedures and information strategies

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, European countries – including Norway – have sheltered over 7 million Ukrainian refugees (UNHCR 2022). That has not been the first time that Europe has faced the challenge of rapidly upscaling its reception capacity for persons seeking protection. However, every crisis has its unique features and challenges, and the receiving countries have had to adapt accordingly.

Several important contextual factors have affected and complicated how Norway has set about receiving Ukrainian refugees, as their situation has differed in many ways from that of other asylum-seekers. As Ukrainians have visa-free access to the Schengen area for travel of up to 90 days, they can choose in which country to apply for asylum, and they do not need to register immediately after arrival. Many Ukrainian refugees who arrived in the first months had pre-existing networks in Norway, people who helped them with accommodation, navigating the system and advocating their rights. Most importantly, thanks to the decision that Ukrainians should receive temporary collective protection, most applications were processed more quickly than individual asylum applications. To cope with the sudden increase in arrivals, the Norwegian government also expanded the options for staying privately during the registration and application process, in turn leading to new practices concerning the paths to formal settlement in a municipality after granted application (see chapter 3.5).

The combination of all these factors has complicated the previously relatively clear and streamlined procedure and division of responsibilities between public actors. Normally, asylum-seekers go through a sequential process after arriving in Norway, which often takes several months from arrival to settlement. However, a notable feature of the policy changes that have been made for Ukrainian asylum-seekers is that the steps in the process often overlap or take place more or less simultaneously.

For example, the normal procedure for persons seeking asylum in Norway is as follows: First, they must register with the police (PU) at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde immediately upon arrival. They stay at Råde during the registration process, health check, and asylum interview. Ideally, these take a maximum of 21 days. Then they stay at a reception centre while awaiting the outcome, which on average takes eight and a half months. While awaiting the decision, the reception centres are responsible for providing information about applicants' rights in Norway through standardized information programmes, including the process for settlement after a

potential acceptance as a refugee. After an application is granted, the reception centre conducts a settlement interview, to map relevant information that could influence in which Norwegian municipality the refugee should be settled. When IMDi receives the information from the settlement interview, they start a formal process with municipalities that have agreed to receive and settle refugees. When the settlement municipality has been agreed upon, the municipality often needs time to prepare (e.g., find appropriate housing), and after that, the refugee is settled. The average time between granted protection and settlement used to be about six and a half months. After settlement, the refugee is entitled to start the introduction programme within three months. Thus, normally, the traditional procedure from arrival to settlement could take about 19 months, and the public actors (UDI, the police, IMDi, the municipalities) had clear responsibilities for the various steps in the procedure. The lengthy process made it possible to provide information in due time before each next step of the procedure.

By contrast, Ukrainian refugees have various options for accommodation during the registration and application process and, thus, various paths to formal settlement. These different options – along with a process that takes considerably less time, resulting in a need for information about all steps simultaneously. For example, a Ukrainian refugee who arrives in Norway and stays with family during initial period, may contact a municipality with questions about settlement, accommodation and financial assistance even before he or she has registered for collective protection. Further, as most Ukrainian asylum-seekers may expect a positive outcome of their application for collective protection (as it is based on simple, general criteria, and not an individual assessment), and the application process is relatively quick, questions about settlement and rights to integration measures arise almost immediately upon arrival.

All these factors have altered the normal procedures and steps in the post-arrival period with regard to registration, reception, settlement and initial integration. In the case of Ukrainian refugees, everything has happened much faster. The various steps no longer take place sequentially but occur more or less simultaneously. This change means a greater need for 1) re-evaluating the reception procedure for persons who seek collective protection, and 2) providing information to persons seeking collective protection about the proceeding steps early in the process.

First, the current system and procedure (e.g., at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde), were designed for those who would undergo an individual asylum assessment. However, one size does not fit all, and the traditional process does not automatically fit applicants for collective protection. Many public actors have made the changes to policies and practices needed to tackle the situation since February 2022. Still, we recommend that the relevant public actors critically review the changes – and how changes in one part of the process may affect the other parts – to evaluate if there should be made amendments to the process of registration, application, pre-settlement and formal settlement for persons seeking collective protection. They should also consider to what extent possible changes may affect the need for greater coordination among public actors and the adaption of existing procedures.

