Regional Refugee Response
for the Ukraine Situation

Spotlights of Romania:

Promising practices from the Ground

November 2023

Inter-Agency Coordination Unit

Regional Refugee Response
for the Ukraine Situation

Executive Summary

Since the start of the international armed conflict in Ukraine, which has forced some 5.8 million people to flee their homes seeking safety, protection and assistance across Europe, more than 4.5 million border crossings into Romania have been recorded. The Government and partners, including civil society, the private sector, volunteers, and international organizations have responded to the crisis with generosity and hospitality. UN agencies and NGOs, support the national response in coordination of humanitarian actors under the framework of the Refugee Response Plan (RRP) and through the Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) and sector working groups.

The 2023 Romania RRP is aligned with the Government National Plan of Measures (NPM) for the protection and inclusion of refugees from Ukraine. UNHCR is leading the Inter-Agency platform comprising of 34 appealing partners implementing humanitarian activities for the refugees from Ukraine.

Since the first RRP was launched in 2022, the response in Romania has continued to adapt to the context on the ground to better serve the needs of the target populations. Recognizing the importance of finding new and innovative solutions to address emerging issues and challenges, stakeholders at all levels have maintained a spirit of cooperation and collaboration to best serve the concerned populations.

Throughout 2023, the Inter-Agency Coordination Unit has highlighted RRP partner projects in Romania and identified some best practices and lessons which highlight innovation, collaborative efforts and coordination to meet the needs of the most vulnerable populations throughout the country. This document details the projects highlighted in the Inter Agency Situational Report during 2023.

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HIAS welcome the stranger, protect the refugee

HIAS was established by Jews to assist those leaving Eastern Europe, it has evolved into a global humanitarian aid and advocacy organization with thousands of employees. Rooted in Jewish ethics, HIAS focuses on aiding forcibly displaced individuals worldwide. With extensive experience in enhancing employment opportunities for refugees and vulnerable populations, HIAS prioritizes Economic Inclusion alongside prevention and response for Gender-Based Violence (GBV), legal, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) globally.

Since May 2022, HIAS has allocated emergency funds to four Romanian CSOs, addressing shelter, basic needs, GBV and MHPSS for the Ukraine response. Re-entering Romania in September 2022 after over 70 years, HIAS collaborates with local partners to implement economic inclusion, MHPSS and community engagement projects. From November 2022, HIAS has been actively involved in economic inclusion activities in Bucharest and Constanța. Focused on establishing relationships with "friendly" employers, the organization strives to provide dignified and swift employment while adhering to lawful employment practices.

Some examples of employers who work with HIAS:

KFC has a workforce of 40 employees in Bucharest, Constanța and Galați, with numbers on the rise. Refugees are esteemed members of the teams, receiving continuous praise. They value the stability and friendliness of the work environment.

Nova Poshta, the Ukrainian shipping company, made its entry into the Romanian market in late 2022. Since then, HIAS has actively facilitated information dissemination, selection and employment processes for over 100 individuals.

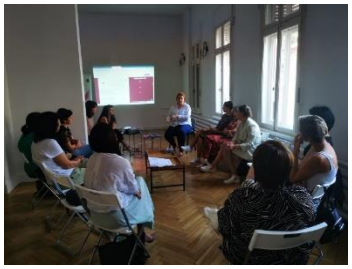
HIAS successfully integrated refugees into the team of Uber drivers in Bucharest and is extending this program to other cities, including Constanța and Iași. Approximately 10 individuals have been placed in full employment, with HIAS providing support through registrations, exams and informal meetings with the teams.

HIAS offers a diverse range of services, including direct support and interpretation for refugees seeking employment, as well as strategy development for companies based on CSR and diversity best practices. The organization remains committed to supporting and enhancing technical capacity for all parties interested in improving refugee access to livelihoods. Additionally, HIAS has conducted the inaugural market assessment of the economic landscape affecting refugees in Romania.

HIAS takes pride in its partnership with SkillLab, an award-winning start-up that assists refugees in translating life skills and experiences into marketable employment skills. SkillLab, an easy-to-use CV-building and skills analysis tool, has enabled the HIAS team to help over 250 beneficiaries create professional resumes, enhancing their access to the Romanian labour market.

