

The condition of non-governmental organisations working with refugees in Poland



Research report 2024

badania

Klon/Jawor



stowarzyszenie
klon / jawor



Save the Children

Warsaw, January 2025

Authors:

Beata Charycka, Julia Bednarek, Aleksandra Belina
Klon/Jawor Research

Graphic design and typesetting:

Jacek Zamecki

This material serves as a supplement to the report titled “When working in crisis becomes everyday life. Local organisations supporting refugees in Poland,” published in May 2024 by the Klon/Jawor Association in collaboration with the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, a subdivision of Save the Children.

The data presented in this study come from “The condition of non-governmental organisations in Poland 2024” survey, a representative study of associations and foundations conducted on a nationwide random sample of 1012 organisations. The survey was carried out between September and November 2024 using the CAWI method, which involved online questionnaires completed by the organisations.

“The condition of non-governmental organisations in Poland” is a study that the Klon/Jawor Association has conducted periodically since 2002, making it the largest independent research initiative focused on associations and foundations in Poland. This year marks the 10th edition of the study.

Project “The condition of non-governmental organisations in Poland 2024” was funded by the Polish-American Freedom Foundation, the Stefan Batory Foundation, the National Freedom Institute – Center for Civil Society Development, and the Foundation Save the Children Poland.



Introduction

In mid-2024, the Klon/Jawor Association, in collaboration with the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, a subdivision of Save the Children, published a comprehensive report on the situation of organisations assisting refugees in Poland. The report, titled “When working in crisis becomes everyday life. Local organisations supporting refugees in Poland” is available in [Polish](#) and [English](#). It summarises findings from quantitative and qualitative research, providing an in-depth look into the needs and challenges faced by the surveyed organisations. However, due to the non-representative nature of that research, that report does not address the broader question of how extensively Polish non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are involved in supporting refugees.

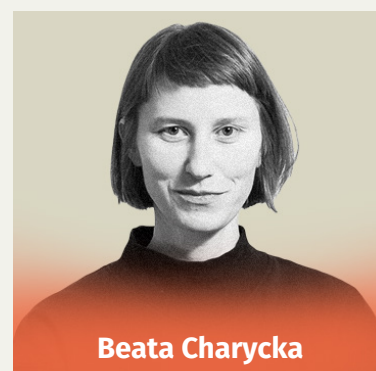
The opportunity to fill this gap arose during the 10th edition of “The condition of non-governmental organisations in Poland” survey conducted in the fall of 2024. This research project is the largest independent, representative study of associations and foundations in Poland, carried out periodically by the Klon/Jawor Association since 2002. The study diagnoses the current state of the civil society sector in Poland, tracks changes and long-term trends, and addresses pressing issues of particular social importance.

At the start of 2025, the war in Ukraine and its impact on Poland’s third sector remain a critical context for many organisations. “The condition...” survey also highlights the specific characteristics of organisations supporting refugees in comparison to the broader Polish NGO sector. In some sections of this publication, we compare data from organisations assisting refugees with data for the entire NGO sector in Poland.

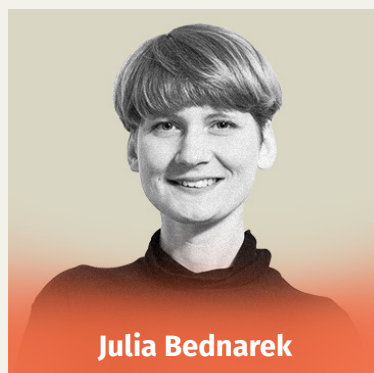
This publication is thus a supplement to the report “When working in crisis...” It is important to note that the mentioned report focused exclusively on organisations supporting refugees. In contrast, “The condition...” survey samples organisations randomly from all registered associations and foundations, ensuring results that are representative of the entire Polish NGO sector. Consequently, any discrepancies between detailed findings in the two reports can be attributed to these methodological differences.

Throughout this publication, we use the terms non-governmental organisations, NGOs, civil society organisations, associations and foundations interchangeably. We define refugees as all individuals who have fled their countries due to conflict, violence, or persecution and are currently residing in Poland, regardless of their legal refugee status, country of origin, or whether their stay in Poland is temporary or permanent.