Second, an expedited reception process with more options for the individual also necessitates coherent and thorough information to the asylum-seeker, from the very beginning, about the choices and the process ahead. The existing process and measures for information tailored to the normal asylum procedure may not be sufficient. Our interviews with and survey of Ukrainian refugees have showed that a major challenge is navigating among the many relevant actors and getting an overview of the overall reception processes that lie ahead. It is a clear request from many interviewees (Ukrainian refugees as well as frontline workers and volunteers) that the government should establish a webpage or portal where they could get 1) an overview of the whole process and the various steps from arrival to settlement, and 2) information about which actors are responsible for what. Such a page could well include links to other relevant pages, but what our informants missed the most was one, unified webpage where they could get an overview of the overall process of seeking protection in Norway and the actors involved.

In interviews with IMDi and UDI, the representatives expressed great understanding for the Ukrainians' wish to have all relevant information available on one webpage, but they also explained why this is no easy matter. First, as Norway has a sectoral principle of responsibility (*sektoransvarprinsippet*), each sector is responsible for policies within its particular field. To create one webpage would necessitate close coordination among many actors. Recalling previous experiences, the IMDi and UDI representatives noted that such initiatives often start out well, but that maintaining and updating such collaborative pages across sectors proved difficult. For such a webpage to function (and not simply be a source of additional misinformation with non-functioning and outdated links), would require that all involved organizations (NAV, IMDi, UDI, Directorate of Health, etc.) would feel responsible for maintaining the page and ensuring that information or links to other webpages were up to date. If such a webpage or portal with overall information is to be established (and that, our study has shown, emerges as a clear request from Ukrainian refugees), such an initiative will require all involved actors to have dedicated resources for maintaining the webpage, to ensure continuously updated information. Additionally, it is probably preferable for one organization to have main responsibility for the page.

## 14.2 Local autonomy and differential treatment

This report has shown that Ukrainian asylum-seekers in Norway have been quite satisfied with their reception. However, one thing that came as a negative surprise to many Ukrainians concerns the differences in financial assistance across municipalities, and to some extent also across reception centres. Many Ukrainians have close communication with other Ukrainian refugees in Norway through various social media platforms, and unequal practices have been quickly noted.

Our study confirms that not all those who stayed in reception centres received the pocket money to which they were entitled; and when they did, they did not always understand how these benefits were calculated, as people got different amounts. For some, it has been unclear what basic necessities they may ask for in reception centres, and interviewees have reported different practices at different centres. UDI has recognized that there has been a problem with the payment of pocket money in reception centres and will compensate those whose rights were not fulfilled. For the future, better practices should be established so that reception-centre providers are able to fulfil these commitments.

In particular, refugees who have stayed with families, friends or other acquaintances have noted differences in the provision of financial support across municipalities. Between registration and approved application, 30% of them received financial assistance from the municipality. Between approved application and formal settlement, the percentage who received support increased to 56% (see chapter 0). Some received support quickly after establishing contact with the municipality, whereas others had their requests for financial assistance from the municipality rejected.

While the unequal practices at reception centres may be dealt with by improving payment routines and by providing information to refugees about what they are entitled to, the problem of unequal financial assistance in municipalities is more complicated. As explained in chapters 3 and 10, it is to a large extent up to the individual municipalities what financial assistance they will provide, and when. The municipality may choose not to accept a refugee for AMOT, in which case they have no obligation to provide financial assistance to refugees not staying in reception centres. If a municipality accepts refugees for AMOT, they are entitled to financial assistance to cover the necessary living expenses. However, this assistance is meant to be subsidiary or need-based: thus, each municipality has discretion to evaluate the need for financial assistance in each individual case. That being said, the municipalities also have the possibility of providing residents with additional support or services through the Norwegian Welfare Offices (NAV) although they

are not legally obliged to do so (if the municipality can refer an applicant to a reception centre for support).