HIAS believes in second chances and a pivotal aspect of its economic inclusion programming is providing professional training to enable rapid employment. In 2023, the organization supported 30 individuals with six months of IT training (GO IT), offering a 90% likelihood of employment in network companies. Additionally, HIAS provided training for 30 individuals in the Karolina beauty school program and trained another 30 individuals for the building industry.

Some of HIAS's trusted partners who are actively participating in the implementation of essential approaches to the refugee response:



The Refugee Women Community Center in Bucharest, coordinated jointly with ANAIS, serves as a hub for refugee women to gather, foster community bonds and gradually integrate into Romanian society. HIAS's initiatives include informative sessions on legal rights, economic inclusion, support groups and diverse social activities, all tailored to support the expanding community of refugees residing in Bucharest. Contact: Str. Trifoi 5, Bucharest, elena.arhire@asociatia-anais.ro.

Centrul de Resurse Civice (CRC), operating in Constanța, spearheads economic inclusion activities in collaboration with HIAS. The centre initiated a pilot program for refugee economic inclusion in Constanța, supported by various partners. Since spring 2023, HIAS and CRC have managed a call centre providing economic inclusion information, conducted numerous sessions, organized job fairs and offered case management for over 1,000 clients. The team has also replicated HIAS's employer-focused initiatives from Bucharest for the Constanța community. Contact: Boulevard I. C. Brătianu 5, Constanța, cosmin.barzan@gmail.com.

The Galați Youth Program, led by the Association Help Ukrainians, fosters youth integration in Galați by bringing together Romanian and Ukrainian youth through sports. Serving as a lifeline for displaced Ukrainian youth facing isolation, the project has revitalized a sense of purpose for both Romanian and Ukrainian participants. More info: https://hias.org/news/hockey-helps-ukrainian-refugee-children-romania/. Contact: Mykolay.Latushkin@damen.com

The Romanian Angel Appeal Foundation (RAA) support to children, youth and adults

The Romanian Angel Appeal Foundation (RAA) was founded in 1991 by the wives of the Beatles. RAA's mission is to build an equitable future for every child, youth and adults through impactful actions and sustainable results in the educational, social and medical fields. In 2022, RAA extended support to children and families affected by the international conflict in Ukraine, emphasizing education and integration. RAA initiatives included establishing day centres, providing non-formal education, supporting access to the formal education system, emotional support, and fostering integration of displaced children within the Romanian community, benefitting over 1,340 children and youth and employing 35 Ukrainian adults. RAA's focus be condensed into three primary layers:

1. Preschool and school-age children's education

At the OMINIS and Perla centres, RAA established two Play, Learning, and Parenting Hubs with Ukrainian educators, providing normalcy for 141 preschool children. In 2022, a third centre fostering Romanian-Ukrainian preschool integration was created in partnership with DGASMB (Direcția Generală de Asistență Socială a Municipiului București). The centres have been taken over by DGASMB in August 2023.

RAA aided "Mihai Viteazul" National College's teachers and students with teaching supplies and facilitated the opening of the "Ienăchiță Văcărescu" Elementary School. Teaming up with JRS, over 100 children participated in a special summer program. In addition, 196 teenagers, children, and parents took part in one of the 5 camps organised in 2022 by RAA. Summer camps and recreational activities provided much-needed joy and healing. During the summer, children rediscovered the delight of play in camps organized across the country. Teenagers also found solace in these camps, spending a week disconnected from their devices and surrounded by nature.

2. The socio-emotional health of adolescents

Acknowledging the vulnerability of young individuals, RAA established the Youth Centre within the National Library of Romania in Bucharest in May 2022. As of January 2023, the centre moved to its permanent location and operates as an open and life skills centre for youth people over 13 years old. Throughout 2023, RAA has provided daily open youth work services, which aim to encourage young people's socio-emotional development and community integration, as well as key competences development through non-formal education programmes. Romanian, English classes and digital skills classes are weekly provided, complemented

by sport, arts & crafts, cooking activities or more complex workshops such as digital storytelling, civic engagement or health education. RAA reached over 600 adolescents and young refugees aged 13 to 25 through these activities and created a secure environment with an open youth hub approach.

Supporting social inclusion, RAA places a strong emphasis on linguistic integration, providing more than 300 hours of free English and Romanian language classes, along with Microsoft certified Digital Education courses. With a diverse offering of 270 non-formal education workshops, 60 outdoor recreational activities, and 175 open youth centre days, the Youth Hub evolved into a sanctuary for many youths, actively contributing to their personal development and self-confidence.

