



Area-Based Assessment

Cluj-Napoca, Romania
November 2023

About UNHCR

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organisation dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution. UNHCR leads international action to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless persons. It delivers life-saving assistance, helps safeguard fundamental human rights, and develops solutions that ensure people have a safe place called home where they can build a better future. UNHCR also work to ensure that stateless persons are granted a nationality.

About CSCM

Founded in 2011, **Romanian Centre for Comparative Migration Studies** (Centrul pentru Studiul Comparat al Migratiei/CSCM) is a think tank officially connected to Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca and which investigates and directs applied projects around an extensive catalogue of topics concerning all stages of migration and its dynamics. From CSCM, Alexandra Porumbescu, UCV; Anolie Cosciug, ULBS; Kyrychenko Viktoriia, UBB and Andriana Cosciug - CSCM researcher, have contributed to this report.

Acknowledgements

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Area Based Assessment – Cluj-Napoca, Romania

As of 30 November 2023, over **6.3 million refugees from Ukraine** were recorded globally. To this date, Romania has recorded more than 5.1 million border crossings of refugees directly from Ukraine and via the Republic of Moldova. Among them, 149.000 refugees have applied for Temporary Protection and approximately **81.000 remained in the country**. Furthermore, over 3.000 refugees have registered for Temporary Protection (TP) in Cluj-Napoca.

The **Area-Based Assessment (ABA)** provides a comprehensive overview of the humanitarian situation in Cluj-Napoca. This location was selected for in-depth analysis due to Cluj-Napoca's status as one of the cities with a high level of economic development, making it an attractive destination for refugees from Ukraine. The city's appeal is further enhanced by its broad access to educational institutions and promising employment prospects. Additionally, its relative proximity to the Ukraine border adds to its allure as a destination for refugees from Ukraine.

Considering the evolving situation, updated information regarding the living conditions, needs and access to services of refugees from Ukraine, living outside of collective sites, including those who have left such sites, was needed to inform humanitarian programming and long-term strategies. Consequently, UNHCR, through its partners, the Romanian Centre for Comparative Migration Studies (CSCM), affiliated to Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, conducted this ABA to provide information for an area-based response by authorities, humanitarian organisations, and development actors. The research was also facilitated and greatly supported by the contribution and involvement of local partners: the Directorate for Social Assistance of Cluj-Napoca (DAS), Peace Action Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR), O masă Caldă Association. The focus of this assessment is to understand the needs and priorities of refugees in Cluj, their access to services, social cohesion in the city, and the impact of refugee arrivals on the local economy and service accessibility for the host population. This approach aims to enhance the understanding of the city's dynamics and challenges, enabling stakeholders to respond more effectively and address gaps in the refugee response.

This report presents findings related to access to services, humanitarian assistance, employment, living conditions, host-refugee relationships, and priority needs across Cluj-Napoca.

The assessment employed a mixed research methodology, namely the collection of primary data from community members and key informants (KIs), along with the examination of secondary data from local sources and online references. The primary data was obtained through quantitative surveys with refugees and host community representatives, interviews with key informants (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs). Data collection took place between 6 September and 10 November 2023 in Cluj-Napoca, and five data collection methods were employed, as explained further.

Methodology



Refugee household survey

A household-level quantitative structured questionnaire was administered to 152 refugees (face-to-face) residing in both private accommodations and collective sites. The survey aimed to assess their profile, priority needs, access to services, as well as social cohesion and movement.



Host community survey

A household-level quantitative structured questionnaire was administered to 102 individuals from the host community. The survey aimed to observe the effects of refugees' arrival in terms of social cohesion, impact on the local economy, and access to public services.



Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Two FGDs were conducted in Romanian, Ukrainian and Russian, one with refugees and one with members of the host community. These FGDs aimed to provide a qualitative insight into the economic ramifications of refugees' arrival in the city, its effects on service access, and the dynamics between refugees and their hosts. These discussions followed a semi-structured interview guide. Each group was designed to include six to eight participants from various socio-demographic groups. The FGDs were conducted by a facilitator and assisted by a note-taker. They were recorded along with written notes taken by the interviewers. Subsequently, the data from these discussions were transcribed and translated for analysis.



Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Ten key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted in Romanian and English, involving stakeholders relevant to the refugee response in Cluj-Napoca. The objective was to gain insights into the impact of the refugee crisis on specific services, understand the response efforts made thus far, and explore how various stakeholders collaborated. A semi-structured questionnaire guided these interviews. The selection of KIIs was purposeful and followed an initial exploration of local stakeholders. All KIIs were recorded, and subsequently, the data from these interviews were transcribed for analysis.

Challenges and limitations

- **Quantitative Surveys**

Because there was no pre-existing data on the number of refugees residing outside of collective sites in Cluj-Napoca and the total number of households that hosted refugees, the sample selection process was purposive during data collection. Therefore, the findings should not be regarded as representative of the entire population of interest but rather indicative.

- **FGDs with the Host Community**

Finding participants from the general population in Cluj-Napoca who were willing to participate in these discussions proved challenging. However, six representatives of the host community were engaged in face-to-face discussion.

- **FGDs with Refugees**

The focus group discussion with refugees gathered nine participants. However, the moderator ensured that all participants had an opportunity to speak. The discussion was recorded, ensuring that the analysis covered all the information mentioned.

- **KIIs**

Most of the interviews were conducted online via video calls rather than in person due to the limited availability of time for the participants.

- **Timing of Assessment**

It is crucial to highlight that the data collection occurred from September to November 2023. Due to modifications in the government assistance programme, a large part of potential respondents were actively seeking employment or engaged in the labour market. A noteworthy proportion of Ukrainians declined participation in the survey, citing constraints on their time, particularly those associated with caring for children or other family members requiring special attention.

- **Context of Assessment**

The research was conducted in an area that has already participated in other types of studies related to the situation of Ukrainian refugees, which may have led to assessment fatigue and some respondent's reluctance to participate.

Key Findings



Movements - A significant 75% of Ukrainians settled in Cluj-Napoca expressed a firm intent to remain in their present location for the foreseeable future. In the mid-term, approximately **64% expressed their wish to stay in their current accommodations for the following six months**. For those contemplating a change in residency within the following six months, the primary reasons cited were concerns about security in Ukraine, accounting for 59%, while 20% indicated that an improvement in Ukraine's security situation might prompt them to consider returning.



Housing - Although **90% of respondents live outside collective centres**, housing still emerged as a critical challenge for refugees in Cluj-Napoca. The delays in receiving the funds for the new government assistance programme are leading refugees to consider returning back to Ukraine in regions with elevated insecurity risks. 75% of individuals have expressed their desire to remain in their current housing for an extended period, signifying a steadfast commitment to continue residing in Cluj-Napoca.



Education - The education of refugee children in Cluj-Napoca has been a concern. Approximately **24% of the children of surveyed households were not receiving any formal education** (at the time of the data collection – September – November 2023), primarily due to **language barriers**. Ukrainian schools were preferred, with most children participating in Ukrainian distance learning or attending Ukrainian educational hubs in Romania. Challenges persisted at the local level, with difficulties in managing mixed-age classes and limited kindergarten spots due to financial constraints for some refugee households. Adult education, on the other hand, was reported to be well-organised, emphasising the need for language skills and suggesting retraining programs and vocational courses for improved employment prospects.



Health - Healthcare was identified as a top priority, with **55% of respondents highlighting its importance**. Challenges included difficulties in registering with a Family Doctor, obtaining prescription medications, and accessing specialist care. Furthermore, a shortage of doctors willing to accept Ukrainian patients and language barriers added to the healthcare challenges. Despite these obstacles, most refugees who used medical services expressed satisfaction, except for extended waiting times or high costs for private services. The items for which a positive evaluation was marked included the diversity of medical services, available facilities, and the funding system.



Humanitarian Assistance - Refugees reported overall satisfaction with humanitarian assistance programmes (Local Authorities, NGOs and UN Agencies), with approximately **83% indicating contentment**. Public sector officials assessed that the majority of identified needs were adequately addressed. Nonetheless, there has been a discernible decrease in aid provision and involvement over time. Challenges in coordination among non-governmental organisations (NGOs) resulted in duplicated services and ineffective allocation of resources. Critics emphasised the necessity for a more structured and coordinated approach to streamline aid efforts.