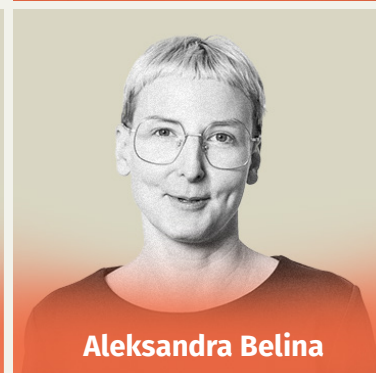
badania Klon/Jawor



Beata Charycka



Julia Bednarek



Aleksandra Belina

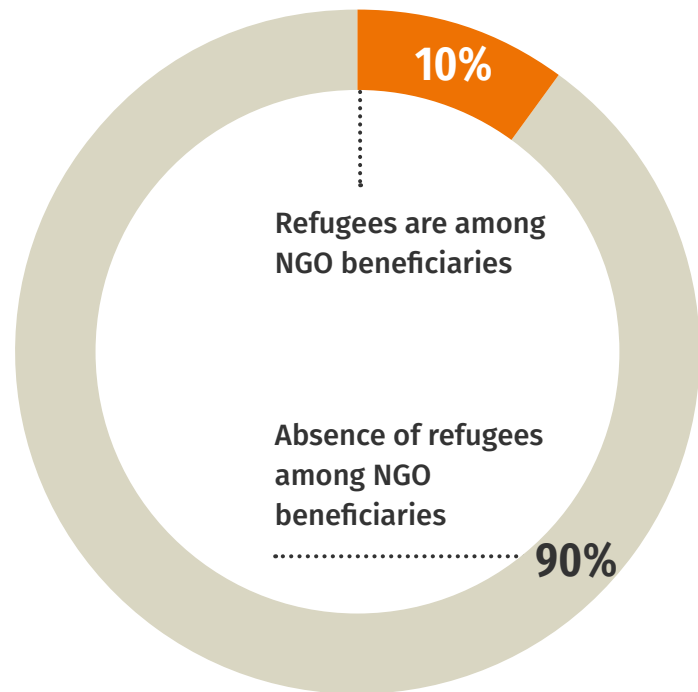
The scale of NGO engagement in activities for refugees

- **10% of all associations and foundations in Poland are currently involved in activities for refugees.** These organisations report that refugees, regardless of their formal status, are among their beneficiaries.
- **The majority of NGOs working with refugees focus on individuals from Ukraine.** 90% of these organisations are involved with people from Ukraine who left the country after February 24, 2022, and are granted temporary protection. Additionally, 36% of organisations report that their activities also include individuals from countries other than Ukraine (either under international protection or seeking it).

Characteristics of NGOs engaged in activities for refugees

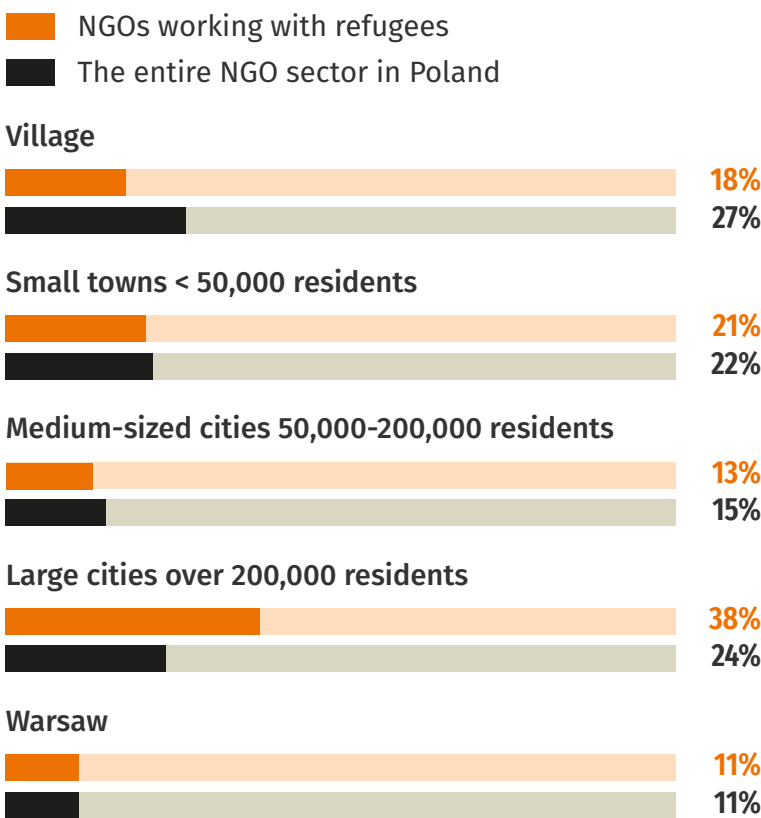
- **Activities for refugees are predominantly carried out by urban-based organisations.** Almost half of the NGOs engaged in activities for refugees (49%) are located in major cities with over 200,000 inhabitants, whereas in the entire non-governmental sector about one-third of organisations (35%) are based in these cities. While 27% of all NGOs operate in rural areas, only 18% of organisations working with refugees are based there.