3. Adult empowerment

Recognizing the barriers in accessing healthcare services faced due to information gaps, RAA created The Health Navigator project. It provides 10 online episodes in both Romanian and Ukrainian languages, offering guidance through the Romanian healthcare system. RAA social workers played a vital role in assisting parents with legal requirements and accessing necessary services.

Kompass: model of combatting human trafficking

As part of the Ukrainian Crisis Response to address trafficking risks, eLiberare designed and piloted an innovative protection model: The Kompass Model. eLiberare is a women-led organization that works on developing project methodologies and tools that prioritize a women- and victim- centred approach. The Kompass model focuses on assisting refugees from Ukraine and has a primary goal to raise awareness about safety measures, to create individual safety plans for those at risk, and to offer assistance to those in need. The model was co-created with Ukrainian colleagues who joined the eLiberare team in April 2022 and is implemented in four steps, acting as a barrier against exploitation and human trafficking for both Ukrainians and third-country nationals seeking safety after leaving Ukraine in search of a safe place.

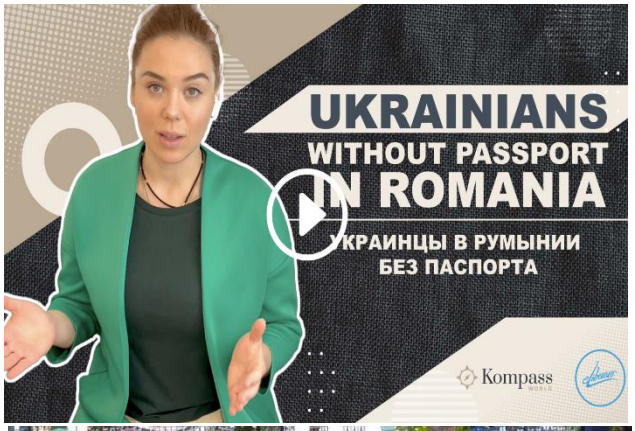
The initiative reached 336,000 people through online awareness campaigns, created 3,853 safety plans, provided counselling to 18,680 individuals through offline and online information sessions, trained 1,060 frontliners, assisted 50 people and distributed 25,000 safety cards and 1,839 flyers.

In recognition of its outstanding contribution to combating human trafficking through the utilization of data and technology, the Kompass Model received the prestigious Disruption of Recruitment Award at the Data to Disrupt Trafficking Awards held in London in October 2022. This recognition solidifies the model's status as a best practice in the fight against trafficking.

The model is composed of 4 steps:

Step 1. Raising awareness about safety measures

In this step eLiberare focuses on raising awareness about safety measures for Ukrainians residing in Romania. This comprehensive approach encompasses both online and offline channels.



Online Outreach: The team utilizes the Kompass.world website to disseminate general safety information. Specific information about labour exploitation is made available on robotainfo.com. So far, 54 informative videos have been posted, which contain red flags for labour exploitation and safety measures. Collectively, the videos have reached a total of 336,000 views on Telegram, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. eLiberare's Telegram Channel has 2,013 subscribers, serving as a hub for community updates and crucial information. Additionally, the Instagram account hosts informative online info-sessions, while the TikTok account is dedicated to share engaging content tailored to the interests of Ukrainian youth.

Offline Engagement: eLiberare's offline efforts include the distribution of 1,839 flyers on a one-on-one basis across 30 locations and Safety Measures Cards, each containing 10 vital safety measures to be followed by individuals fleeting to safety. These cards also provide emergency contact numbers. In total, 25,000 cards have been distributed so far.

Step 2. Capacity Building

After raising awareness, the objective is to empower individuals to effectively implement the safety measures. Information sessions have been designed to provide comprehensive insights into rights and responsibilities, temporary protection, access to diverse services, safety protocols and information pertaining to the risks of human trafficking. As part of the safety sessions, participants receive backpacks containing essential items, including information materials, emergency contact information and guidance on accessing assistance through available services. To date, these information sessions, both offline and online, have provided counsel to a total of 18,680 individuals.

eLiberare also played a pivotal role in facilitating 70 training sessions for 1,060 professionals and volunteers engaged in refugee support. These training sessions are tailored to equip participants with a deep understanding of human trafficking indicators in the context of the Ukrainian crisis and to train them in effective response methods in potential trafficking cases.