Livelihoods - A substantial portion of **refugees relied on employment (42%) and savings (34%) for income**. Language barriers and the lack of right opportunities were significant barriers to employment. Additionally, 22% reported that their households had no source of income, a stark contrast to the pre-conflict situation (2%).



Refugees-Host Community Relationship - **Around 93%** of refugee respondents perceived the relationship between refugees and the host community as "positive" or "very positive", as opposed to under 50% of the hosts evaluating it similarly. In addition, qualitative data analysis painted a more nuanced picture, with many describing the relationship as neutral, characterised by limited interactions and occasional tensions mainly attributed to the prolonged situation in Ukraine and the language barrier.



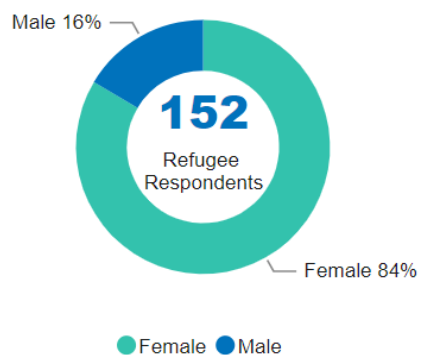
Public Authorities - Ukrainian refugees faced **delays in receiving financial aid from the Romanian government**, leading to frustrations. Public institutions in Cluj-Napoca provided various forms of assistance, including accommodation, sustenance, children's activities, and language courses. However, key informants suggest there has been noted hesitation among Ukrainians regarding engagement with local authorities, posing challenges in effectively monitoring and providing necessary assistance to this population.

Coverage and demographics

This Area-Based Assessment covers the entire city of Cluj-Napoca, a city located in the Northern part of the country. Due to their relative proximity to Ukraine, substantial Ukrainian population, and the absence of clearly defined borders, the satellite towns of Floresti and Baciui were also incorporated into this study. It is also important to mention that Cluj-Napoca is among the top ten cities in Romania hosting refugees. Cluj-Napoca's proximity to the border crossing points with Ukraine is notable. The significance of this geographical location is underscored by the fact numerous Ukrainian refugees decided to stay in Cluj-Napoca at the moment.

The most significant share of participants in the refugee survey is female (84%), which is consistent with the general gender breakdown of the Ukrainian refugee population in Romania at the time of this survey. The data collected shows that 18% of the Ukrainian families residing in Cluj-Napoca were separated due to the conflict, a smaller percentage than in other locations of the Ukrainian refugee communities in Romania, but still indicating a risk of vulnerability. The average household is composed of approximately three people, and with an average of above one child per household, indications of an adult female caregiver profile of refugee respondents is emerging in the study.

Gender of refugees



2.90

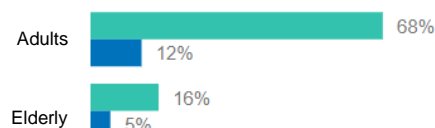
Average household size

1.03

Average number of children in the household

45.10

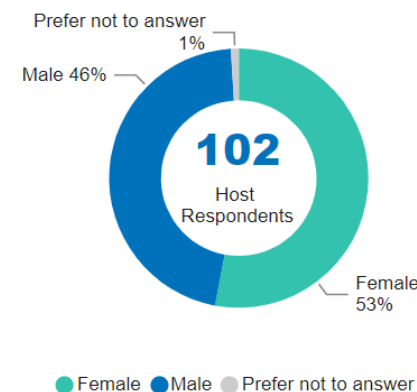
Average age



Family separation due to conflict



Gender of hosts



3.46

Average number of refugees hosted

3.28

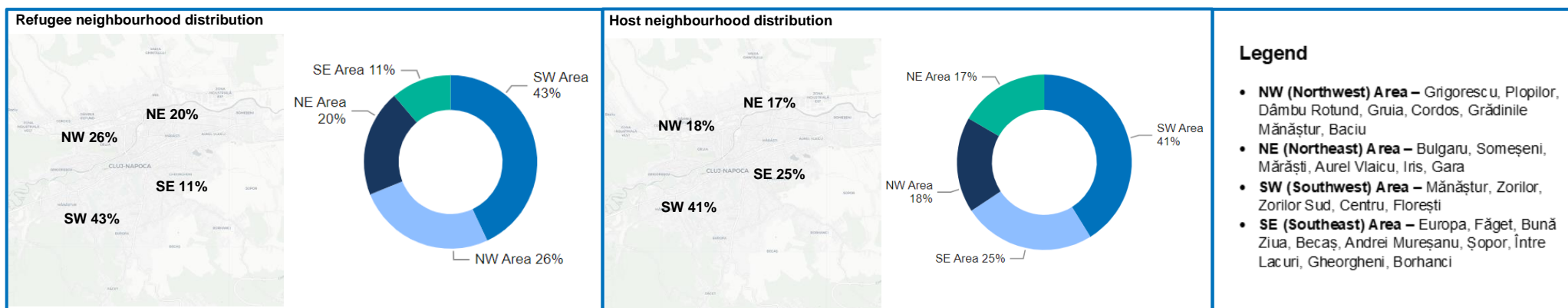
Average number of people in the household

42.35

Average age

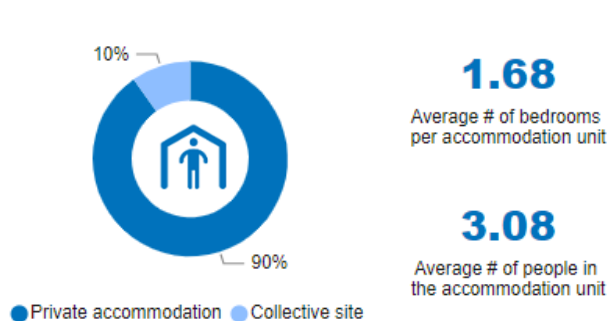
The host community survey reveals an average of almost three and a half people hosted, matching the number of individuals in the host household. Host households, on average, have fewer than one child per household. In the survey, a total of 102 people participated, with a nearly equal gender distribution – 46% male and 54% female. Among the respondents on the host side, 72% reside in Cluj-Napoca, while 28% live outside the city, making use of housing within Cluj through rental arrangements.

In terms of hosting neighbourhood distribution, the largest share is located in the southwestern region, where 41% of accommodations are located. This distribution aligns with the refugee neighbourhood distribution, which stands at 43% of respondents residing in the same area of the city.

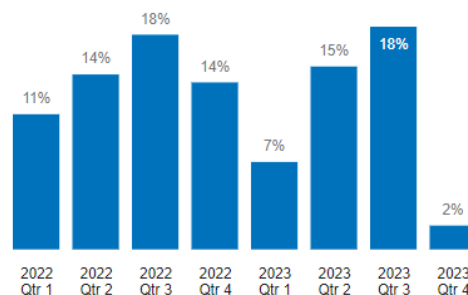


Housing conditions

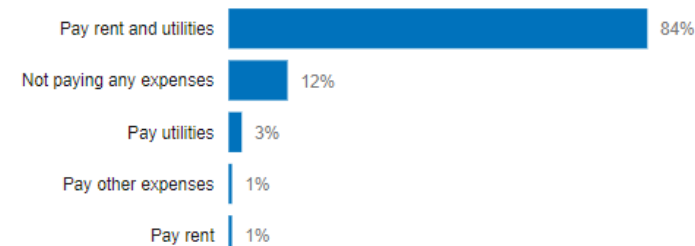
Accommodation was regarded as one area that has become more problematic for the refugee community, as indicated by participants in focus group discussions (FGDs) and KIs. This situation is largely attributed to the changes in the governmental program that provides financial support for housing and to the delays in the disbursement of the funds, reported both by the KIs and the refugees. However, most of the refugees indicated that the reason for choosing a specific accommodation was that it was affordable or comfortable.



