Habitat for Humanity®

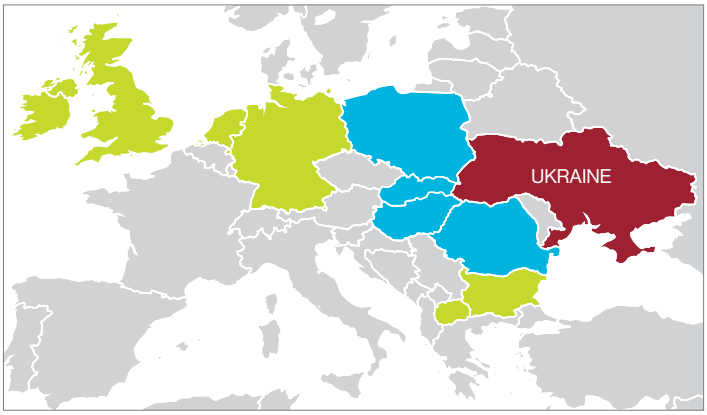
Habitat for Humanity – Ukraine Emergency Response

Poland – Romania – Hungary – Slovakia

Umit Bektas/Reuters Pictures

Habitat for Humanity has been supporting shelter needs in Central and Eastern Europe since 1992. Residents of this region are now facing what the United Nations is warning could be **Europe's largest refugee crisis of this century**, as the conflict in Ukraine is forcing families who fear for their lives to flee their homes and travel to neighboring countries.

The U.N. estimates that more than 1 million people left in the first week of the conflict alone, and these numbers are expected to keep rising. The result is a **massive need for emergency and long-term shelter.**



Habitat response countries

Additional countries in Europe with Habitat organizations

OUR EXPERTISE

Habitat for Humanity is well-positioned to respond to these urgent needs.

Our teams of shelter experts are already working with other aid organizations and government officials at the border in Romania and Hungary. We are collaborating with partners on an appropriate response in Poland and Slovakia as well. Habitat joins daily calls led by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, or UNHCR, to help ensure a coordinated approach. And we have sent crisis-response reinforcements to the countries bordering Ukraine.

OUR RESPONSE

Habitat is seeking to alleviate the shelter burden of refugees fleeing Ukraine.

Habitat for Humanity International committed US$350,000 to ramp up our initial response. However, the need is great, and we are fundraising for a two-pronged approach to reducing the vulnerability of refugee families by supporting refugees on the move and helping them advance along a path to permanent, durable shelter.

Supporting refugees on the move

In the first days of the crisis, Habitat started providing refugees on the Hungarian border with emergency supplies such as water, diapers and lighting. Habitat Romania, meanwhile, installed space heaters at transition centers near the Ukrainian border, where temperatures were dropping below freezing at night. Through a partnership with the Ibis hotels, Habitat Romania also is issuing vouchers to refugees crossing into the country, allowing them to stay for free in one of the company's hotels for five days and giving them access to transportation. Habitat seeks funding to continue aiding refugees in transition, including for a large-scale effort to equip them with emergency travel kits—backpacks containing items such as power banks, sim cards, socks, sanitizer, masks, and transportation vouchers.

Supporting refugees' longer-term shelter needs

With a strong history across the region, Habitat is well-placed to assess the longer-term housing needs of families arriving and settling in host communities. This work will be done in step with our Pathways to Permanence methodology, ensuring that families have a safe, durable place to call home. Plans for this part of our response will be confirmed in the coming days and weeks. Interventions will build on current strengths and require US$1 million to $3 million. These initiatives could include:

- **Helping displaced families access affordable rental housing,** including through subsidies, and connecting them to social services in partnership with other organizations.
- **Lending our housing and construction expertise to partners who repurpose so-called empty spaces,** such as unused schools, factories and apartments, to serve as shelter for refugees.
- **Identifying more permanent housing solutions in host countries,** such as refurbished rental housing.

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285 Peachtree Center Ave. NE, Suite 2700, Atlanta, GA 30303-1220 USA
322 W. Lamar St., Americus, GA 31709-3543 USA
(800) 422-4828 fax (229) 928-8811 **publicinfo@habitat.org** **habitat.org**

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