



United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) visits Kraków

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'I have been involved in humanitarian aid and refugee affairs for 40 years and I never imagined that I would visit Poland and Kraków in this context,' said United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, who visited Krakow's city hall on 30 March 2022.

During his meeting with Mayor Jacek Majchrowski, he was interested to hear about the situation of Ukrainian refugees in Kraków. He stressed that he was impressed by Poland's efforts, which have in one month been greater than other countries' in several years. President Majchrowski talked about the great support received from abroad, but the needs are still great.

The City Clerk Antony Fryczek, Head of the Department of Social Policy and Health Elżbieta Kois-Żurek and Head of the Municipal Social Welfare Centre Witold Kramarz spoke about these needs. They drew attention, among other things, to problems in the field of education - a 20% increase in the number of inhabitants has resulted in greater demand for school and kindergarten facilities. In addition, there are more and more elderly people and children among the refugees who require health care, including round-the-clock care. This, in turn, necessitates an increase in the number of places in social care institutions. The city has a concept on how to meet these challenges, but current legislation does not foresee the spending of such large resources from the city budget - hence the need for support from other sources. It should also be noted that the process of integration of refugees with the residents of Kraków (those who want to stay with us, and this is a large group), which has already begun, is not an easy matter either. We cannot allow a situation in which the inhabitants feel that their needs are being reduced in favour of Ukrainian citizens. According to Commissioner Grandi, such phenomena very often accompany refugee processes and supporting local governments in this respect is a task for international organisations such as UNHCR or UNICEF.

Another important aspect is the issue of relocation of refugees across Europe. What is needed here is a system that ensures the safety of refugees and protects them from undesirable practices. Beata Sabatowicz, Deputy Director of the Mayor's Office, assured that these issues are of paramount importance when considering offers from international partners. Each offer must be confirmed by the local municipal/regional administration or diplomatic mission. It must also specify the conditions of stay and benefits offered to refugees. Ukrainian citizens who decide to go to another country are registered. Therefore, transfers to Orleans and Solura were very popular.

Commissioner Grandi also pledged concrete financial assistance. Space will be made available for this purpose in the Tauron Arena, where the UNHCR Office will be established, which will create opportunities for efficient assistance to Ukrainian citizens.