Time of arrival in current accommodation



Payment for the accommodation





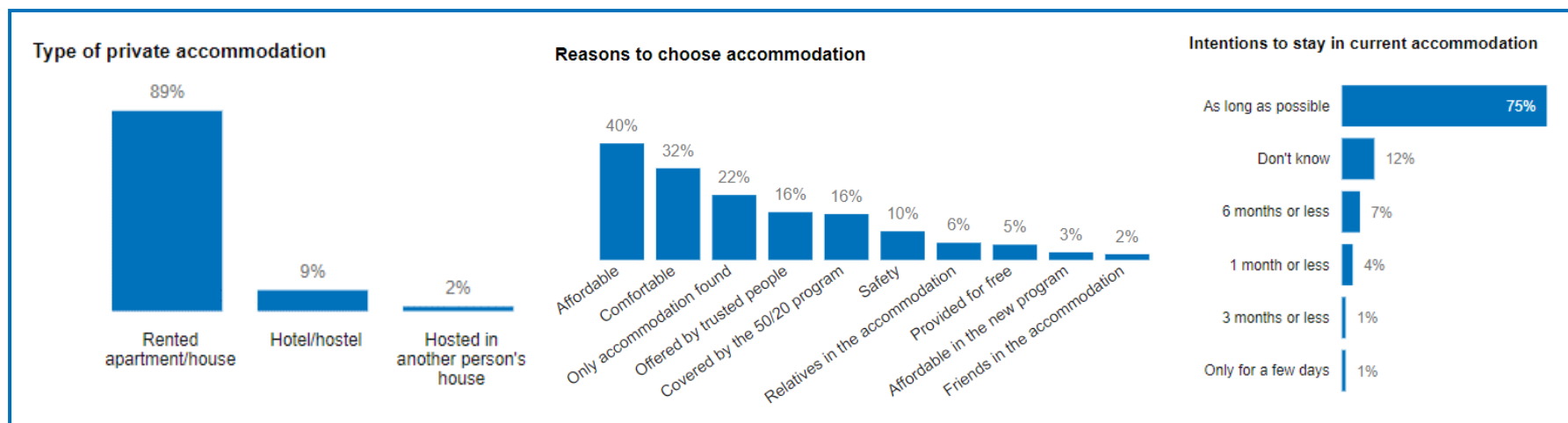
Of the 152 respondents, 90% indicated they reside in private accommodation, while the remaining 10% live in collective housing. On average, approximately three people inhabit each dwelling. The average number of bedrooms per dwelling is around 1.68 units. Approximately 57% of respondents arrived at their current location during the year 2022, with the majority of arrivals concentrated in the third quarter of that year. Among those surveyed, a significant 84% indicated that they cover the costs of their own accommodation and all associated utility expenses.

Of the total respondents, 89% reside in private houses or apartments, 9% are accommodated in hotels or hostels, and 2% share the living space with the owners. Among those surveyed, 40% stated that the primary reason for choosing their housing was affordability, followed by considerations of comfort. The vast majority of respondents, namely 75%, express their intention to stay in the chosen housing for as long as possible, indicating a long-term commitment to remain in Cluj-Napoca.

Among all those surveyed, 83% reported having submitted the necessary documents to receive financial support from the government's program for accommodation and food. However, only 40% of respondents stated that they had actually received financial support.

Six of the interviewed KIs believe that delays in the government's disbursement of the new support program are compelling several Ukrainians to return to regions with a high risk of insecurity. Additionally, they believed that, before the amendment of the 50/20 program, some host country representatives were receiving undue benefits by declaring an inflated number of people living in a particular accommodation facility.

KIs confirm that non-governmental organisations are doing everything possible to address crises, such as providing temporary accommodation, assisting with housing searches, negotiating with landlords to reduce housing costs, and supplying hot meals to populations with specific needs. However, this still does not enable a global solution to the situation.





Hosts perspective

The main incentives to accommodate refugees from Ukraine were reported to be economic as well as the desire to help. Nonetheless, for some hosts, the most important incentive was the fact that they enjoyed meeting new people. Regarding the possible reasons that might lead the community to reconsider hosting refugees in the future, 52% of the hosts indicated that rental space might not be available anymore, while 28% reported possible misbehaviour or conflicts with the refugees as a reason. Asked for how long they were planning to host refugees, the majority (88%) of the respondents said that they planned to do it for as long as it is needed, with 4% of the hosts specifying that this was contingent on the continuation of the housing programme, as they could not afford it otherwise.

Movements

While the quantitative household survey indicated that, in the short term, most refugees had intentions of staying in Romania, the qualitative data revealed a significant level of uncertainty regarding their medium to long-term plans. This uncertainty stemmed from the lack of information about when the war in their home country would end.

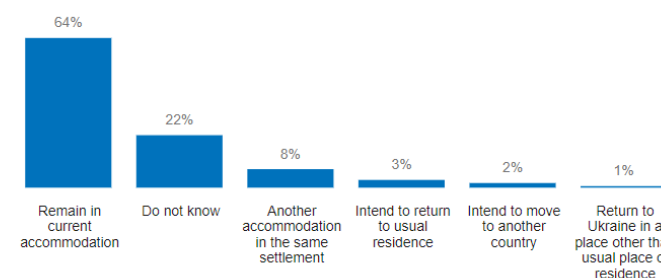
During the focus group discussions (FGDs), some participants expressed their desire to return to their usual residence as soon as the security situation permitted. However, given the ongoing insecurity in Ukraine, refugees find themselves with limited options but to stay in Cluj-Napoca for an uncertain time. The most important reason to move again within Romania in the following six months appears to be the security concerns in Ukraine, followed by improving the security situation and the need to find more permanent accommodation. Poor living conditions and the difficulties of adapting appear to be less important in this regard. This uncertainty surrounding the refugees' length of stay in Cluj-Napoca has implications for various aspects covered in this report, including their willingness to seek employment, learn the Romanian language, and engage in inclusion activities.

In addition, we can mention here that the main reason for staying in Romania was the closeness to the residence in Ukraine. This factor proved important to about 53% of the respondents, whereas in the second place, the pleasant environment came up (34%), and in the third place, the cultural environment influenced the decision (21%). This ranking was close when asking about the main reasons for choosing Cluj-Napoca, with the difference that a pleasant environment took the first place in the choice question, surpassing the proximity to the border with Ukraine.

Reasons to move in the next six months

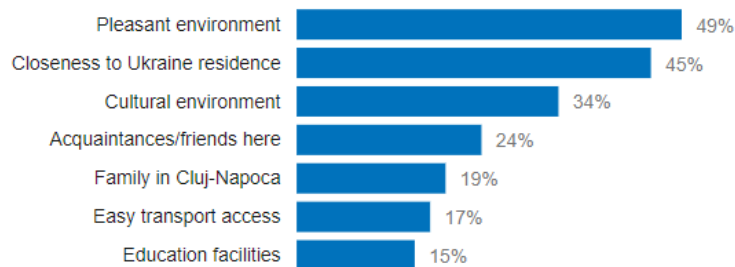


Intention to move again in six months

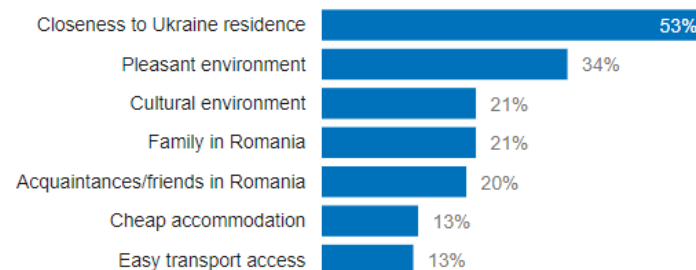




Reasons to choose Cluj-Napoca



Reasons to choose Romania

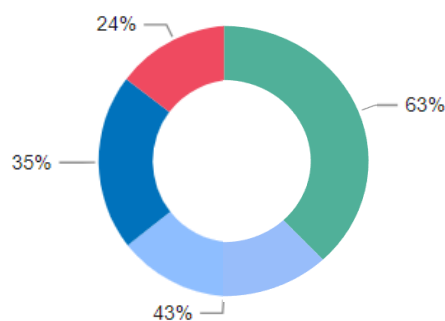


Education

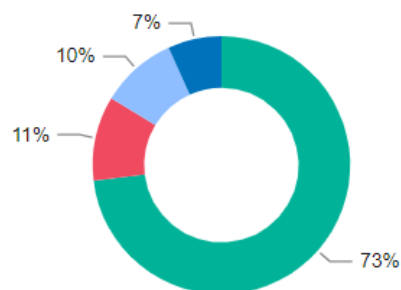
The survey results reveal a notable preference for Ukrainian online schools as the primary educational option for children instead of attending school in person in Romania. This preference is driven by the advantage of allowing children to attend classes in their native language, which the Ukrainian government officially recognises, and by the flexibility provided by online schooling. Parents appreciate this option for ensuring that their children do not miss out on schooling for extended periods.

