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KIN ATLAS · 04

Internal Displacement in Europe: A Border Changes the Count, Not the Loss

Eight domestic records, four reading paths and one rule: a movement, a stock and a cross-border journey are not the same thing.

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1 Reading the data

Every number has a face. Every number also has a date, a definition, a source and a limit.

This paper distinguishes People still internally displaced (People still displaced) from Movements registered during the year (New displacements). It also makes the Limit of the available evidence (Coverage limit) visible before figures are compared or cited.

2 Suggested citation

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2.1 A border changes the count

Internal displacement means leaving home without crossing an international border. When a person crosses one, the statistical category changes. The loss of home does not disappear, but the measure does: a person may become a refugee, an asylum seeker or a beneficiary of temporary protection rather than an internally displaced person.

This is why the Europe Atlas does not place people displaced within Ukraine in the same total as people who sought protection abroad. It also does not add a year-end stock to the new movements recorded during a year. A stock asks who was still displaced on a date. A movement records an episode of displacement, and one person may move more than once [1] [2].

> *The map changes at a border. A family's need for safety does not.*

2.2 Ukraine: a present that keeps moving

At 31 December 2025, IDMC recorded 3,712,000 people still internally displaced by conflict and violence in Ukraine. During 2025, it recorded 169,869 conflict-related and 60 disaster-related new internal displacements. These are three different measures, not parts of a total [1].

The data has limits. IDMC notes that the estimate may miss people because access to some territories and telephone-based reach are limited. A separate IOM survey found that women represented 59% and children 24% among people living in households made up only of IDPs. That survey covers its own defined population; it is not a percentage for every IDP in Ukraine [4].

At the same time, UNHCR records people from Ukraine who sought protection outside the country in a separate cross-border universe. The Atlas keeps that line visible because a person in Hungary, Bulgaria or another host country is not an IDP of the host country [5] [10].

2.3 Receiving people: a separate count

At 31 December 2025, Eurostat recorded 4,353,665 beneficiaries of temporary protection across the EU-27. Germany hosted 1,251,105 people, Poland 969,250 and Czechia 393,055. These are host-country protection records, not people internally displaced in Germany, Poland or Czechia [11].

The number changes when it is read relative to population. Czechia recorded 36.0 beneficiaries per 1,000 residents, Poland 26.6, Cyprus 25.9, Slovakia 25.8 and Estonia 25.1. A population-relative rate describes scale in relation to residents. It does not measure public spending, capacity, integration, willingness, a 'burden' or the value of a person's protection. Temporary protection is also not a count of every person who crossed a border, every asylum claim or every refugee from Ukraine in Europe. It is a defined legal-status dataset at a given date. UNHCR separately recorded 5.4 million refugees from Ukraine across Europe as of the latest available figures at the end of 2025 [5] [11].

> *A host-country statistic can show where protection is being provided. It cannot turn people into a burden or erase the country they left.*

2.4 Georgia: displacement can outlast the headline

Georgia makes a different question visible: what does it mean to remain displaced when the original conflict is no longer the day's headline? At the end of 2025, GIDD recorded 301,000 people still displaced by conflict and violence. It separately recorded 53,000 people still displaced by disasters. These figures are not added together [1].

The country record also warns against an easy conclusion. Registration and return are not the same as a durable solution. A person can remain on a register for many reasons, and a person removed from one may not have gained secure housing, livelihood, property rights or belonging. The Atlas keeps the number beside that unanswered question [7].

2.5 The Balkans: a bridge, not a shortcut

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo appear here as three domestic records of protracted conflict-related displacement. They do not stand for all of the Balkans, and the Atlas does not calculate a Balkan total.

At the end of 2025, the GIDD recorded 95,000 people still internally displaced by conflict and violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 194,000 in Serbia and 16,000 in Kosovo. Each figure has its own registry, territorial language and history. Returns, property restitution and institutional support matter, but none alone proves that displacement has been resolved [1] [8] [9].

A separate KIN dossier will examine this region with local sources, interviews and an ethics protocol. This Atlas only opens the door: it shows that long displacement is not a closed chapter simply because it is no longer breaking news.

> *A return is an event. A durable solution is a condition that still has to be shown.*

2.6 Apply the same rule to every record

The Russian Federation is included because the GIDD publishes a 2025 domestic record using the same minimum evidence rule. It reports 580 people still displaced by conflict and violence, 26 by disasters, 2,700 conflict-related movements and 3,600 disaster-related movements. The four values are shown separately.

IDMC labels all four estimates as medium confidence and likely underestimates. The Atlas therefore neither turns them into a political conclusion nor combines them with data about people from Ukraine who crossed into Russia. A published domestic measure is not a complete national census, and host-country data is a different universe [1] [3].

2.7 Small events also need honest language

In North Macedonia, the 31 disaster-related movements recorded after a forest fire in 2025 are movements during an event. They are not a national stock of people still displaced. In Bulgaria, the GIDD recorded 46 disaster movements and 46 people still displaced at year-end after the Rani Lug fire. The small number does not make the event unimportant; it makes precision more important [1] [12].

Hungary is shown only as a boundary note. Eurostat recorded beneficiaries of temporary protection there at the end of 2025. They are people protected in a host country, not internally displaced people in Hungary. A blank IDP field is not a zero, and a host-country figure cannot fill it [11].

3 References

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4 Key terms

Coverage limit – **Limit of the available evidence**: A geographic, temporal or methodological boundary on what a figure can establish.

New displacements – **Movements registered during the year**: Movements or episodes registered during a year; the same person may appear more than once.

People still displaced – **People still internally displaced**: People who remained internally displaced at the end of the reference period.