Step 3. Individual Safety Plans

In this step of the intervention process, the focus shifts to creating Individual Safety Plans (ISP), a crucial step in assisting individuals with their safe journey or stay in Romania. eLiberare has crafted a toolkit to aid in mapping the specific vulnerabilities of each person and evaluating the potential risks of exploitation they may face. Based on the vulnerabilities identified, tailored scenarios are developed to meet the unique needs of each individual.

The internvention team intiates the completion of an ISP by first having the individual sign a General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) agreement. Subsequently, a series of questions are posed to assess the individual's vulenrability level and requirement. Then, the team establishes a safety Password with the beneficiary and provides them with an information card containg essential crisis helpline. Finally, the individual is integrated into a Telegram group to facilitate ongoing support and communication. To date the team and their partners have successfully conducted 3,853 ISPs, contributing significantly to the overall effectiveness of the intervention.

Step 4. Assistance mid and long term

The focus on this step is on providing mid and long-term assistance to individuals, especially those whao are travelling to their final destinations. For those embarking on journey to other countries, the intervention team startegically establishes check-in points at various locations along the route. Theses checkpoints are essential

for ensuring the safety of the travelers. If someone misses a check-in point, the team can promptly intervene through their extensive network of partners or collaborate with local authorities in the specific country of concern. The primary objective is to guarantee that every individual safely reaches their ultimate destination.

At the moment, eLiberare has 21 partners across Romania and 17 partners in Europe that serve as Safe Places in Albania, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Republic of Moldova, Sweden, Turkey and Ukraine. These Safe Places serve as essential referral pathways for individuals who are traveling further and who face a higher level of risk during their journey.

For those individuals remaining in Romania, the intervention team ensures that they can recognize suspicious recruitment practices and potential situations of exploitation while providing the necessary support and assistance. eLiberare has established a range of essential services to address various needs, including social services, legal assistance for job seekers and workers, mediation, translation services, support for necessities, and referrals to specialized service providers.

During the Ukraine Crisis Response, eLiberare's Crisis Textline on WhatsApp emerged as a trusted information source for refugees. It became a platform where refugees could disclose potentially dangerous situations. Notably, this platform accompanied 600 individuals in accessing various services in Romania, and 1,209 individuals were reached for employment assistance. Additionally, the Crisis Textline served as a channel for reporting instances of abuse.

As a direct result of these assistance measures, eLiberare's dedicated team identified victims of gender-based violence (GBV), individuals exploited through labour, and thwarted attempted human trafficking cases, among others.

The Kompass model has been implemented by four other partners in various locations, including Timisoara, Oradea, Baia Mare, and Tulcea, as well as through one international partner based in Athens, Greece.

Empowering displaced individuals from Ukraine in their quest to self-reliance by Project Voyager through the Jobs for Ukraine project

Project Voyager's aims to address immediate job placement needs while nurturing long-term professional growth for refugees through innovative technology, strategic collaborations, and employment services.

Over 173,000 people visited the Jobs for Ukraine platform since its launch on 3 March 2022. With 3,500+ job openings across 60 countries and over 11,700 candidate profiles (over 50% based in Romania), the platform serves as a bridge for diverse employment, having facilitated over 8,500 interactions between job seekers and employers in IT, administrative, hospitality, supply chain, customer service, manufacturing, and more. Project Voyager also deployed other impactful technologies such as the Information Tool for the Romanian Government in partnership with UNHCR and The Romanian National Council for Refugees (CNRR), to facilitate relevant information provision and dissemination about legislation changes impacting persons of concern.

To ensure a safe digital space, each employer and job posting is manually vetted on the Jobs for Ukraine platform, users can report misconduct and they can find relevant resources for recognizing legitimate employment.

The Jobs for Ukraine employment counselling has already guided 400 individuals in 2023 in navigating the intricate job market. Community events, spanning workshops, job fairs, industry-specific micro job fairs, communities of practice, and entrepreneurship-focused gatherings, have attracted over 500 attendees in Romania. The Jobs for Ukraine Job Fair in Bucharest engaged 260 job seekers and 27 employers in November 2022, yielding on-the-spot hirings. Project Voyager partnered with the regional employment office in Constanta to support over 100 refugees in Constanta to find employment at the National Job Fair.

