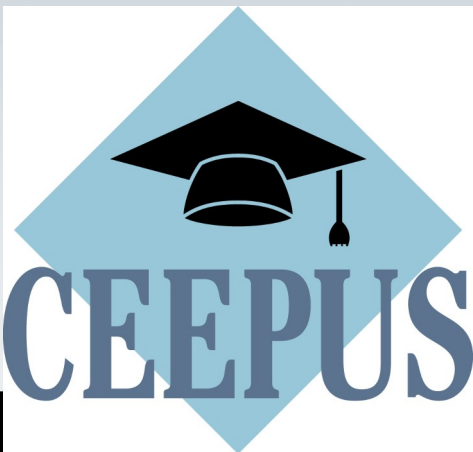




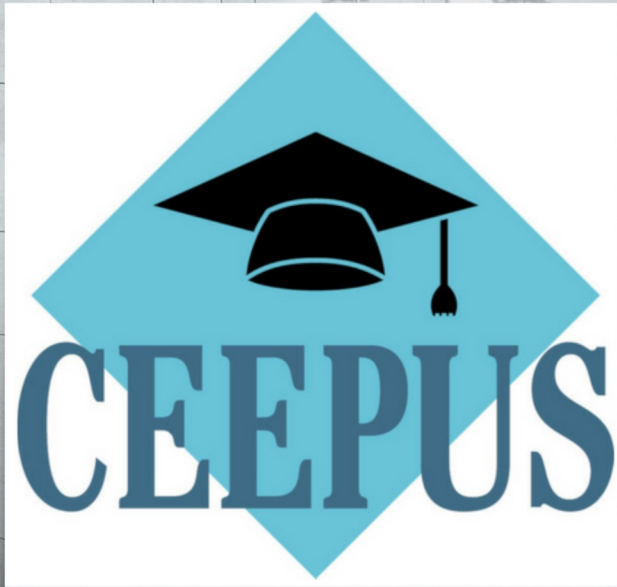
UNIWERSYTET  
O P O L S K I



**Special Online Session:  
Situation of Ukrainian refugees in Central Europe  
and the Balkans – comparative analysis and  
lessons learned**



**13th EURINT INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE,  
24-25 May 2024 | Iasi, Romania**



# Border and Regional Studies Network



**Border and Regional Studies Network within the CEEPUS**  
(Central Europe Exchange Programme for University Studies)  
**Established in 2021**



**19 universities from 11 countries of Central Europe and the Balkans**

AL – University of Tirana

PL - University of Opole, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, University of Wrocław, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

CZ - Technical University of Liberec, University of Ostrava, Silesian University in Opava,

Croatia – University of Zagreb

HU - ELTE Budapest, University of Pécs,

SI - University of Ljubljana,

MN - University of Montenegro,

SVK – University of SS. Cyril and Methodicus in Trnava; Comenius University in Bratislava,

RO - Babes Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi,

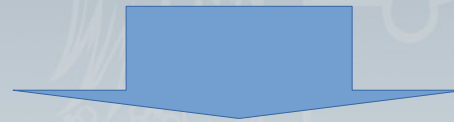
MD - Free State University of Moldova,

MK – University American College in Skopje

## The main points to be addressed during the session:

The research report from the Visegrad + project: **Situation of Ukrainian refugees in Central Europe and the Balkans – comparative analysis and lessons learned:**

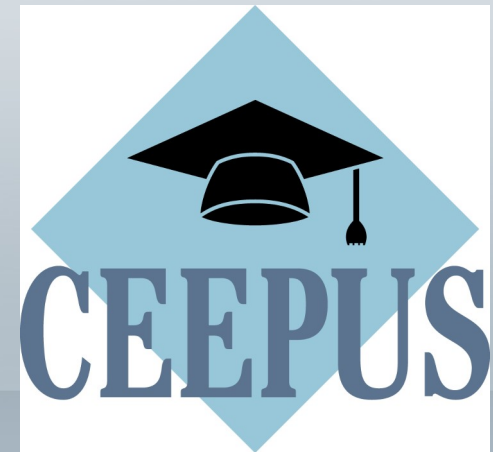
- the most important phases of the research
  - the most important conclusions
  - the most important recommendations



discussion over the presented findings/  
experience and knowledge sharing/questions