Regarding inclusion activities, most survey respondents are aware of such opportunities. Only a small percentage, 7%, indicate they are unfamiliar with any inclusion activities. This suggests a generally high level of awareness and engagement among the surveyed parents regarding initiatives to facilitate inclusion.

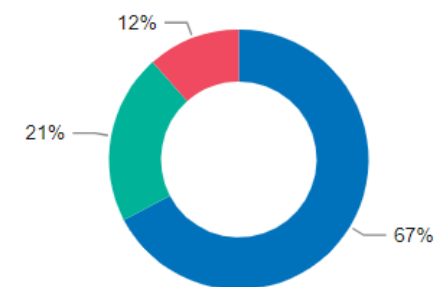
Access of children to formal education



Inclusion activities in Romanian schools



Availability of non-formal education activities for children in proximity



● Ukrainian school online : ● Ukrainian school in Romania ● Romanian school ● No

● Not applicable ● No ● Not sure ● Yes

● Yes ● Not sure ● No

Regarding non-formal education activities, approximately 70% of respondents are aware of these activities, and they confirm their availability in the area where they reside. This indicates a significant awareness and accessibility of non-formal education opportunities for the surveyed population, contributing to a holistic educational experience beyond formal schooling.

The updated governmental assistance program for housing and food imposes new eligibility criteria, requiring Ukrainian children to be enrolled in school. However, school inspectors face challenges, particularly with managing entire classes of children of different ages. Some KIs report that the School Inspectorate allocates special places for Ukrainian children in Romanian schools, designating them as listener students. This means that these students spend a year in the class, and the percentage of Ukrainian children attending Romanian schools is relatively low. Instead, many opt for Ukrainian schools supported by NGOs or online schools in Ukraine.

Despite respondents being generally aware of education facilities in their proximity, the preference for schooling within the Romanian education system is limited. This is attributed to a lack of support for inclusion and language barriers. While some KIs mention success stories, particularly for children who received support from teachers or those in play-based education, the overall inclination is towards alternative educational options.

It's highlighted in both host and refugee FGDs that the arrival of refugees has not negatively impacted Romanian children's access to education. Ukrainian students, instead of engaging in the formal education system, tend to participate more in non-formal education activities.

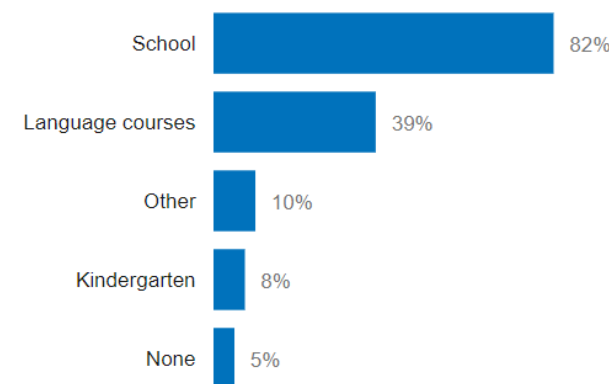
This complex situation underscores the challenges in integrating Ukrainian children into the Romanian education system, emphasising the importance of addressing language barriers and providing support for effective inclusion. Additionally, Ukrainian students' preference for non-formal education suggests a need for flexible and culturally sensitive educational approaches.

Adult education

In terms of adult education, several KIIs underscore the abundance of opportunities for Ukrainians in Cluj-Napoca, particularly in higher education. However, a significant impediment arises in the form of a language barrier, with proficiency in English and Romanian proving essential for seamless navigation of the system and successful enrolment as full-time students. One KI specifically highlighted the existence of a Ukrainian Department at Babeş-Bolyai University (UBB), which extends support to refugees throughout the enrolment process.

In stark contrast to the perspectives gathered from KIIs, the FGD uncovered a challenging reality surrounding the enrolment process. Refugees shared a common sentiment that the process is protracted and mired in bureaucracy, leading to a notable dropout rate among those initially considering university enrolment. This administrative burden serves as a substantial barrier, dissuading refugees from pursuing higher education opportunities. Additionally, the failure of universities to recognise benign student status upon return to Ukraine poses challenges in accessing social benefits. On a positive note, refugees have access to a variety of courses aimed at learning different professions, offering an alternative educational pathway.

Available in person education facilities in the proximity

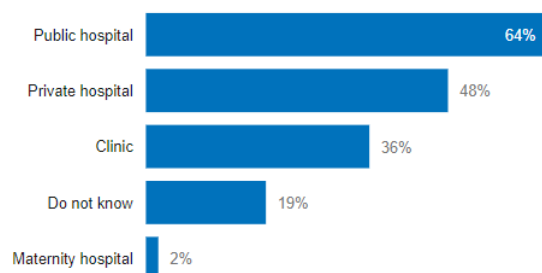




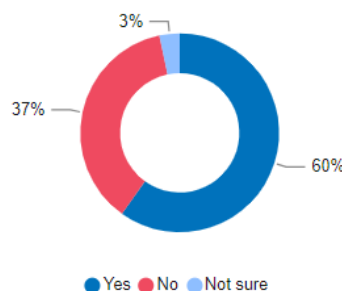
Healthcare

Healthcare emerged as the first cited priority need among survey respondents, with 55% mentioning it, and it was also among the most frequently mentioned needs in focus group discussions (FGDs). Participants in these discussions highlighted that they perceived healthcare as a very challenging type of assistance to access, but 81% of the refugee survey respondents reported having used medical facilities since their arrival, and 64% of them are aware of available Romanian public medical services. Notably, significant numbers of respondents were aware of the availability of Family Doctors providing basic medical care in proximity (60%) and the availability of mental health and psychosocial support services in proximity (59%).

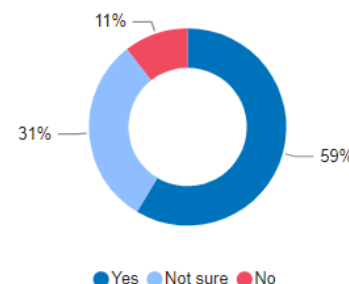
Available medical facilities in proximity



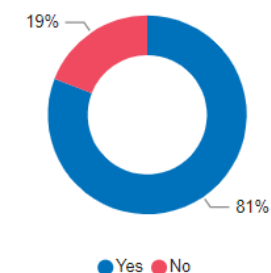
Availability of general practitioner in the proximity



Availability of mental health and psychosocial support in proximity

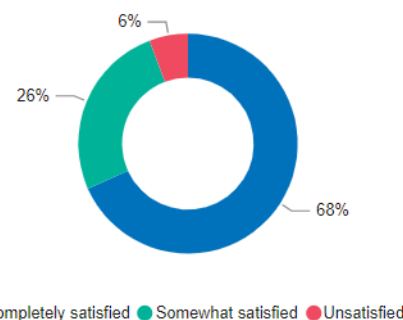


Usage of medical facilities since arrival

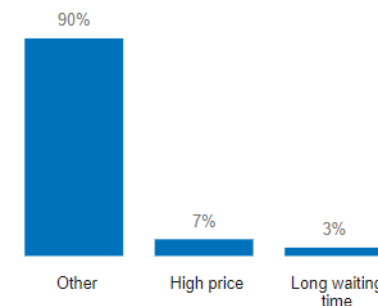


Despite having access to the Romanian healthcare system with the same rights as insured Romanian nationals, both KIs and Ukrainian refugees pointed out several persistent barriers. The most mentioned barrier, as reported by participants, was the difficulty in registering with a Family Doctor, which is essential for general consultations, obtaining prescription medication, and accessing specialist care within the public sector. KII participants confirmed that few doctors were accepting Ukrainian patients because it implied more paperwork needed to be filed. It is important to recognise that this issue is partly specific to the Romanian public health system, as even some Romanian nationals encounter difficulties in finding an available family doctor. An additional issue mentioned by both KIs and FGD respondents was the bureaucratic process of obtaining disability certificates due to the differences in assessment between Romanian and Ukrainian legislation.