The scale of NGOs involvement in activities for refugees

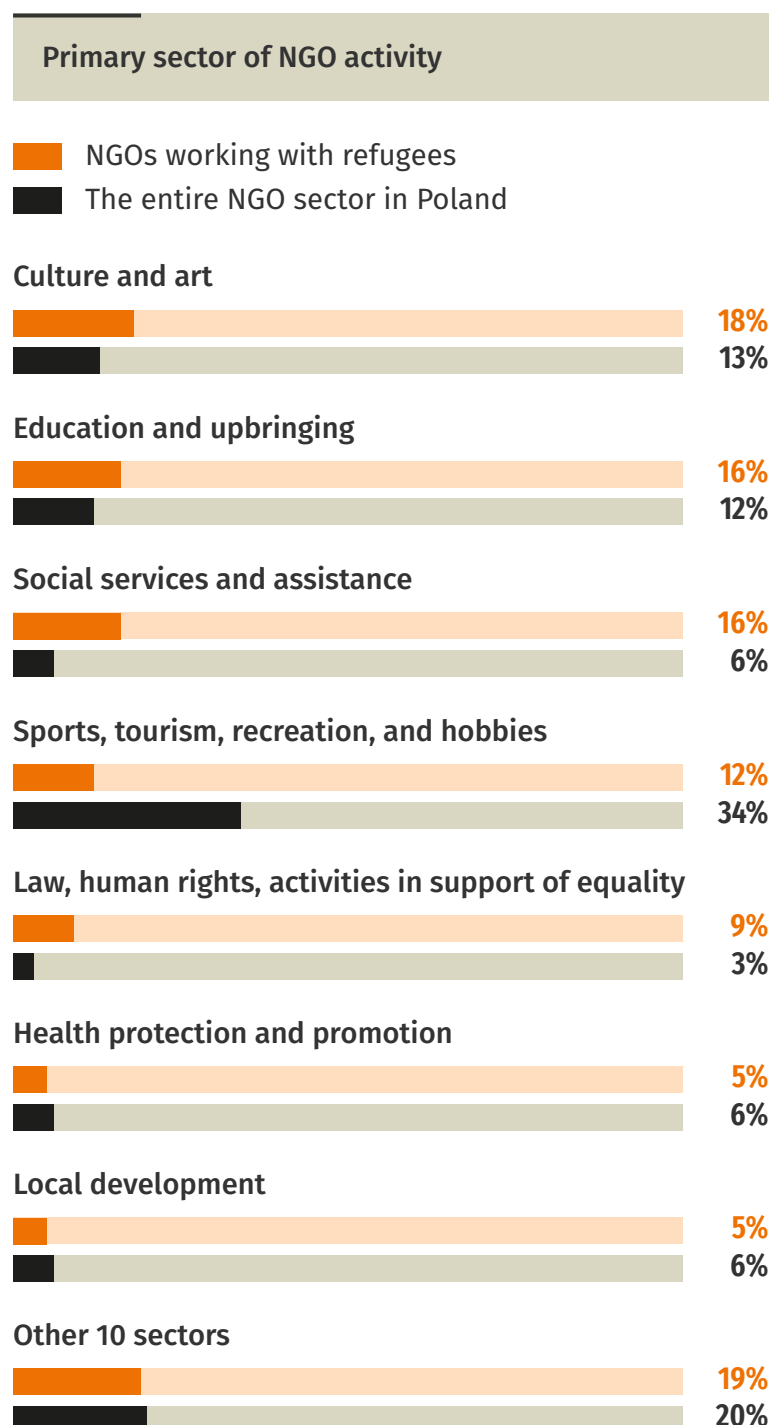


The percentages are based on all NGOs in Poland.