- Visegrad Fund



## Border and Regional Studies Network

Idea for the project in January 2023



successful application to International Visegrad Fund in April 2023



Visegrad + project: ***Ukrainian refugees in Central Europe and the Balkans - lessons learned and policy recommendations***

# The main characteristics of the project

**The title of the project:** Ukrainian refugees in Central Europe and the Balkans - lessons learned and policy recommendations

**Project website:**

<https://borderandregionalstudies.wnopiks.uni.opole.pl/visegrad-project/>

**Partners of the project:**

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi

Babes Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca

Silesian University in Opava

University of Ostrava

University American College in Skopje

University of Montenegro

University of Opole


University of Pécs

University of SS. Cyril and Methodicus in Trnava

# The method of structured, focused comparison

developed by Alexander George


(George A., 2019, Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison, In: Alexander L. George: A Pioneer in Political and Social Sciences, ed. Dan Caldwell, Springer)




comparison is 'focused',  
because it selects for  
exploration only a specific  
example of a wider  
phenomenon like a refugee  
community



the Ukrainian  
refugee community  
bounded both in  
time and space



comparison is 'structured'  
because all the cases selected  
were analysed according to the  
standardized set of guidelines  
directing the process of data  
collection



the analytical framework comprised  
of dimensions to be focused on, with  
each dimension accompanied by set  
of standardised guiding questions

# Three phases of the comparative study of Ukrainian refugees

## Phase 1: Design of the comparison



June and September 2023: two online sessions devoted to discussing theoretical and methodological foundations of the comparison - research problem, research question and theory/theories that might be useful for studying the selected phenomenon  
**building the analytical framework to be applied for each country**

## Phase 2: Single case studies




International group of 14 academics works separately on each country -  
2 academics per one case/country

## Phase 3: Comparing cases



October 17-20, 2023 Conference in Skopje: presenting, discussing and comparing 7 preliminary country studies conducted



follow-up work on the research report  
(January, April 2024 two additional online meetings to discuss the structure and content of the report)

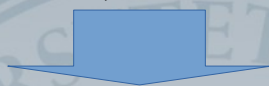








Research problem: **a situation of Ukrainian refugees** after the full scale invasion of Russia in February 24, 2022 in the following countries: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

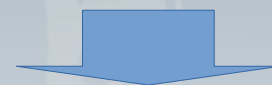


**How does this situation look like and has it evolved after February 24, 2022?**

the Ukrainian refugee situation has two crucial components



reaction of a receiving country towards Ukrainian refugees and how it changed after February 2022



characteristics of Ukrainian refugees community and how it changed after February 2022