Satisfaction with the medical facilities and services



Reasons for dissatisfaction with the medical facilities and services





Another significant barrier to accessing health services was the language barrier, as reported by refugees in the FGDs and confirmed by KIs. All in all, 94% of the surveyed refugees who used Romanian healthcare services declared themselves to be completely satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the medical facilities and services provided.

Psychological counselling

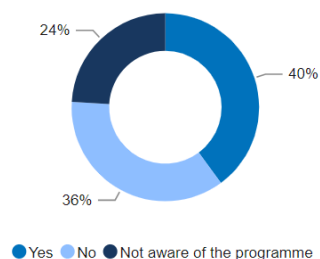
Several KIs mentioned that the situation with the war in Ukraine causes fear and uncertainty and that at the local level, there are various psychological services for both adults and children available. Many of the KIs emphasised the importance of providing psychological support that will help the refugees in the long term regardless of their decisions to remain and integrate in Romania or return back to Ukraine. In contrast, only one of the participants in FGD mentioned the existence of an organisation that provides psychological support for women.

Social services

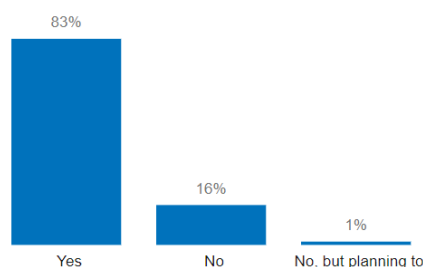
Nearly all participants (83%) in the survey reported having applied for the housing and food assistance program, and only 13% of them experienced difficulties in the process. The most frequently mentioned difficulties were related to the required documentation and the lack of information regarding the procedure. Notably, only 40% of respondents revealed that they benefitted from the programme, and 24% were unaware of it.

According to both the key informant interviews (KIIs) and the focus group discussions (FGDs), multiple assistance programs and distribution centres with ample supplies were available, and a wide range of organisations and entities were involved in providing support, including local authorities, international and local NGOs, religious organisations, and volunteers.

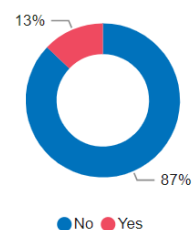
Beneficiaries of the new government assistance programme for housing and food



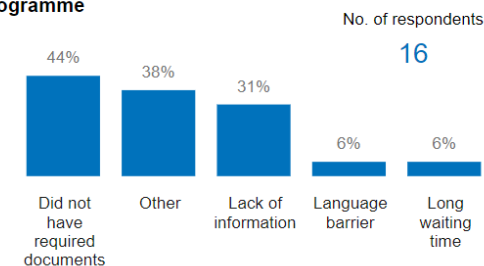
HH applied for the new accommodation/food expenses programme



Difficulties in applying for the house/food programme



Types of difficulties in applying for the house/food programme





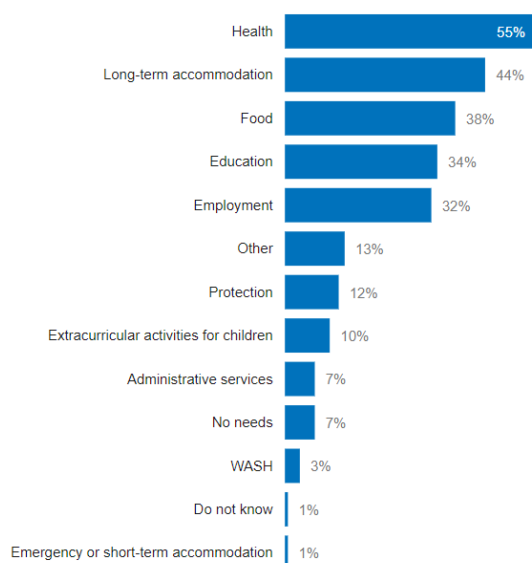
Needs

The most mentioned needs in the refugee focus group discussions (FGDs) included access to medical services, food, and education, which is confirmed by the responses in the refugee survey. The household survey yielded similar results, with the addition of employment ranking as the top need.

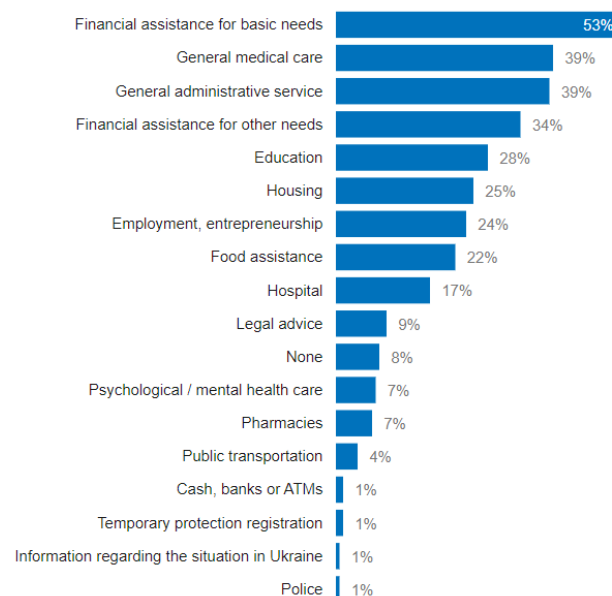
According to survey responses, refugees' most pressing service needs are centred around financial assistance for basic needs, with 53% of respondents highlighting this as their primary requirement. Following closely, 39% of refugees identified medical care and general administrative services as their second most common needs. The survey also revealed that 34% of respondents consider financial assistance for other needs to be a significant category of services. Finally, education emerged as a notable service, with 28% of respondents recognising its importance in meeting their needs.

In terms of information needs, the refugees indicated that the services they are most interested in are financial assistance and healthcare, followed by employment and humanitarian assistance registration, and they prefer receiving information from community groups or phone/SMS and social media. Official websites, in return, are among the least preferred information channels, being chosen by only 26% of the respondents.

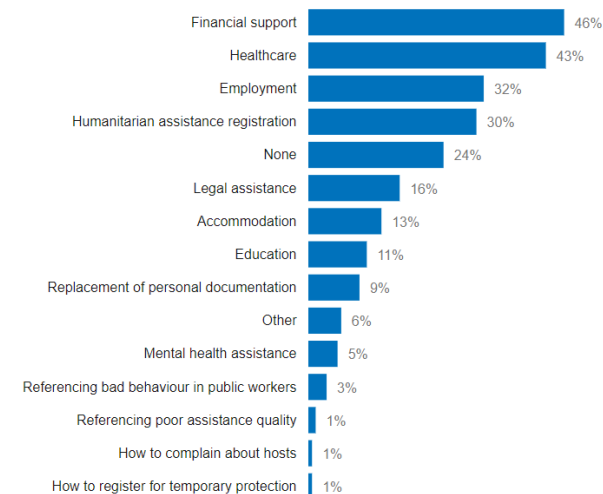
Top 3 priority needs



Types of services needed



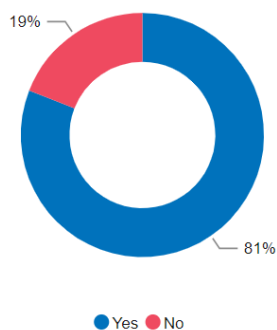
Information needs



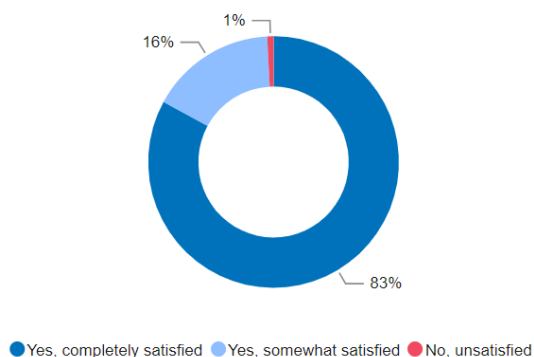
Humanitarian assistance

Nearly all participants in the focus group discussion (FGDs) acknowledged that they had benefited from humanitarian aid in Cluj-Napoca, with a significant emphasis on cash assistance and the provision of food and non-food items (NFIs). Nonetheless, as explained in the methodology section, the sampling was selected based on the availability of the respondents, so the figures cannot be considered indicative for all the refugees from Ukraine residing in Cluj-Napoca. It is worth noting that multiple humanitarian assistance programs and distribution centres with substantial supplies were available. Additionally, various organisations and entities provided support, including local authorities, international and local NGOs, religious organisations, and volunteers. Quantitative data indicates that international NGOs and religious organisations were most involved in providing assistance.