This local discretion may to some extent explain why Ukrainian refugees' experiences with Norwegian municipalities and NAV have varied significantly. However, further study is required to find out more about the practices of municipalities in relation to Ukrainian refugees. What are the main reasons behind the differing practices we have identified in this report? What factors shape the municipalities' decisions to accept or reject people for AMOT? What considerations have shaped the provision of financial assistance to Ukrainian asylum-seekers who are not staying at reception centres? How have municipalities reached the decision as to who is eligible for support according to the regulations – which involve a great deal of discretion? For the future, it is important to provide information to asylum-seekers about why such differences in financial assistance may occur. Policy-makers should also consider measures that can reduce the instances of unequal treatment among persons seeking protection in Norway.

### 14.3 Expectation management: not only *what*, but also *why*

One main observation from our study is how inaccurate (or lack of) information has led to unrealistic expectations, in turn influencing Ukrainians refugees' experiences of the procedures and services they encountered. One highly concrete example is how inaccurate time estimates created unnecessary frustration during the registration process at the National Arrivals Centre at Råde. For example, applicants were foreshadowed that the process would take three hours – but it actually took six to seven hours. If there are uncertain time-estimates for the procedures, and these vary for different persons (which was often the case with processing applications for collective protection), it is important to inform the asylum-seekers that time estimates are uncertain (and preferably why, see next point).

Second, expectation management can be a question of not only informing about *what* (e.g., rights, procedures, etc.), but also *why*. We find that many are frustrated about the Norwegian settlement model where people who get assisted settlement through IMDi have limited possibilities for influencing in which municipality they are settled. Here, it would be logical to provide information on *why* Norway has this kind of settlement model (the goal of dispersed settlement, and that public settlement includes many rights for accommodation, introduction programmes and financial assistance, all of which the municipalities must plan for and provide).

Third, in the course of spring 2022, several different policy processes were underway, so public actors could not know exactly how the situation would be until after the political process was completed. For example, the policy processes concerning the adjusted introduction programme and Norwegian language training for Ukrainian refugees were being worked out from April to June 2022. However, *some* information is better than *no* information: it is important to inform about any ongoing processes and the fact that no decisions have yet been made. Preferably, further information could be provided about when answers may be expected.

### 14.4 Reaching the 'end-user:' timing, suitable channels and formats of information

With an expedited application process and policy changes that opened up multiple paths to formal settlement, Norwegian governmental actors have struggled to provide Ukrainian refugees, their private helpers and other governmental and non-governmental actors with updated and readily comprehensible information.

First, a major challenge has been to provide sufficient information to persons who do not stay in reception centres during the application procedure – as is the case for many Ukrainian refugees.

In the regular asylum application process, reception centres are responsible for providing standardized information programmes for their residents about their rights and obligations and the next steps in the process. However, our survey found that about half of the recently arrived Ukrainian refugees have been staying outside the regular system, making it essential to find ways of reaching those who do not get information directly from formal actors like the reception centres. Public actors must develop targeted information strategies for providing information to this (relatively large) group of Ukrainian refugees.

Second, in times of crisis, policy changes are decided and enforced rapidly, whereas implementation of these changes must be dealt with after the changes have been agreed, including how to inform the end-users (here: Ukrainian refugees) as well as other relevant actors. However, policy changes that are hastily enforced without sufficient information for the actors involved, may prove more troublesome than anticipated. This may not always be possible, but one recommendation for future crisis would be to plan how to inform relevant actors and end-users *before* a relevant policy change is implemented, to minimize double work and misunderstandings. Delaying the implementation of a policy may not always be desirable in times of crises, but it could be worth evaluating whether the overall effect of a policy change would be improved if implementation were delayed slightly, so that reliable and understandable information could be circulated to accompany policy implementation.

Third, our study found that Ukrainian refugees use social media as an important source of information, Facebook in particular. These platforms may be important channels for reaching end-users with targeted information and updates about important changes. However, public actors such as UDI and IMDi will also have to ensure that their use of social media is in line with GDPR regulations, and that these platforms do not function as arenas where members of the target group exposes sensitive information about themselves. These privacy considerations limit the array of options for public actors. Still, using social media as active communication platforms in times of crisis to reach groups that may be difficult to reach through traditional channels (like official webpage or other formal channels) should be evaluated and further developed, for both this and future situations of high influx of protection seekers.