Location of the organisations



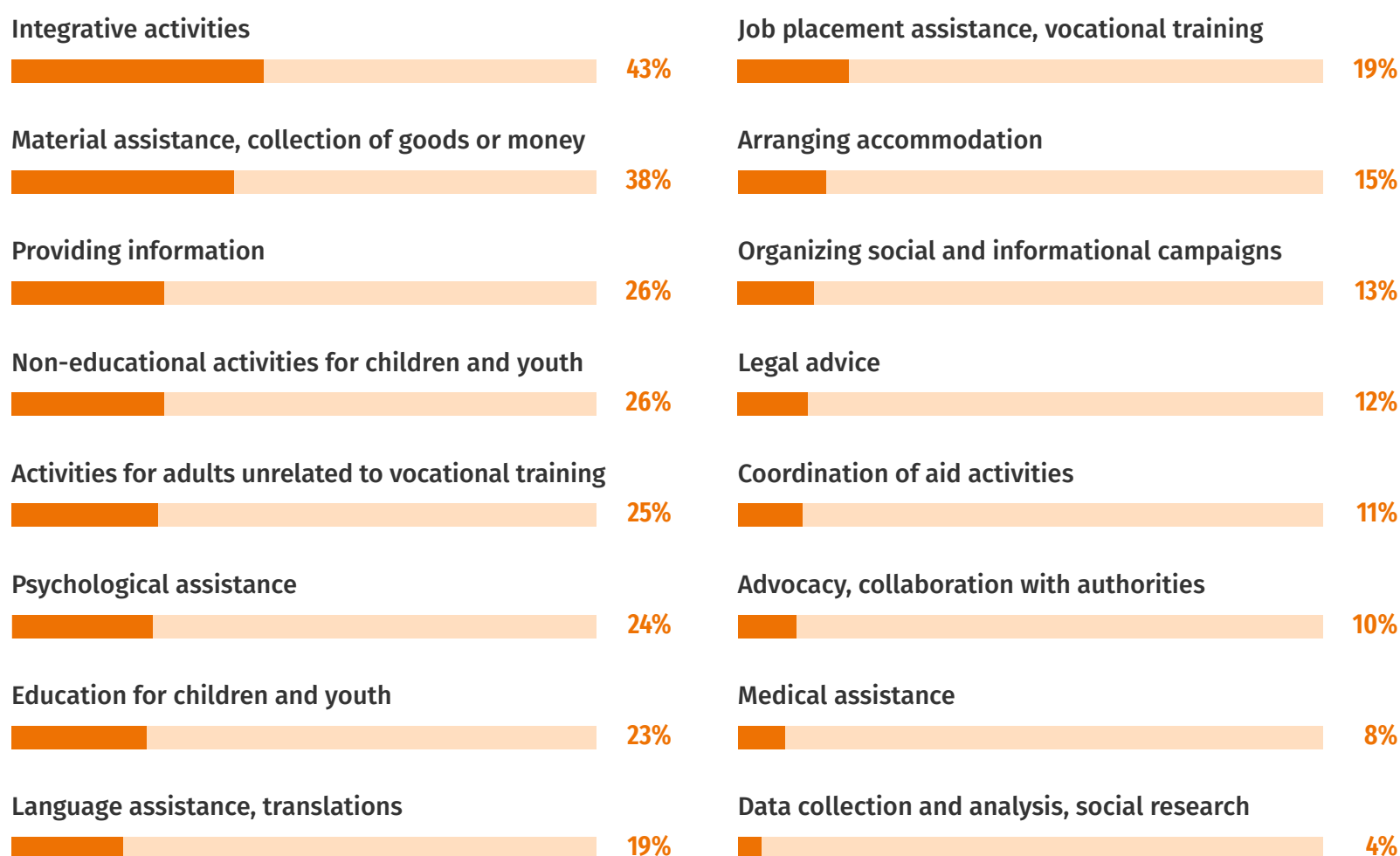
- **The largest number of NGOs involved in work for refugees specialises in areas such as culture, education, and social assistance (16-18%).** These results indicate that organisations working with refugees are distinct from the broader NGO sector in Poland, where these areas of expertise are represented by a smaller proportion of entities. On the other hand, the largest sector in the Polish NGO landscape is sports, which is the main focus for about one in three NGOs in Poland, but is much less represented among NGOs working with refugees.
- **NGOs involving refugees tend to have a broader scope than most NGOs in Poland.** Over half of these organisations (51%) operate at a national or international level, while in the entire NGO sector, only 39% of organisations have such a reach. Additionally, local organisations make up 21% of NGOs working with refugees, whereas in the overall sector, 35% of NGOs operate only locally.
- An average organisation working with refugees has been operating for over 10 years.
- **Most organisations began their activities for refugees after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.** 55% of NGOs engaged with refugees started their work after February 2022, while 29% indicate that they had been involved in such activities before.
- **For the vast majority of organisations (89%), activities related to refugees are a secondary area of focus or are undertaken incidentally, alongside broader initiatives.** Only a small percentage of organisations (8%) state that working with refugees is their primary goal.



NGO activities for refugees

- The most common activities for refugees conducted by NGOs are integration efforts, carried out by 43% of organisations engaged with this group. 38% of entities provide material assistance, such as collecting money or donations.
- Around a quarter of organisations (23%-26%) run informational activities, offer programs for children and youth, conduct non-vocational training for adults, and provide psychological support.
- Fewer than one in five organisations (below 20%) focus on language support, job assistance, organizing stays in Poland, conducting social campaigns, offering legal advice, or coordinating aid efforts.
- The least frequently undertaken activities include advocacy for refugees, providing medical assistance, and collecting and analyzing data.

Types of activities carried out by organisations for refugees



Organisations could select multiple answers, so the data does not sum up to 100%. The question refers to activities currently being implemented. The percentages are based on NGOs working with refugees.

Human capital of NGOs

- NGOs working with refugees have slightly larger human capital compared to the average NGO in Poland, although it is important to note that these organisations' needs are greater due to their larger scale of operations.
- 85% of organisations working with refugees employ paid staff, meaning they pay at least one person. At the same time, 15% of these organisations operate solely with volunteer work, meaning they do not pay for any labour.
- **Half of the NGOs working with refugees have a permanent staff team, averaging 6 people** (these are individuals working regularly and continuously, under an employment contract or other types of agreements). At the same time, 28% of organisations working with refugees have

very small teams, consisting of up to 3 people, while 19% have larger teams, consisting of 20 people or more.

- 76% of organisations working with refugees engage volunteers, averaging 10 people annually. 15% of these organisations involve no more than 3 volunteers per year, while 29% involve 20 or more.
- **The inclusion of refugees in the structures of NGOs is limited.** Among the NGOs working with refugees: 3% have at least one refugee in their management board, 12% – in their staff, and 27% – among their volunteers.

Human capital of organisations working with refugees

NGOs using paid labor



NGOs relying solely on volunteer labor



NGOs with a permanent staff team



NGOs engaging volunteers



Average number of employees

6 people

Average number of volunteers

10 people

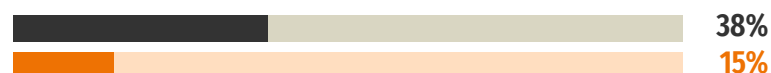


The percentages are based on NGOs working with refugees.