Beneficiaries of assistance in crisis response



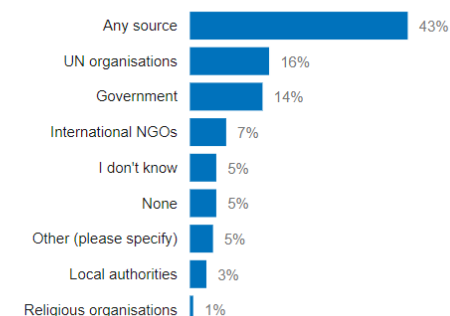
Satisfaction with crisis response assistance received



Providers of assistance in crisis response



Preferred source of assistance



Furthermore, out of the 81% of respondents who benefitted from assistance in crisis response, almost all reported being either completely or partially satisfied with the aid they had received.

FGD participants identified decreasing aid levels as their primary grievance regarding humanitarian assistance; the KIs also highlighted similar findings. This decline in aid could be attributed to various factors, such as the early assistance provided by private individuals and NGOs with limited resources, who could no longer sustain the same level of material support, some of them running out of funds. Additionally, host respondents emphasised that given the amount of assistance already provided, the number of Ukrainian refugees, and the duration of the ongoing war, volunteers and personnel from local authorities and humanitarian sectors were fatigued. This can decrease the amount and quality of assistance the local community is providing and requires more coordination in the approach.

Furthermore, KIs highlighted a critical issue related to the necessity for ongoing support, particularly in light of the relatively low level of government financial assistance targeting the refugees. Despite the persistent high demand for support services, there is a notable decline in available financial resources. Several KIs expressed concerns about the inadequacy of resources, pointing to the challenges in meeting the evolving and growing needs of refugees in the coming months.

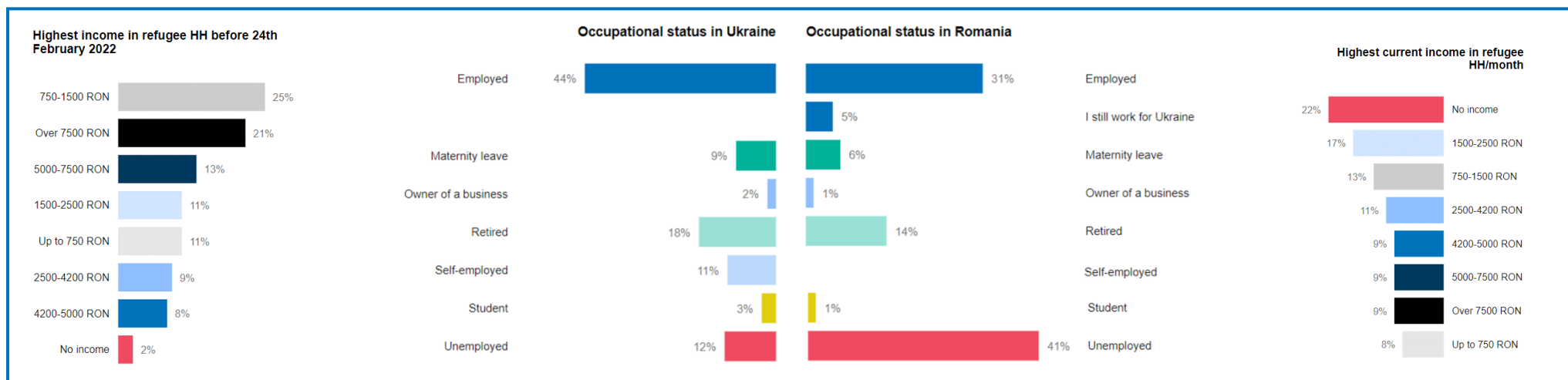


Livelihoods

The employment landscape for respondents underwent a notable shift before and after 24 February 2022. Before this date, 44% of respondents were employed, whereas only 30% are currently employed. The pre-existing employment base was largely concentrated in the IT sector, with 37% of respondents holding professional, scientific, and technical occupations engaged in this field. Contrastingly, 28% of respondents reported working in housekeeping, cooking, and childcare roles in Cluj.

Despite the challenges, there's a noteworthy presence in the non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector, where 12% of respondents have secured employment (this percentages might be biased due to the sampling methodology). Furthermore, the data indicates a slight increase in entrepreneurship, with 2% of refugees identifying as business owners compared to the previous 1%. This shift may be attributed to challenges in accessing traditional employment opportunities in Cluj, prompting some individuals to explore entrepreneurial endeavours as an alternative.

The income dynamics among respondents have undergone significant changes. Before February 2022, 25% of respondents reported having an income ranging between 750-1500 RON. However, the current scenario reveals that 22% of respondents have no income. This is a notable shift, especially considering that only 2% of respondents had no income back in Ukraine.



Examining the sources of income in Romania, a substantial number of respondents rely on employment (42%) as a primary source, while others depend on savings (34%) and pensions (20%). Notably, only a relatively small percentage (12%) of respondents rely on humanitarian aid support and social support from the state. These findings underscore the economic challenges the refugee community faces, with employment opportunities being a critical factor in their financial stability and the reliance on humanitarian aid being a relatively lower contributor to their overall income.

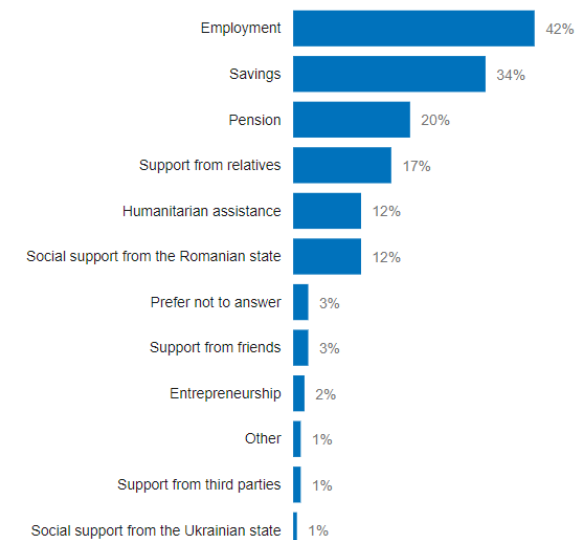


The combination of household members losing their jobs, relying on assistance and savings, and experiencing a decrease in income could potentially heighten the vulnerability of Ukrainian households in Cluj-Napoca. Given the protracted nature of the crisis, the issue of livelihoods may become a more pressing concern in the coming months.

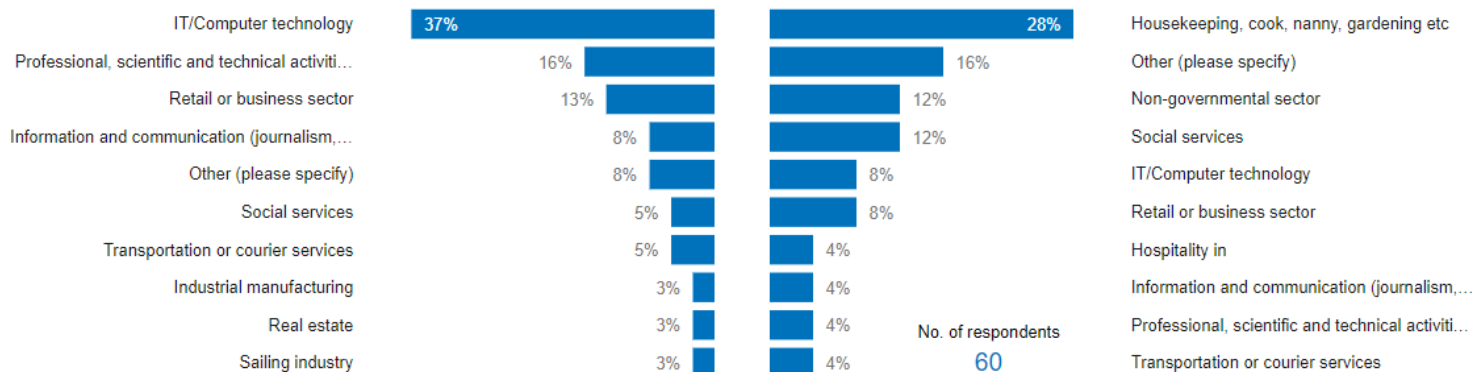
Among the respondents who are currently unemployed (39%), several key reasons were cited for their joblessness. The primary factors identified include difficulties in finding the right company, a lack of proficiency in language skills, and challenges in accessing childcare. Interestingly, only a small percentage (2%) of refugee respondents declared that they are not actively seeking employment, emphasising the overall motivation and desire within the refugee community to secure employment opportunities. Furthermore, participants in focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informants (KIs) pointed out similar impediments. The qualitative data aligns with the household survey findings, as a larger proportion of FGD participants and KIs identified the primary obstacles to employment as the language barrier and the lack of childcare.