# Different categories of the secondary data sources used



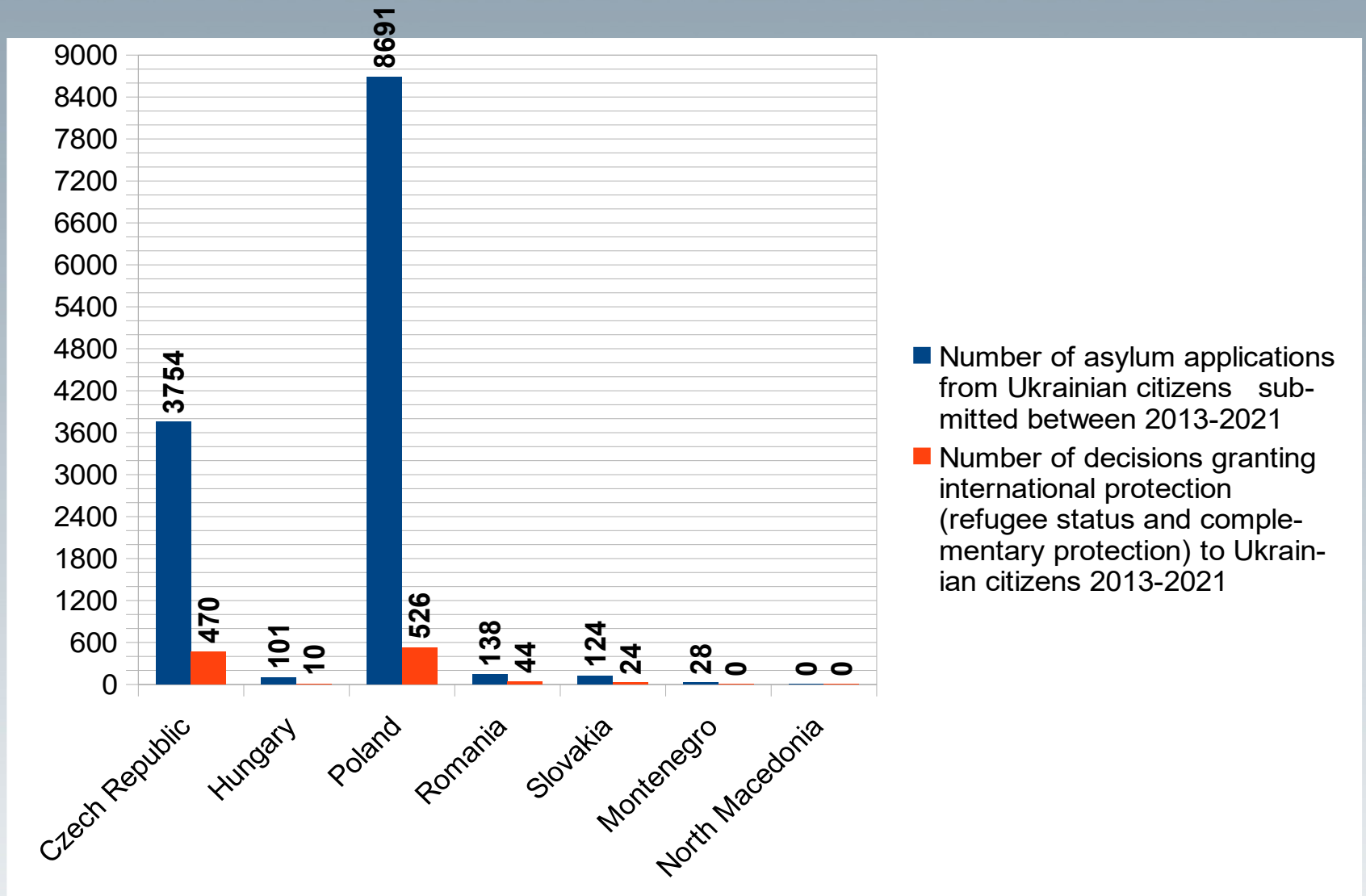
1. Scientific/academic literature
2. Policy papers
3. Public opinion pools
4. Reports published by governmental and non-governmental organizations (including international ones)
5. Data bases on migrants
6. Media reports

## The main 7 conclusions

1. This **was somehow paradoxical situation** that the cluster presented such openness in accepting huge number of Ukrainian refugees, because if we look at the data like the Migrant Acceptance Index (Gallup Institute), before 2022, they were **characterized by the lowest levels of acceptance of immigrants**. This demonstrates that **in a specific geopolitical circumstances and arrangements**, historically and culturally grounded inclinations towards defining immigrants might be of secondary importance.
2. The analysed countries have a **long history of emigration**, however only recently the five EU countries became countries of **massive labour immigration**. It means that these countries only recently approached the challenge of integrating and dealing with immigrants, **without any long term experience in integration policies** – this is reflected in **rather low standards of integration policies** as measured by the Migrant Integration Policy Index
3. Especially in the V4 countries **immigration policy was strongly securitized** after 2015 and **in the whole cluster the acceptance rate for asylum applications in 2013-2021 was low**, both for all applicants (stretching from 0.53% to 25%) and applicants with Ukrainian citizenship (stretching from 6% to 32%).



# Number of asylum applications from Ukrainian citizens and decisions granting them international protection between 2013-2021 according to the UNHCR data



Source: Own elaboration on the basis of the data from the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees: <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/>

4. Before 2022 there were **quite well embedded Ukrainian networks in the EU countries** of the cluster, composed of people who were economically active, relatively well educated (knowing very often the language of the host society) and politically recognized as legitimate minorities. In North Macedonia and Montenegro the Ukrainian community was tiny before 2022, however it played active role in supporting Ukrainians who arrived there after 2022

5. **Patterns of settlement** in the countries of arrival are quite similar. The refugees migrated mainly **to the biggest cities, but also the borderland regions** were significant areas of destination – this clearly **shows unequal distribution of burden of hosting refugees by the local governments** in one country, demonstrating also risks of shortage of public services in specific regions and municipalities.