Size of employee and volunteer teams in NGOs working with refugees

- NGOs employing a given number of staff
- NGOs engaging a given number of volunteers

1 – 3 people



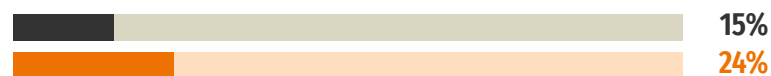
4 – 9 people



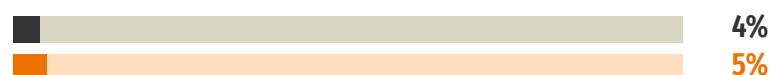
10 – 19 people



20 – 99 people



over 100 people



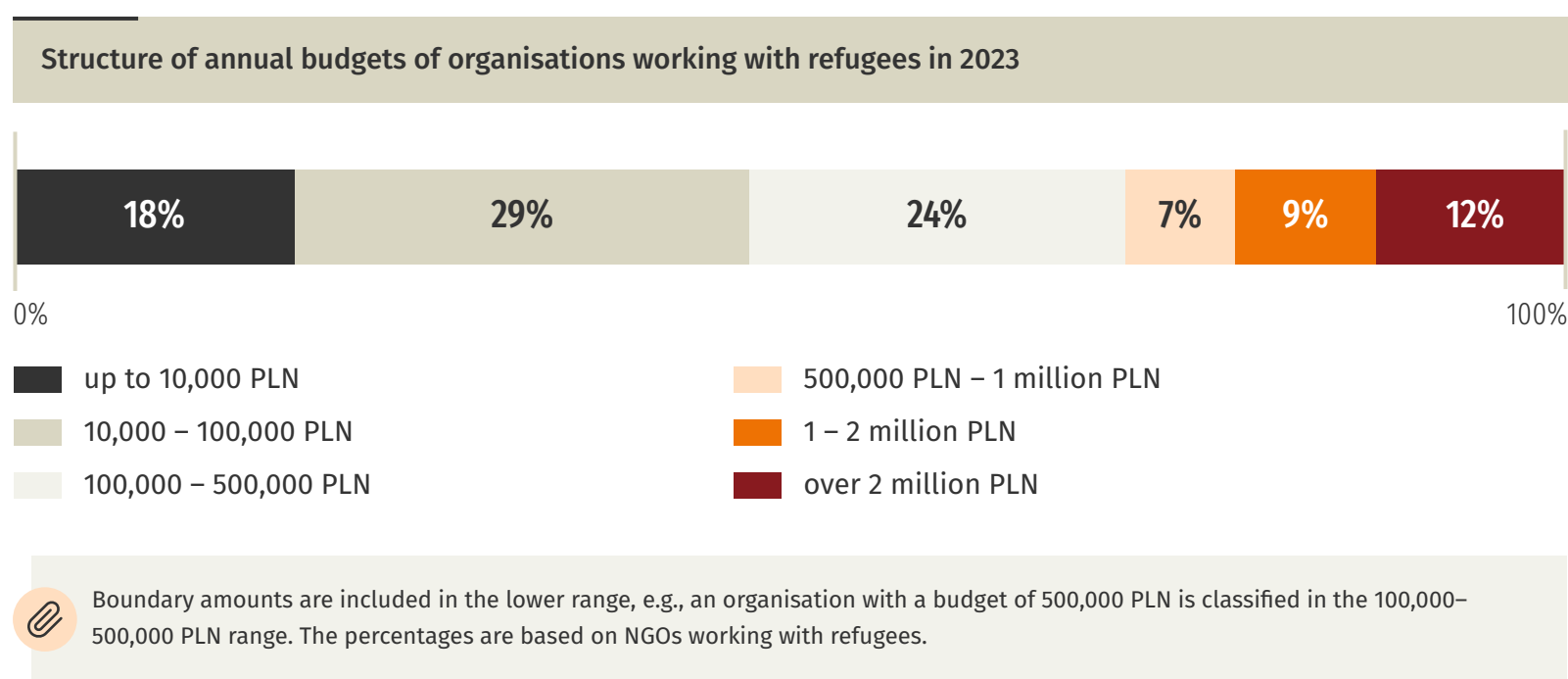
The data is based on NGOs working with refugees that have permanent staff and engage volunteers, respectively.