Lastly, this project has focused on investigating *Ukrainian refugees'* experiences with their first phase in Norway, and limited mainly to UDI's and IMDi's main areas of responsibility. National agencies may provide services to asylum-seekers directly as 'end-users', however, often their work towards end-users is more indirect. An important task for UDI – and perhaps the main purpose of IMDi as an organization – is not direct service delivery for those seeking protection, but to guide, help and inform other public and non-public actors in their service delivery to the target group. Future studies should explore how these frontline workers have experienced UDI's and IMDi's information strategies and measures, and whether they have received sufficient information and guidance to perform their service provision to Ukrainian refugees.

## 14.5 The interpretation dilemma

We find that competence in English among Ukrainians who come to Norway is low. As only 11% of those above 18 years report that they speak English fluently the need for interpreting services has thus been significant. However, 90% of the Ukrainian refugees report that they are fluent in both Ukrainian and Russian, and interpreters in both languages have been used, although more Russian-language interpreters have been available the initial period. Several measures have been taken to increase the number of Ukrainian-language interpreters in recent months. Although not all Ukrainians had access to interpreters every time they needed it in the initial period, the majority of those who had been provided with interpretation – almost 80% – answer that the interpretation was of good or excellent quality.

During our data collection, some Ukrainian interpreters and Ukrainian interest groups in Norway noted that they found it problematic to use Russian language in interpretation extensively in communication with Ukrainians – especially as regards interpreters with a Russian background. In our survey, however, very few Ukrainian refugees raised concerns about the use of interpreters with Russian backgrounds.

Generally, under the Norwegian Interpreting Act, public bodies are obliged to provide interpreting in a language in which the minority language speaker is proficient, although not necessarily in that person's preferred language. On 23 May 2022, IMDi published online guidelines to public actors (primarily targeting managers and employees in municipalities) who need interpreting services for Ukrainian refugees.<sup>41</sup> Here it is stated: 'Public actors may not emphasize the interpreter's ethnicity when deciding on interpreting assignments. Nor is the ethnicity of the employee/contractor registered with the employer/contractor.' Further:

Trust between the parties of the conversation is often a prerequisite for good communication in interpreted conversations in the health services. If there are circumstances to indicate that the conversation cannot be conducted due to the circumstances of a given interpreter (for example gender or country of origin), arrangements can exceptionally be made for this to be considered.

Very few Ukrainian refugees raises concerns about interpreting in Russian or having an interpreter with a Russian background. Still, it is important for public actors who use interpreting services for Ukrainian refugees are aware that this may be a politized and sensitive issue for some refugees. Thus, IMDi should ensure that relevant public actors are informed about the national guidelines.

## 14.6 Temporary adaptations for Ukrainian refugees – dilemmas of unequal treatment and long-term consequences

Since February 2022, various policies and existing practices concerning grounds for protection, registration, accommodation, settlement and integration have been adjusted or altered to accommodate the high arrivals of Ukrainian in Norway (see chapter 3 for a detailed description of these changes). The stated aim of most of the policy changes implemented since February has generally been to simplify and pragmatically adapt the system to the situation of high influx. Mixed with this pragmatism, politicians have often expressed another set of expectations and assumptions about Ukrainians' ability to integrate in Norway, and/or accentuated how this situation differs from previous situations with high influxes of asylum seekers.

Most changes and adaptations have targeted Ukrainians specifically, and not involved general changes for all asylum-seekers. In relation to these (temporary) changes made for Ukrainians, some questions related to future policy development arise. It will be important 1) to evaluate the effects of the new policies and practices and consider whether it would be advantageous to expand them to all protection seekers, 2) to deal with questions of unequal treatment between Ukrainian refugees and other groups, and 3) to address the potential long-term consequences of the temporarily legislation for Ukrainian refugees.