Through strategic partnerships, Project Voyager forged a strong path to skills development. Working with reputable training providers, Project Voyager facilitated free online English and Romanian classes for over 250 refugees from Ukraine this year. Additionally, Project Voyager ran vocational education and training initiatives, underpinned by partnerships delivering advanced IT courses, digital technology training and other domains.

Recognizing the need for psychosocial support, Jobs for Ukraine launched the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) project, which connects over 60 qualified Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking mental health professionals with 8 humanitarian organizations who need their skills to provide MHPSS services to war-affected people.

Overall, Project Voyager's Jobs for Ukraine has empowered over 6,500 Ukrainian refugees on their path to self-reliance in Romania. Two filmmakers from Argentina captured bits of Project Voyager's impact in a short documentary, the trailer can be watched here.

A Testament to Unity and Support to refugees, the Migrant Integration Center in Brasov Steps Up to Provide Aid

Since the onset of the refugee arrivals, local NGOs, private donors, and the Municipality of Brasov swiftly responded to the influx of refugees from Ukraine arriving in the city in a remarkable display of solidarity. In a coordinated effort, they transformed the existing Cattia Business Center into a secure haven for those seeking refuge from Ukraine's turmoil.

The Migrant Integration Center (MIC) is actively working in two locations in Brasov to assist refugees: its main office in the city centre and the dedicated Cattia refugee centre. While the latter provides exclusive services to Ukrainian refugees, the central office extends its support to third country nationals and beneficiaries of international protection as well.

In March 2022, MIC developed a cash assistance programme, supported by Banca Transilvania, which provided cash assistance to over 3,000 Ukrainians through bank transfers until July 2023.The range of services offered by MIC in response to the refugee crisis goes beyond financial aid. The centre offers vital information and counselling services, as well as direct assistance in navigating various systems such as healthcare, education, and local employment opportunities. Furthermore, MIC provides translations for essential legal matters like dealing with the police or notaries. Support for accommodation, temporary protection, and psychosocial support are provided by the dedicated team at MIC, ensuring the well-being and integration of these displaced individuals and of the MIC's team.

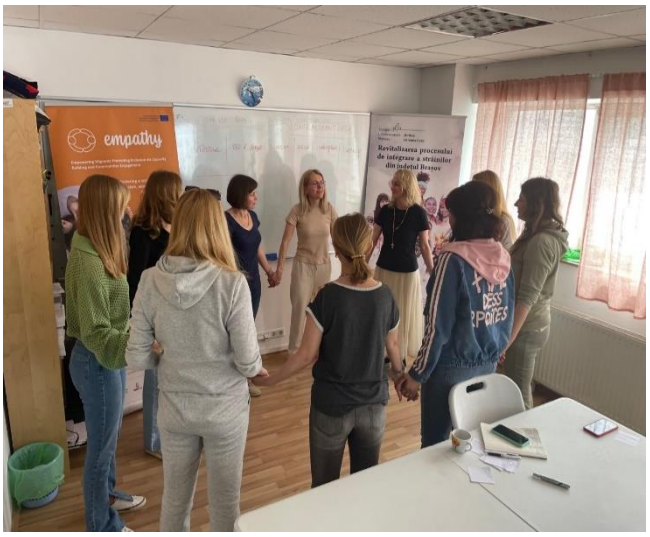
Recognizing the importance of a holistic approach to integration, MIC has been organizing Romanian language courses and socio-cultural activities for adult refugees. Drawing on its experience dating back to 2011, these courses and socio-cultural activities have played a crucial role in empowering newcomers to Brasov and helping them feel at home in their new surroundings.

Romanian language course graduation, Brasov

Recognizing that not all refugees reside within the city, MIC has initiated a mobile team to reach out to those in various communities beyond Brasov. This mobile team bridged information gaps and provided essential assistance to families in need, ensuring that support is extended far and wide.

MIC also collaborates closely with local authorities, conducting advocacy sessions about refugees and migrants' integration within the city. Through reliable partnerships and successful referral mechanisms, MIC has fostered meaningful connections with local NGOs, strengthening the overall response to the refugee crisis. Since the beginning of this endeavour on the 1st of March 2022, MIC has successfully provided support to more than 4,500 individual refugees from Ukraine living in Brasov city and its environs.