NGO finances

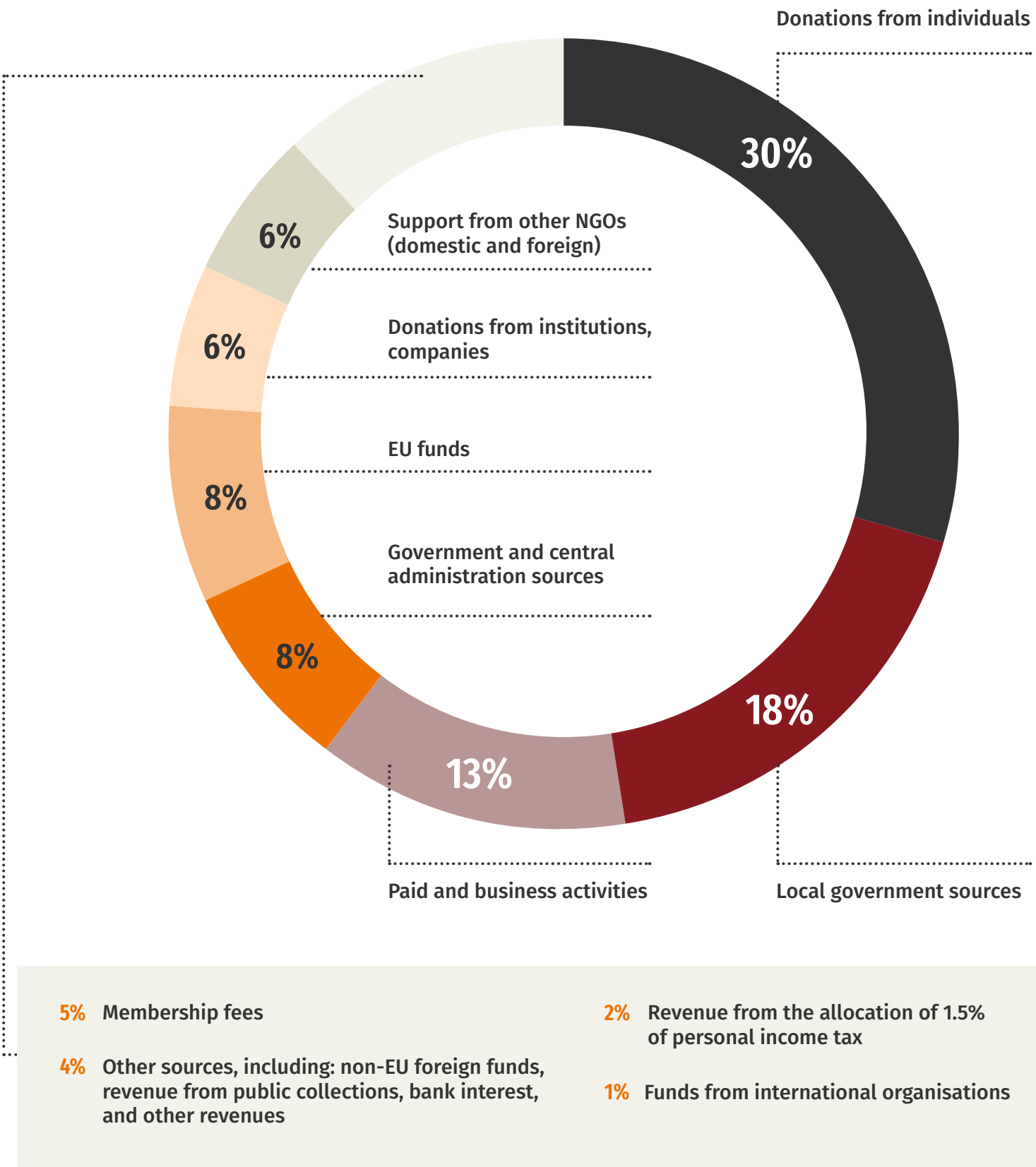
- **The annual budget of an organisation working with refugees in 2023 amounted to an average of 113,000 PLN.** Nearly half of the organisations (47%) operated with a budget of no more than 100,000 PLN, while one in five organisations (21%) had a budget exceeding 1 million PLN.
- **The dominant component of the budgets of organisations working with refugees – that is, the most significant source – consists of donations from individuals.** These funds account for an average of 30% of the budgets in this group of organisations. The second most significant source of income is local government funding, which represents an average of 18% of their budgets. Public funds, both domestic and international, collectively contribute to one-third (34%) of the budgets of NGOs working with refugees.
- In addition to the share of a particular source of income in the budgets of organisations, which indicates its significance, it is also important to consider the percentage of organisations accessing that source. This metric highlights the accessibility of a given funding source.

Organisations working with refugees most frequently draw on donations from individuals and local government funds. In 2023, 66% and 61% of organisations, respectively, utilised these sources. Additionally, 25% of organisations accessed central government funds, 16% received support from foreign NGOs, and 3% turned to international organisations such as UNICEF or UNHCR.

- 34% of NGOs working with refugees ended 2023 with a financial loss.
- **Having financial reserves is rare among organisations working with refugees.** 54% of these organisations state they do not have reserves, meaning they do not have funds not allocated to specific projects that could ensure the continuity of core operations in a crisis situation. 30% of organisations indicate they do have reserves, including 14% having enough to cover at least six months of operations. 16% of organisations are unable to determine if they have financial reserves.