First, one of the most striking differences between the reception of Ukrainians and other asylum seekers and refugees, is that Ukrainians have been granted much more freedom to make *independent choices*. Unlike other asylum-seekers, Ukrainians can move freely within the Schengen area and choose in which country to apply for collective protection. Further, once in Norway, they have greater possibilities to decide whether or not to live within the reception

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<sup>41</sup> <https://www.imdi.no/tolk/bruk-av-tolk-som-folge-av-situasjonen-i-ukraina/>

system, they have greater access to direct settlement in a municipality of their choice, they can choose whether to take part in the introduction programme on a full-time basis or not, and they can even opt to learn English instead of – or in addition to – Norwegian. Moreover, they can choose to return to Ukraine to consider their options, and still have the possibility to return to Norway with no loss of rights or entitlements. Thus, Ukrainians have far more options than other groups seeking protection in Norway. This report has sought to provide a brief introduction to how these changes in policies and practices have been experienced, in particular from the Ukrainians' perspective. However, further evaluations of how these changes have been implemented, and the difficulties and effects, are vital for future policy developments – for Ukrainian refugees, and for other groups of asylum-seekers. As most of the legislative changes made in this connection have been temporary measures, two questions arise: 1) Should the temporary changes be extended and prolonged when they expire, to also apply to new arrivals from Ukraine? or should they be adjusted/removed? 2) Are there any policies or practices that have been made for Ukrainian refugees that should also be expanded to include other/all groups of asylum-seekers?

Second, and related to the second question above, several actors (both in our study, and in the public and political debate<sup>42</sup>) have highlighted that the changes in policies and practices for Ukrainians may lead to unequal treatment between Ukrainians and other groups seeking protection in Norway. Such unequal treatment may concern policies on rights and obligations (e.g., that Ukrainians may bring their pets to reception centres, have the possibility to participate in the introduction programme part-time, may learn English, etc.), and the non-public initiatives specifically aimed at Ukrainian refugees. For example, frontline workers from municipalities, reception centres and volunteer organizations have experienced that private helpers or businesses have wanted to donate clothes, rent out flats or offer free leisure activities – to Ukrainian refugees only. Another example is that Ukrainian refugees in several locations in Norway got access to free public transportation, while other asylum-seekers did not. Frontline workers feel that some of these policies and practices challenge core values of public sector governance: equal service provision and opportunities. This challenge of unequal treatment – and its possible consequences for frontline workers and other groups of asylum-seekers – should be explicitly acknowledged and evaluated in future policy developments.

Lastly, the unpredictability of the war in Ukraine makes it impossible to plan for how many Ukrainians will come to Norway and how long they will stay. A basic idea underlying the arrangement for temporary protection is that the host country will accept many refugees, precisely because the situation is considered to be temporary. However, as is known from earlier studies (Brekke, Birkvad and Erdal, 2019; Brekke 2001), temporary collective protection can lead to difficulties if a conflict drags on, while the government still maintain the expectation that the refugees will return to their home countries.

Moreover, uncertainty as to whether it will be possible to stay in Norway over time can lead to unrest, insecurity and poor integration (Brekke, Birkvad and Erdal, 2019). In this study, we have found that most Ukrainian refugees do not think that the war will end quickly, nor that it will be safe to return to their hometown anytime soon. In fact, the majority would rather continue to stay in Norway if returning to Ukraine entailed that they could not return to their hometown but would have to re-start their lives at new locations within Ukraine. Norway's temporary law for collective protection for persons from Ukraine fleeing the war lasts for three years from its enactment in March 2022. As many actors – and the refugees themselves – begin to realize that this temporary situation may well become long-term (or even permanent), new questions arise concerning the rights of Ukrainian refugees in a longer-term perspective. The two previous paragraphs discussed how many of the changes that have been made to accommodate Ukrainian refugees have meant

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.kommunal-rapport.no/nyheter/forsker-pa-ukrainernes-forste-mote-med-norge/143898/>; Innst. 352 L; <https://www.nrk.no/rogaland/hero-topp-meiner-vi-forskjellsbehandlar-flyktningar-fra-ukraina-og-eritrea-1.16093037>

more options and agency for Ukrainians. Still, with a temporary collective protection permit, Ukrainians may not be as ‘privileged’ compared to other refugee groups in the longer term.