Building social cohesion, multicultural picnic, Brasov



Group therapy at MIC Brasov with Ukrainian women

Resilience Innovation Facilities Centres (RIFs), known as Innovation Hubs, Terre des hommes Romania

In March 2023, Terre des hommes (Tdh) Romania launched two Resilience Innovation Facilities Centres (RIFs), known as *Innovation Hubs*, in Brasov and Bucharest. The Innovation hubs are targeting children between 7 and 18 years old. Under the slogan "Reinvent your childhood, reshape your future", these innovation hubs have been designed to challenge children and young people on topics such as friendship, tolerance, expressing emotions, etc. - and subsequently encourage them to express these through their own creative projects that includes 3D printing, laser cutting, vinyl cutting, combined with a MHPSS component.

The Innovation Hubs are equipped with modular spaces for learning through play, non-formal education workshops, creativity workshops, and the acquisition of technical and digital skills. They aim to strengthen the youth's agency, empowerment, and resilience by providing access to resources, tools, learning, activities, and experiences that enable them to seize development opportunities and unleash their own potential.

Refugee children attend English and Romanian language classes and afterschool programme in the RIF centres. These programmes serve two important purposes: enhancing communication skills and ensuring successful integration into Romanian society, while also encompassing vital knowledge about child protection.

The two innovative hubs, RIF, and the activities carried out by the mobile team in the centres, not only address the immediate needs of refugee children and parents, but also fall under the category of psychosocial support to protect their mental balance and psychosocial well-being. Tdh teams help refugee families to connect with the Romanian community and provide them with the means to face practical problems and to alleviate the suffering caused by conflict and displacement.

Since the beginning of the international conflict in 2022, Terre des hommes (Tdh) Romania has responded to the immediate needs of children, young people and mothers arriving in Romania, providing essential support in areas such as protection, mental health, psycho-social support, or personalized individual assistance.

Resilience Innovation Facility Centre - Brasov

Resilience Innovation Facility Centre - Bucharest

World Refugee Day - Constanta

Children's Day – Bucharest

How World Vision Happy Bubbles impact the lives of refugee children from Ukraine in Romania

Recent World Vision research indicates that children who have witnessed war have higher levels of anxiety and depression throughout adulthood. Trauma symptoms, toxic stress, and a sense of insecurity are only some of the effects of war on children's mental well-being. This is particularly true for Romania. Refugee children from Ukraine come from an adverse emotional background, experienced physical threats, loss, displacement, and separation from their caregivers.

Since March 2022, World Vision has been responding to the Ukraine Crisis in Romania, with Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), Protection, and Education in Emergency (EiE) among the most critical vulnerabilities, besides addressing refugee children and their families' Basic Needs.

Ten child-friendly spaces (CFS), known as Happy Bubbles, have been established across the country, in Bucharest, Brașov, Constanța, Cluj-Napoca, Iași, and Vâlcea. Built on integrated protection services that prioritize children's safety, well-being, and engagement, these spaces provide a nurturing setting devoid of danger and fear.

In the Happy Bubbles children engage in games, learning, and inclusive activities tailored to their psychological needs. By providing a structured environment, the child-friendly spaces enable children to express their emotions, strengthen resilience, develop social skills, continue their education, and regain a sense of security. As of today, more than 13,000 children are supported by cross-cutting child protection programming. Through Happy Bubbles, refugee children also attend English and Romanian classes. These language sessions not only improve communication skills and guarantee their integration into Romanian society, but also incorporate crucial information about child protection.

Aside from providing protection and educational support, Happy Bubbles serve as spaces for MHPSS activities, such as the First Aid Arts (FAA) program. Approximately 400 refugee children and 50 adults benefit from the ongoing FFA training. Through eight sessions and 17 calming exercises, participants learn self-regulation and interpersonal skills. This technique, which combines art and science, helps children aged 8 to 17 acknowledge their emotions, foster resilience, and handle stress. Generally, more than 13,500 people have benefited from psychosocial support.

Happy Bubbles facilities empower children with disabilities and those who require daily medication. Families receive financial assistance and vouchers for educational supplies, ensuring access to essential resources. Children with special needs and disabilities are celebrated and supported through inclusive events. Through melo-therapy and occupational therapy sessions, these children can express themselves and develop their skills.