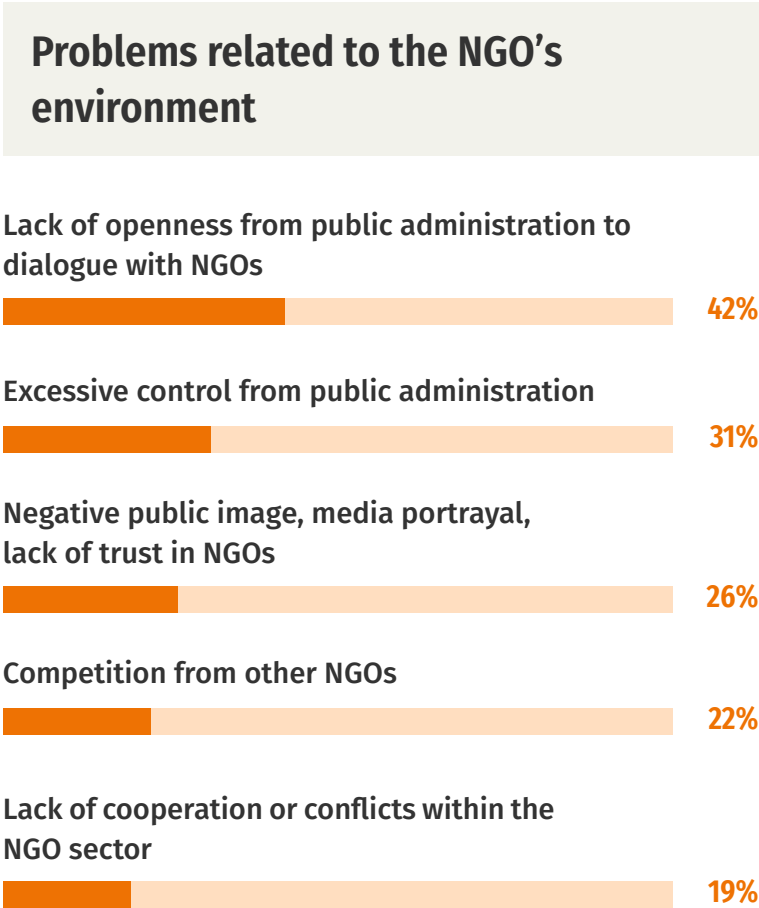
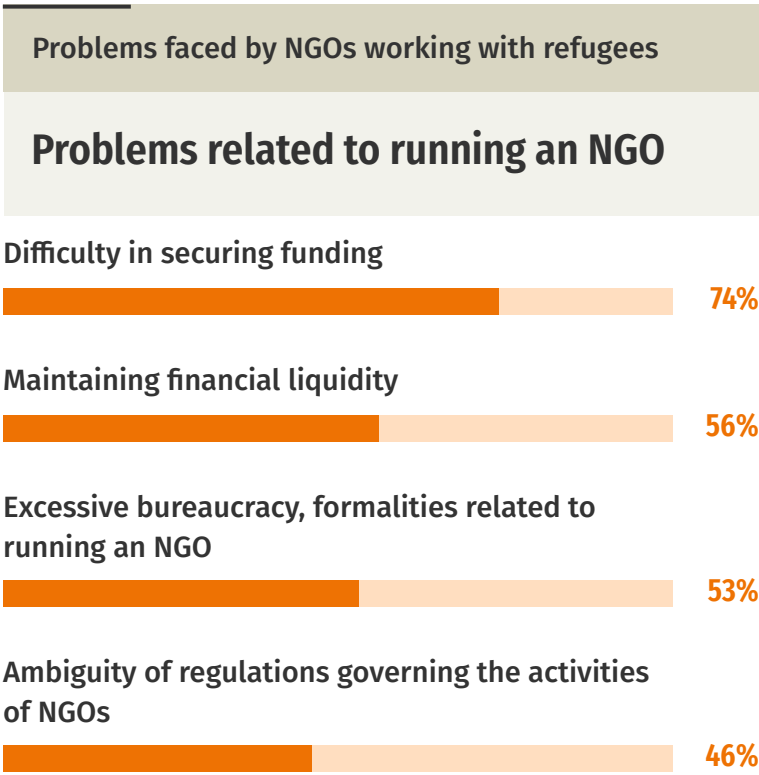
The average percentage share of particular income sources in the budgets of organisations working with refugees in 2023



Donations include both financial and in-kind contributions. Local government sources encompass funds from municipal, city, district, and regional offices. Percentages are calculated based on NGOs working with refugees.

NGO challenges

- One of the most serious challenges for NGOs working with refugees is the difficulty in securing funding and maintaining financial liquidity. These issues are reported by 74% and 56% of NGOs, respectively.
- More than half of the organisations highlight the lack of successors for current leaders (58%) and the challenges in attracting people willing to engage in the organisation’s activities (56%). Furthermore, 45% of organisations report that leaders are struggling with burnout.
- Regarding challenges related to the organisation’s external environment, the most frequently mentioned issue is the lack of openness from public administration to engage in dialogue, as pointed out by 42% of NGOs working with refugees.
- NGOs working with refugees face these challenges more often than those in the entire sector: maintaining financial liquidity, the lack of openness from public administration to dialogue, a negative public perception of NGOs, and burnout among leaders.



The percentages represent the sum of the responses “strongly felt” and “somewhat felt.” The base for calculation is NGOs working with refugees.

