**Despite challenges, V4 societies generally remain supportive of Ukrainian refugees, with more negative attitudes apparent in Slovakia**

*Kyiv, 16th January 2023:* **Poland and Hungary indicate the most favourable views towards Ukrainian refugees, with the former hosting the largest amount and the latter the fewest in the Visegrad countries (V4). Slovakia is the only country in the region where negative sentiment is clearly pronounced: a sizeable 28% of Slovaks see Ukrainian refugees as a threat to their society (in Poland, not even 5% take this stance). Meanwhile, hosting Ukrainians benefits the V4 economies and could slow down the current economic decline of the region, a new GLOBSEC report shows.**

Almost 85% of Poles, 82% of Hungarians and 73% of Czechs see hosting Ukrainian refugees in their country as a positive development. In contrast, 52% of polled Slovaks expressed a negative view towards this. A similar pattern is seen in public attitudes towards the continuation of refugee assistance: 88% of Poles, 87% of Hungarians and 81% of Czechs believe the Ukrainian refugees should be further supported either in full or reduced amount, while in Slovakia, 42% are against the continuation of the assistance, 45% back it and others are undecided.

Slovaks were also more likely (29%) to say they had experienced slight to large negative changes in their lives due to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees, yet only 13% of Poles reported such changes. However, a significant number of Slovaks (15%) believe that Ukrainian refugees enrich their society, with this number only being higher in the Czech Republic at 17%. “*This discrepancy is possible only because Slovak society is polarized – some people are very supportive of Ukrainians and some very hostile*,” one of the report’s authors, Zoriana Mishchuk, a Senior Fellow at the GLOBSEC Ukraine and Eastern Europe Programme says.

*Respondents’ assessment of changes in their lives following the Ukrainian refugee influx (in percentages)*

*Percentage of respondents considering Ukrainian refugees to be a threat or an enrichment to their society*

Meanwhile, 33% of Slovaks believe there has been a spike in the crime rate due to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees - only 11% of Poles share this opinion, with Czechs falling in the middle (20%). Nevertheless, when asked about their personal experience, 81% of Hungarians, 79% of Poles, 70% of Czechs and 68% of Slovaks said they had never observed any inappropriate behaviour by Ukrainian refugees.

“*In assessing negative attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees and the specific characteristics of respondents, a pertinent takeaway is that poor and less educated people, as well as those who learn news in personal communication and from social media, are more likely to espouse anti-refugee beliefs across all countries included in the poll. In Slovakia, people who consider themselves poor are far more likely to oppose their country hosting Ukrainian refugees – almost 70% say it is bad, in comparison to the national average of 52%. In Poland, this number stood at 19% against the national average of 11%*,” Zoriana Mishchuk adds.

**V4 countries’ support to Ukrainian refugees**

Visegrad countries now host more than 2.1 million Ukrainian refugees, representing around a quarter of all Ukrainians who have fled their country following the Russian invasion. Their distribution within V4 countries is uneven: more than 1.5 million reside in Poland (equal to 4% of the host nation’s total population), nearly 467,000 in the Czech Republic (4.3%), just shy of 103,000 in Slovakia (1.9%) and almost 33,000 in Hungary (0.3%).

“*Government aid programmes have been set up ensuring access to limited social services in accordance with national legislative acts supporting the implementation of EU Directive 2011/24/EU. Although the scope and essence of government aid vary from country to country, Ukrainian refugees in all V4 countries can benefit from access to the local labour markets, healthcare, housing, education, and limited financial support*,” Roman Vlasenko, a report co-author and Senior Fellow at the GLOBSEC Ukraine and Eastern Europe Programme, explained.

Civil society of host countries has proven to be critically important in supplementing governmental assistance to refugees (in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia) or even substituting it where the government has not been proactive (in Hungary). The level of individual involvement is impressive: the number of respondents who said they have personally helped Ukrainian refugees in some way is as high as 67% in Poland, 54% in Czechia, 46% in Slovakia and 34% in Hungary. The societal support of refugees, in return, helped the latter to make positive changes in host economies.

While the V4 countries spend a lot on refugee assistance, they also benefit from refugees’ arrival. The most significant mutual impact is seen in the labour market, where Ukrainians take jobs in which the local population is not interested. Although many Ukrainian refugees are well-educated and skilled, they are mostly currently looking for easily accessible jobs that do not necessarily match their qualifications. For instance, in Slovakia, most positions filled by Ukrainians can be categorized as unqualified work (33.1 %), machinery operation (26.3%) or trade and services related (12.8%). The situation is similar in other countries.

“*The employment of Ukrainian refugees has contributed a net positive impact to economic growth in the EU (0.5% or 1.2 million workers by the end of 2022). The largest labour force increases have occurred in the Czech Republic (2.2%) and Poland (2.1%). Hungary and the Slovak Republic, for their part, have seen estimated increases at between 1% and 1.5%*,” Roman Vlasenko added.

While continuing their support of Ukrainian refugees, the host countries learn how to integrate refugees from other parts of the world, who may not have the same skills as refugees from Ukraine but can bring positive changes as well.

**Methodology**

Findings regarding societal attitudes in Visegrad countries towards refugees presented in this report are based on public opinion surveys carried out in the second half of September 2022 in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. The surveys were conducted on a sample of 1000 respondents per country (4,000 respondents altogether) using stratified random sampling in the form of computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). In all countries, the profiles of the respondents were representative of the respective country according to gender, age, education, region of residence and size of settlement. The surveys were coordinated by the FOCUS agency and conducted by STEM/MARK a.s. (Czech Republic), Publicus Kutató és Tanácsadó Intézet Kft (Hungary), Opinia24 Sp. z o.o. (Poland) and FOCUS s.r.o. (Slovakia).

**About GLOBSEC**

GLOBSEC is a global think-tank based in Bratislava committed to enhancing democracy, security, prosperity and sustainability in Europe and throughout the world. It is an independent, non-partisan, non-governmental organization. Its mission is to influence the future by generating new ideas and solutions for a better and safer world. The annual GLOBSEC Bratislava Forum, one of the leading global security conferences, contributes to this mission. GLOBSEC also organizes the annual GLOBSEC Tatra Summit, a conference that provides the opportunity for experts to have fruitful political discussions on the future of Europe.