For example, Ukrainians may seek various types of residence permits, such as family reunification and work permits: they are not restricted to seeking collective protection only. Which permit they get may greatly affect their rights to introduction programmes and language training, but also the future path to permanent residence and eventual citizenship. It is essential that Ukrainians are informed about their options to apply for various types of permits – and what these permits entail as regards short- and long-term rights and obligations. For example, when collective protection ceases after three years, Ukrainians will have to apply for individual asylum if they are still in need of protection. As the years of temporary collective protection do not count when applications for permanent residence are assessed, it will take a Ukrainian refugee a *minimum of eight years* before becoming eligible to apply for permanent residence (compared to *five years* for other groups who get individual asylum directly). Ukrainians in Norway who have obtained work permits do not have the same entitlement to introduction programmes or Norwegian language training; however, they may apply for permanent residence after *three years* (provided that they also fulfil the other requirements for language and civics tests, income level, etc.). Ukrainian refugees should be informed about the various residence permits they may apply for, and the differences between those permits concerning rights to e.g., financial aid and integration measures, as well as differences between permits as regards the path to permanent residence and citizenship.

## 14.7 Should I stay or should I go? Reflections on future challenges for return and integration policies

During the initial period after the Russian invasion, the general assumption among policy-makers was that the Ukrainian refugees’ stay in Norway would be short-term and temporary. By contrast, we find that only one-fourth of the respondents say they wish to return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends. Further specified, 66% answer that they would prefer to continue living in Norway rather than to re-start a new life in another Ukrainian city than their hometown. As migration research has shown, the longer migrants stay in a host country, the less likely are they to return to their country of origin (Balcilar & Nugent, 2019). Moreover, in the global scope since 2005, fewer and fewer refugees have repatriated compared with the period 1990 to 2005 (UNHCR, 2019). Thus, as the war drags on, it seems likely that the number of those who would prefer to remain in Norway will increase. The continuing development of the war in Ukraine will affect their assessments of when – and whether – to return to Ukraine, which in turn may affect their decisions about investing time and effort into integrating into Norwegian society.

Thus, in developing policies for this group, it is necessary to re-evaluate some of the assumptions that are now proved unsure or even false. For example, the temporary legislation for introduction programme for Ukrainian refugees was premised on a short-term perspective compared to other refugee groups, with shorter introduction programmes and Norwegian language courses. One rationale for these policy changes has been the assumption that Ukrainians will be here for only a short while, but another important assumption has been that Ukrainians will integrate into Norwegian society more easily than other refugees because of their assumed cultural similarities, English skills and higher levels of education. In this study, we have debunked the assumption that the majority of Ukrainians want to return to their home country as soon as possible. We have also debunked the assumption that Ukrainian refugees are highly proficient in English. Indeed, they have high educational levels, but these qualifications may not be directly transferrable to the Norwegian labour market. One question for future policy development is therefore if the labour-market integration strategy should have a short- or long-term perspective. Other studies have found that, although initial investments in supplementary education and other qualification measures may be resource- and time-demanding, when viewed in a longer-term perspective, this

investment pays off because it contributes to stable labour-market integration in the longer run (Hernes et al., 2022).

Special rules concerning temporary visits to Ukraine have been developed for Ukrainian refugees, but the implementation and practices around these policies need further attention. For example, Ukrainians do not lose their rights as asylum-seekers if they temporarily visit Ukraine – but for how long should they be allowed to stay in Ukraine without losing their rights to introduction programmes and publicly financed accommodation after they have been settled in a Norwegian municipality? How should these rules be enforced at the local level?

Lastly, future research should also investigate reasons why people may not want to or plan to return to Ukraine. Besides the relatively obvious reasons identified in our research (war-damaged cities, territories under occupation, ever-dangerous border areas, lack of available employment and difficult life conditions after the war), there are also subjective reasons stemming from perceptions and attitudes. For instance, some Ukrainians who fled their country are accused in the social media by those who remained in Ukraine of being ‘weak’ and ‘unpatriotic – a situation that may give rise to fears of social exclusion and therefore unwillingness to return. Research on returnees in a post-war context, as in Bosnia (see e.g., Stefansson, 2004), has noted similar mechanisms. On the other hand, such views are constructed socially, so they should have the potential to be re-constructed and re-branded by efforts of concerned public and social actors in both Norway and Ukraine. Thus, more knowledge about this topic may prove highly relevant in developing of future policies on refugees, not least the question of their return to the home country.

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