Since most students from Ukraine continue their education remotely, laptop computers were distributed to refugee children and students from vulnerable families around the country to allow online learning. World Vision raised awareness on cyberbullying, conducting seminars about the possible hazards and effects of cyberbullying and ways of detecting and responding to such behaviour. More than 7,000 children have received educational support for online classes, afterschool programs, and non-formal education.

The ten child-friendly spaces not only address the immediate needs of refugee children and parents, but also lead the way for long-term rehabilitation, growth, and integration of refugees. This is a critical supplementary offer to World Vision's work, which is also meeting the needs of refugee families from Ukraine in terms of food security and hygiene, providing multi-purpose cash interventions, in 13 cities across Romania. Overall, World Vision Ukraine Crisis Response in Romania has reached over 200,000 individuals, and more than 99,000 children, including refugees and hosting communities, through the support of its nine local partners.

SMALL HANDS
CHANGE THE WORLD

PATRIR's Ukraine House Community Centres support Culture Inclusion and Social Cohesion

The Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR) was founded in 2001 as a non-governmental, non-profit, politically independent organization in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. PATRIR is committed to a world in which conflicts are transformed constructively, through peaceful means – in which individuals, communities, countries and local, national, regional, and international organisations and actors are empowered to work together to address conflicts effectively.

Under the Regional Response Plan, PATRIR supported by UNHCR created and established two community centres in 2022, Ukraine House Cluj and Ukraine House Sighisoara. These centres provide a space for refugees from Ukraine to access protection services and engage in activities focused on social cohesion, cultural and economic integration. In 2023, the Ukraine House Team in collaboration with local service providers began to focus on activities that support cultural integration and social cohesion.

Ukraine House Sighisoara in collaboration with Perspective from Danes, organized a Valentine's Day event for Ukrainian and Romanian youth. Twelve Ukrainian and ten Romanian youth engaged in social games and danced. The feedback from the youth was very positive with the teenagers responding well to becoming acquainted to each other and friendships being formed. This event has led to other cultural integration events for youth in Sighisoara through the Ukraine House and in collaboration with diverse local NGOs.

Ukraine House Cluj marked the one year of the international armed conflict in Ukraine on 24. As a symbolic gesture of solidarity, unity, and appreciation, Ukraine House Cluj gathered people from the Ukrainian community in Cluj, NGO representatives, Romanians and others who showed their support during this hard year. The Ukrainian community commemorated through songs, speeches, and the lighting of candles. They wrote and signed a letter to Romania thanking them for their support and expressing the true meaning of brotherhood.

On 8 March, the Ukrainian community marked the beginning of spring by celebrating Women's Day and appreciating the continuous support of the host community by giving flowers to Romanian, Hungarian and Roma women in Ukraine House Cluj.

Quiz Night is a continuous cultural inclusion event hosted by Ukraine House Cluj, where mixed teams formed by both Ukrainians, Romanians and foreigners in Cluj join in a competitive game testing their knowledge of Ukrainian and Romanian culture. The winners receive tickets to the National Theatre.

More people both Ukrainians and Romanians are expressing interest to engage in a variety of activities and events which will ease refugees' access to opportunities and services in the local community.

Valentine's Day Youth Event with Ukrainians, Romanians, and Roma Youth, Ukraine House Sighisoara, 14 February 2023, ©Shnarova Yuliia

Marking of one year of international armed conflict in Ukraine, Piata Unirii, Cluj-Napoca, 24 February 2023 Organized by Ukraine House Cluj, ©Lucian Stirb

The crucial role of cultural mediators in Romania's Ukrainian refugee response

After receiving refugees from Ukraine, the Romanian Government immediately recognized the needs of refugees to access health care and offered them the same level of care as Romanian citizens with health insurance. However, communication and language barriers, the unfamiliarity of the health-care system, and lack of knowledge and information created obstacles that impacted refugees' access to services.

In response, the WHO Country Office in Romania recruited 7 Ukrainian-speaking **cultural mediators** through the United Nations Volunteers programme. The cultural mediators have been deployed in Bucharest, Galați, Cluj, Târgu Mureș and Brașov, where there are significant populations of refugees from Ukraine.

Cultural mediation, a recognized profession in Romania, can ensure that people are able to access high-quality health care. The 7 cultural mediators have professional backgrounds in medical science, psychology and social science. They speak Ukrainian and Russian as well as English, and are attempting to master the Romanian language through classes or online learning applications.