6. The **profile of the Ukrainian refugees is a specific one**, constituting some form of **advantage for them**, but also determining **specific challenges for integration**. Majority are women with children, Christians, with a good education level and previous working experience and clear displacement pattern. But this means specific problems:

- limited access to the pre-school education, child care and lack of preparation of schools for teaching
- as important users of the public services like schooling, health care, welfare payments (in some countries), they are **under higher risk of being perceived by the host society as competitors** for public services

7. Electoral politics creates **temptations for using narratives directed against the Ukrainian refugees** by political parties (supported by disinformation and dissatisfied interest groups). A **new narrative might appear soon** concerning the refugee-men in conscription age – there were already some voices on that in Slovakia and Poland. Public opinion pools for the whole 2023 show that **still significant majority support the refugees, however it dropped** from 82% to 74%.

## The main 7 recommendations

1. Addressing the long term well being of Ukrainian refugees can not be treated as a separate issue, but **must be a part of a wider strategic approach towards immigration** implemented by governments: extraordinary situation in 2022 created not only challenges, but also opportunities to overhaul and transform the approach towards immigrants (by capitalizing on huge social engagement at the time of reception):
  - within that strategy **the local government should be the main level of building an inclusive environment for immigrants** - the integral part of the **local governments' development strategies should be integration policy of immigrants**, but it must be accompanied **with financial support from the central government** based on well defined, transparent and objective criteria of transferring subsidies.
2. There should be more **awareness raising campaigns about the positive contribution of immigrants** – not only by referring to the economic argumentation, but **also grounded in the fact that all of these countries have their own history of massive emigration**.
3. Building of a **culture of resilience to disinformation discrediting refugees**, thus educational programmes at the basic, compulsory level should be changed accordingly. The topics related to refugees (and immigrants generally) should be an integral part of civic education in the curriculum.
4. In the countries with a tradition of multi-ethnic diversity (like Montenegro or North Macedonia) there should be **more visibility and attention given to the so-called new minorities**, which means those who recently immigrated to these countries like Ukrainians (there is **not enough recognition for special needs of the new minorities**).

5. As a significant proportion of Ukrainian refugees are women and children:
- **child care protection and schooling are the most important services to be provided.**
  - inclusion into the educational system should be one of the crucial tasks, with implementation of **the specific forms of assistance and extra lessons for Ukrainian children** (this would also improve integration with the labour market among Ukrainian women)
6. Ukrainian diaspora before 2022 has proven to be an important social capital facilitating migratory movement and a safety net for newly arrived. While the newcomers after 2022 either have organised themselves for self-support. **These non-governmental organisations should be given financial and organisational support**, both from the local government and within the central government programmes.
7. There should be intensified effort by governments of the countries being the main hosts of refugees to **find a political support and elaborate on long term solutions after the 3 years period of duration of the Temporary Protection – the space for Poland, which will preside over the Council of the European Union** in the first half of 2025 (which overlaps with the end of the Temporary Protection on March 4, 2025)

## Ukrainian refugees in 7 countries and Ukrainian border proximity

country	number of refugees as for January 2023	number of refugees as for August 2023	number of refugees as for date in the bracket	general population as for 2022 (according to the World Bank)	ratio of Ukrainian refugees to the general population (column 4 to 5)	border with Ukraine
Czech Republic	483 620	361 485	381 400 (31.01.2024)	10 672 118	3,6%	No
Hungary	33 603	52 290	66 135 (17.03.2024)	9 643 048	0,7%	Yes/ 137 km long
Poland	1 563 386	968 390	956 635 (15.12.2023)	36 821 749	2,6 %	Yes/ 535 km long
Romania	106 835	95 195	77 250 (01.04.2024)	19 047 009	0,4%	Yes/ 649 km long
Slovakia	107 203	106 570	117 265 (24.03.2024)	5 431 752	2,2%	Yes/ 97 km long
Montenegro	33 098	53 240	65 105 (29.01.2024)	617 213	10,5%	No
North Macedonia	6 404	12 155	18 915 (22.02.2024)	2 057 679	0,9 %	No

Source: UNHCR [https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine\\_](https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine_); World Bank: <https://data.worldbank.org/country>.



- 
- Visegrad Fund
- 
- 

Thank you for your attention

See us on the website, where the report will be published:

<https://borderandregionalstudies.wnopiks.uni.opole.pl/>