Future perspectives of NGOs

- **Most organisations working with refugees plan to continue their activities.** Among them, 25% declare an intention to significantly expand in the near future, while 57% aim to maintain their current level of activity. However, 10% of organisations plan to considerably reduce, suspend, or cease their operations.
- **Organisations foresee that the most significant factors affecting their work with refugees over the next 2 years will be negative public opinion** – 60% of NGOs express concerns about this. More than half of the organisations also identify the lack of appropriate legal solutions and increasing difficulties in securing funding as key challenges. A slightly smaller proportion of organisations predict that burnout among personnel and challenges in cooperation with local communities will impact their operations.



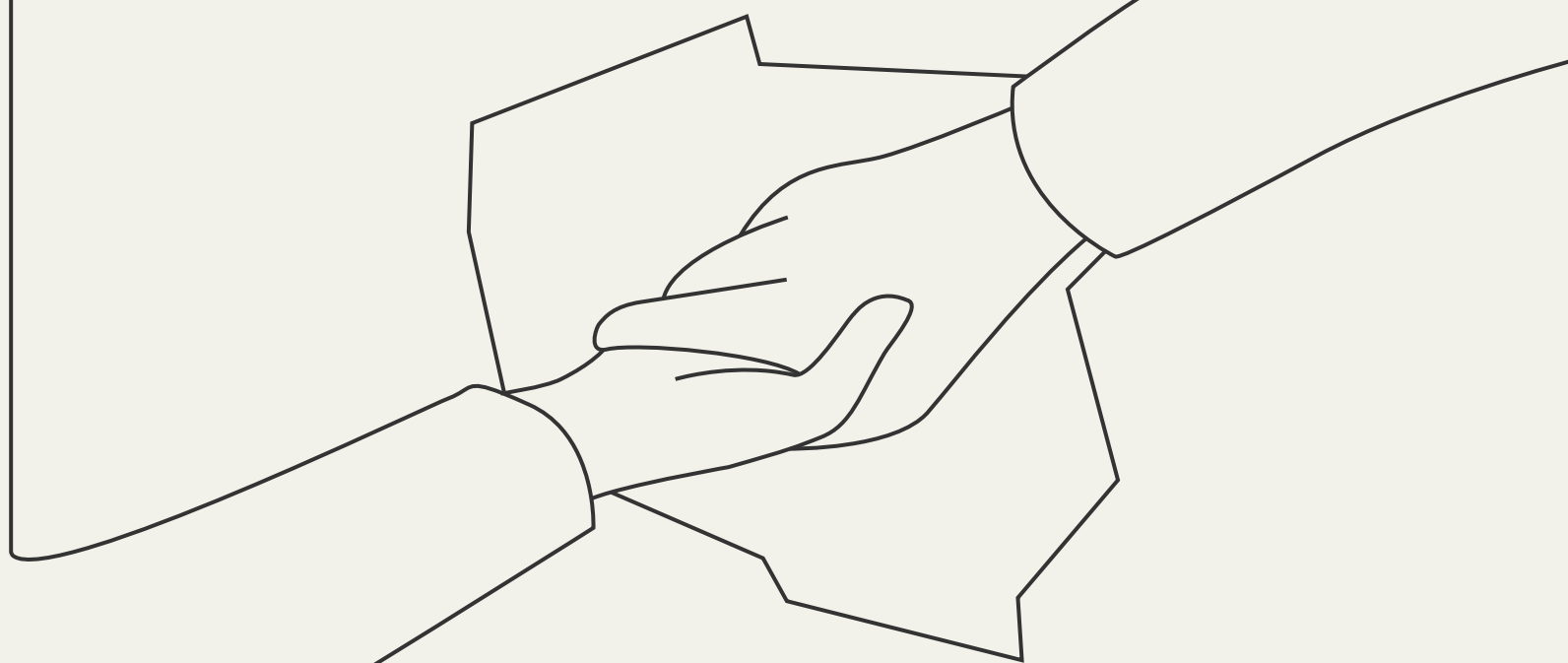
 The percentages represent the sum of responses “definitely yes” and “probably yes.” The percentage is based on NGOs working with refugees.

Save the Children Poland

A part of a global humanitarian organization working for children. Its mission is to improve the quality of life of children through activities directed at their welfare, development, and rights. The organization implements projects in areas such as advocacy, education, psychosocial support, child poverty prevention, and protection from violence. In Poland, more than 180,000 people, including 120,000 children, have received help from Save the Children Poland since its establishment in 2022. Further information about the foundation's activities can be found at savethechildren.pl.

Klon/Jawor Research

The research team of the Klon/Jawor Association, an organisation that supports the development of civil society in Poland and runs the ngo.pl portal. Klon/Jawor Research brings together expert knowledge of the non-governmental sector in Poland with experience of conducting research and analysis. Since 2002, we have been conducting the largest independent cyclical study of associations and foundations in Poland - [The capacity of NGOs in Poland](#).



badania

Klon/Jawor



stowarzyszenie

klon / jawor



Save the Children