Additionally, a significant issue highlighted throughout the interviews and host FGD is that Ukrainian qualifications are not recognised in the EU. Another noteworthy concern raised by KIs and FGDs is the mistreatment of Ukrainian workers by employers in the EU. The reported issues include delayed or irregular payment of wages and a lack of fair treatment. Moreover, there is an indication that some employers may prefer hiring individuals from other countries.

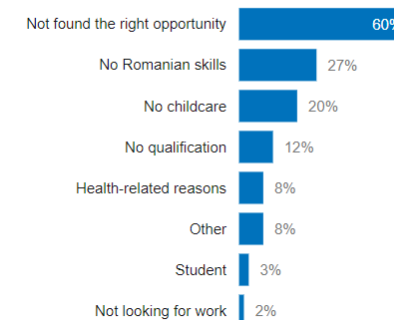
Main sources of income



Field of work in Ukraine vs Field of work in Romania



Reasons for unemployment





Economic impact on the host community

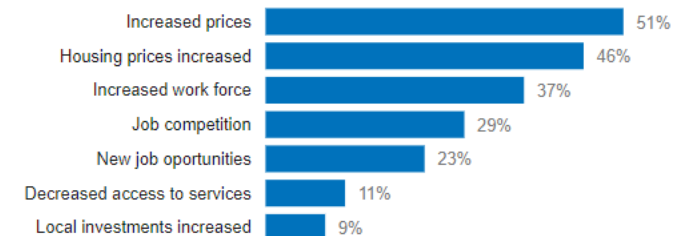
In both the focus group discussions (FGDs) and the household survey, hosts generally acknowledged a rise in housing prices and prices in general in Cluj-Napoca since the arrival of refugees. However, nearly all of them attributed this inflation to the escalation of hostilities in February 2022 and other domestic and international developments rather than attributing it to the refugees themselves. The rental market was the only sector of the economy where a price increase was reportedly linked to refugees. This increase was connected to the revenues generated from the housing assistance program, which were reported to be significantly higher than rental costs before the program's implementation.

KIs noted that there was no sudden surge in demand following the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Cluj-Napoca. The increase in demand resulting from more individuals residing in the same area appeared to be so minimal that it went largely unnoticed by the local population. Furthermore, one KI in public administration noted that the arrival of Ukrainian refugees might have a positive economic impact, consisting of more labour prospects and more taxes and revenues to the public budget. In general, it was reported that the local economy had remained relatively unaffected and that the local labour market was little impacted because the Ukrainians did not work in the majority.

When it comes to professional status, 40% of hosts were employed during the survey period, 28% owned a business, and 19% were freelancers. The remaining 13% of respondents were on maternity leave (5%) or preferred not to answer; furthermore, a small minority were on retirement. In this context, one of the KIs explained that the employment of refugees had minimal impact on the labour market, but some areas, such as the beauty industry, now benefit from more professionals.

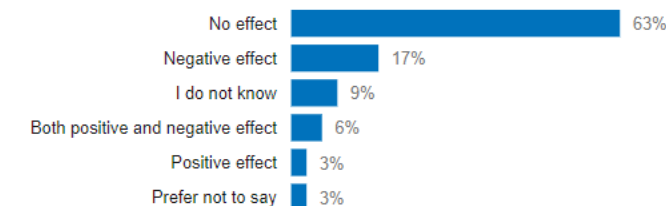
Also, both the KIs and the hosts noted that the housing program has benefited landlords, while services such as cleaning, and maintenance have seen increased demand. When asking the landlords about their intentions to host refugees even during the new governmental support program, two-thirds, 68%, stated that they would continue providing accommodation to refugees, and just 10% were planning to stop hosting, whilst the remaining respondents were uncertain. Throughout the FGD and the interviews, the arrival of Ukrainian refugees is viewed as an opportunity for investment that could stimulate economic growth, as noted by host community members. All in all, for the host population in Cluj-Napoca, the arrival of Ukrainian refugees is estimated to have had no effect (44%), rather than negative (6%). Only 11% consider it to have had a positive effect.

Effects of refugee arrival on local economy



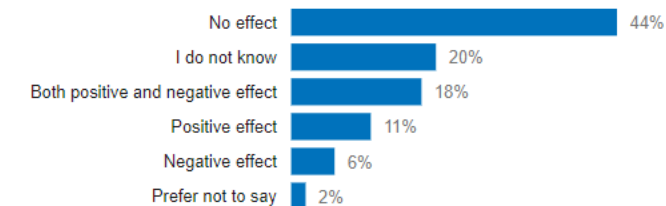
Influence of the conflict on host family

Host assessment



Economic impact of refugee arrival

Host assessment





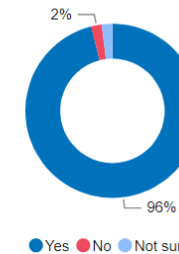
Inclusion

Based on the survey data, almost all the refugees (96%) and a significant number of hosts (53%) reported being aware of formal inclusion events. Furthermore, 58% of the refugees surveyed declared they had participated in inclusion events, and more than 90% found these initiatives useful. The most important organisers of inclusion events were considered to be the NGOs, followed by local authorities and individuals.

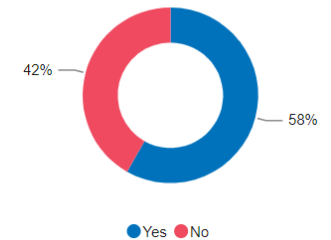
As mentioned earlier in the Movement Intentions section, the survey results indicate that the majority of refugee respondents expressed their intention to remain in Cluj-Napoca, while the FGD revealed a certain level of uncertainty regarding the future. In this context, inclusion is a priority, and many KIs note that numerous types of inclusion events and programmes are taking place throughout the city.

Regarding the language barrier, which is regarded as the main obstacle to inclusion throughout the discussions, KIs note that language courses have inconvenient schedule hours for people with jobs and are not accessible for newcomers, as the groups have already been formed, while challenges with childcare have also been reported to limit participation during the refugee FGD. Refugee FG participants also mentioned that inclusion initiatives they have attended include church events, recreational activities, sports events and volunteer centres. Similar examples of inclusion events are recalled by the KIs during the interviews. Cultural events have also been recognised as a positive approach to inclusion by multiple host community respondents and KIs, as they help facilitate mutual understanding and learning between the two communities.

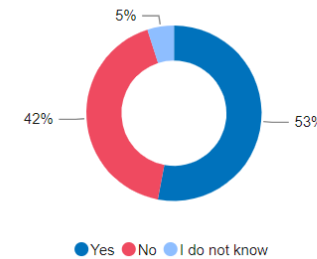
Awareness of formal integration initiatives
Refugees perspective



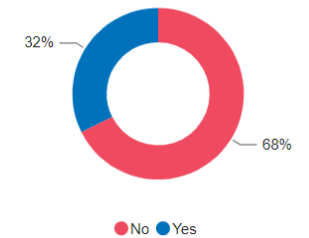
Participation in integration activities
Refugees perspective



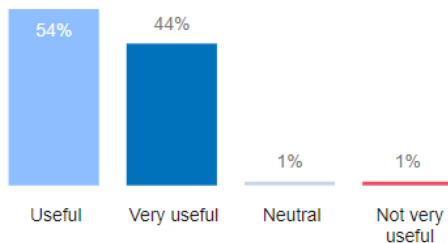
Awareness of formal integration initiatives
Hosts perspective



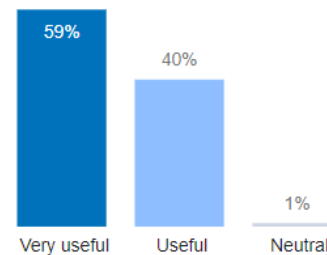
Participation in integration activities
Hosts perspective



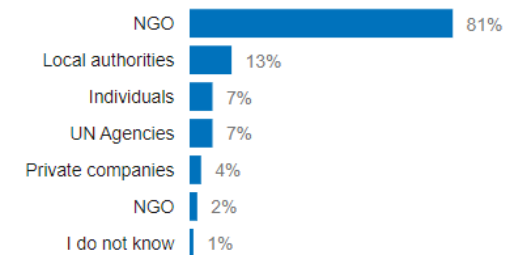
Evaluation of formal initiatives to promote inclusion



Contribution of non-formal initiatives to promote inclusion



Organizers of inclusion events





In addition to this, children's activities are seen as crucial for inclusion, as many respondents are mothers with young children. One KI involved in children's education explained that the attendee status in a Romanian school helps the children interact with Romanian children and learn the language more quickly and that many children are currently attending Romanian language courses organised by NGOs and the County School Inspectorate (ISJ). On the other hand, KIs note that efforts have been made to integrate the Ukrainians, like providing psychological assistance or organising different activities for children.

Access to psychological support services and counselling has also been identified as a crucial element for the inclusion of the refugee community, as emphasised by KIs and host community respondents.

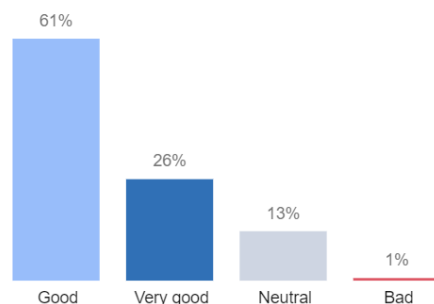
The dynamic of the refugee-host community relation

Based on the surveys, the perception of the relationship between refugees and host communities differed between the two surveyed groups: while over 85% of the refugees describe it as "good" or "very good," almost half of the hosts consider it that way, and the most selected option was "neutral".

Several KIs noted that when Ukrainian refugees initially arrived in Cluj-Napoca, the local population responded highly positively, displaying significant interest and involvement in the refugee situation. However, this perception appears to have shifted over time, with multiple KIs attributing the change to the host population growing accustomed to the ongoing war and the presence of refugees. Respondents from the host community also observed a shift in local attitudes compared to the early days of the conflict when everyone was eager to assist. Additionally, some participants in the refugee focus group discussion (FGD) reported that there are problematic experiences with landlords due to financial instability and delays in the payments in the housing program, while similar issues were reported in the host community FGD, in regard to Ukrainian tenants who were misusing house utilities or took away things as compensation for the delayed governmental financial assistance.

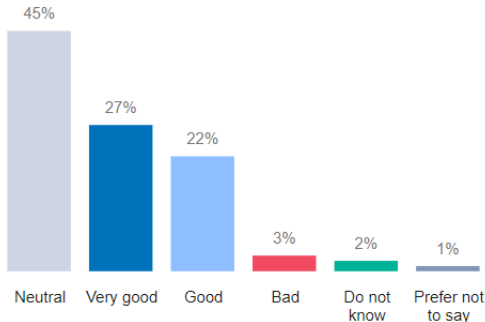
Refugees- host community relationship

Refugee perspective



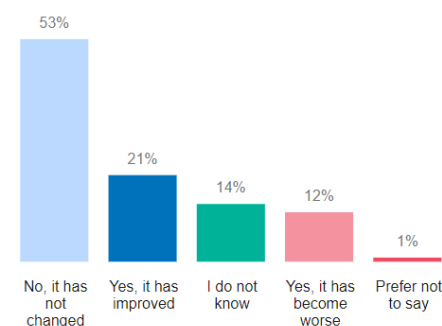
Refugee- host community relationship

Hosts perspective



Evolution of the host-refugee relationship

Host perspective



Across both household surveys and qualitative data, the language barrier emerged as one of the most frequently mentioned issues. Communication difficulties were the primary source of tension for refugee respondents and the second most common concern for the host community. The language barrier creates a sense of distance between refugees and hosts, as they often struggle to understand each other and lack a shared language for effective communication.

Regarding the evolution of the relationship since the beginning of the conflict, more than half (53%) of the hosts report no changes, while 21% believe it has improved and 12% that it got worse. However, there are some differences between the survey results and the insights gathered from focus group discussions and interviews. In the qualitative data, the host community members and KIs more often depicted the relationship as neutral, characterised by limited interactions and occasional tensions.

Relationship with public authorities

As of February 2022, a collaborative effort spearheaded by the prefecture established a working group comprising various public institutions and several organisations. This coalition aimed to oversee and address the needs arising from the influx of Ukrainian refugees. However, there has been noted hesitation among Ukrainians regarding engagement with local authorities, posing challenges in effectively monitoring and providing necessary assistance to this population.

During FGDs, refugees expressed concerns and frustrations regarding delays in receiving financial support from the Romanian Government. Delays in financial assistance can have significant consequences for refugees, who may be in specific needs situations, making it essential to streamline the support process. Both FGDs and KIIs included reports of shortcomings and discrepancies between the submission of documentation and the receipt of allowances, and they argued that discrepancies could create confusion and frustration among refugees and underscore the importance of efficient administrative processes.

Furthermore, some of the KIs note that local municipal workers have expressed grievances regarding their additional responsibilities in managing Ukrainian-related matters alongside their regular duties. This increased workload has strained their capacity to perform their usual tasks efficiently. It was further explained that public institutions are actively engaged in formulating a strategy aims to enhance the development of social services, although this initiative coincides with the imposition of an austerity ordinance. This ordinance, involving position closures and freezes, presents a paradoxical challenge in expanding social services while grappling with restricted resources.

One KI also explained that challenges persist despite implementing programs adhering to legal frameworks and ensuring equitable distribution of resources without diverting funds from Romanian citizens to favour refugees. Conscientious efforts remain to maintain adherence to legal protocols and financial transparency.

During the FGD with the hosts, it was pointed out that while efforts have been made to assist Ukrainian refugees, shortcomings are evident in the services provided by AJOFM (The Romanian Agency for Employment). This agency registers individuals but lacks sufficient follow-up mechanisms, offering minimal assistance beyond language courses, leaving gaps in comprehensive support for the registered individuals.

Conclusions

The Ukrainian crisis has triggered a substantial influx of refugees across neighbouring nations, including Romania. Within north-western Romania, Cluj-Napoca has emerged as a pivotal settlement for a sizable Ukrainian refugee population. This comprehensive assessment navigates through diverse dimensions of the Ukrainian refugee experience in Cluj-Napoca, encompassing their mobility patterns, housing conditions, educational pursuits, healthcare access, humanitarian aid reception, livelihoods, inclusion within the host community, and interactions with public authorities.

While a majority of participants express a commitment to staying in the current location, the future aspirations of Ukrainian refugees in Cluj-Napoca are still uncertain due to the protracted situation in Ukraine which is not allowing them to plan for the long-term, thus hampering their inclusion and integration prospects.

The primary impediment hindering inclusion, employment opportunities, and access to essential services such as healthcare and education for Ukrainian refugees in Cluj-Napoca revolves around the language barrier. Healthcare surfaces as a pivotal concern, highlighted by 55% of respondents, citing obstacles in registering with a Family Doctor, obtaining prescribed medications, and accessing specialised medical attention.

While the relationship between the host community and refugees generally maintains a positive tone, there has been a slight decline in community involvement, potentially attributed to a degree of exhaustion. Housing emerges as a critical challenge for Ukrainian refugees in Cluj-Napoca, linked to uncertainties in housing and food assistance programs. A significant portion of refugees, 22%, express a lack of any sustainable income source, raising profound concerns regarding their livelihoods, especially with the prolonged crisis and the onset of winter.

The complexity of offering support to refugees in Romania underscores multifaceted challenges involving various stakeholders and administrative particularities that need addressing to ensure prompt and effective aid and protection for refugees, in line with the Temporary Protection status. Enhancing coordination, communication, and streamlining administrative processes is important to strengthen the support framework for refugees within the country.

AREA-BASED ASSESSMENT

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