The services are diversity-friendly and aim to prevent discrimination. They include psychological counselling and psychosocial support, introduction sessions on health system, awareness raising about health referral mechanisms and pathways, and health promotion. The cultural mediators also provide support related to sensitive topics such as human trafficking, sexual and labour exploitation, and gender-based violence. To support the mediators' work, WHO has disseminated information about health-care access, availability of medicines, vaccination and proper antibiotic use.

WHO is also supporting **7 family-doctor clinics** and collaborating with civil society organizations to provide free-of-charge primary-care services to refugees, including sexual and reproductive health care, and mental health and psychosocial support. Since June 2022, around 2,200 refugees have accessed these services.

WHO Cultural Mediators providing services to a pregnant lady at WHO health clinic in Galati Blue Dot

Teenager at a MHPSS workshop on art and health organized by WHO Cultural Mediators at 'Cattia' refugee centre in Brasov city

Habitat for Humanity Romania - the Edmond Centre - Shelter and Social Hub

The need for long-term shelter for refugees from Ukraine in Romania emerged as an important need while the conflict in Ukraine is continuing and the stay in Romania is getting more protracted. Habitat for Humanity Romania, in an immediate response to these shelter needs, rented out apartments for 30 families from Ukraine, covering the entire costs for rent and utilities.

Habitat for Humanity Romania was alerted that 70 refugees staying in the Ferdinand School Centre in Bucharest had to be relocated by the end of September 2022 due to inadequate housing conditions and unsuitable infrastructure for the winter months. Habitat for Humanity Romania, in partnership with the Sector 2 City Hall and UNICEF, transformed an unused office building into an accommodation centre and social hub for refugees - called “The Edmond Centre”- as a medium and long-term solution for the most vulnerable categories of refugees in the Bucharest’s 2nd sector. The Edmond Centre was rehabilitated in record time relying heavily on partners and volunteers.

The Edmond Centre currently boasts over 2,000 square meters of rehabilitated energy and heat efficient spaces over three floors. The long-term accommodation capacity is for 100 people and about 20 people per night can be accommodated as transitional shelter. In addition to housing, the centre offers educational, medical, social integration, recreational and psychological services to meet the needs of refugees. These services are provided by specialized local authorities to ensure a holistic and integrated response. Each of the 27 rooms, the common spaces as well as the kitchens and showers, were furnished by Habitat for Humanity Romania using furniture and appliances the organization had in stock and donated by its partners UNICEF and CORE.

As of February 2023, the Edmond Centre accommodates 70 refugees – consisting of families with two to nine people, elderly with disabilities, or single people. In addition, the Centre accommodates an additional 30 refugees, allocated by the Bucharest Municipality Centre for Coordination and Management of the Intervention (CMBCCI), who is redirecting refugees from key transit points such as the North Railway Station, depending on their short to long-term needs and their vulnerabilities since December 2022. A total of 456 refugees, including 179 children, have benefited from educational, medical and psychological services provided at the Edmond Centre.

In the short to medium term, the Edmond Centre will continue accommodating refugees from Ukraine. In the long term, it will accommodate vulnerable families from Bucharest, contributing to strengthening of the shelter and housing system.

Habitat for Humanity is working closely with its partners, public authorities, and volunteers to deliver qualitative and safe accommodation for the refugees from Ukraine. Since the beginning of the Ukrainian Refugee situation, Habitat for Humanity Romania has provided transitional shelter to more than 2,700 people crossing through Romania.

Four simple adjustments to accelerate inclusion of Ukrainian pupils in the audient format

(Case study from Ienachita Vacarescu school in Bucharest, with European Commission and World Bank support.)

World Bank (WB), with support from the European Commission's DG REFORM, has been providing advisory support to the Department of Emergency Situations (DSU) and the Prime Minister's office in Romania through a project funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) on Accelerating the access of Ukrainian (UA) refugees to support services. Its key approach is to run experiments, which give space to service providers and beneficiaries (refugees) to co-create solutions leading to their better life outcomes (e.g., more people financially self-sufficient, in quality learning etc.). The experiments thus provide insights on how to operationalize or adjust the Government's National Plan of Measures for the Protection and Inclusion of Refugees (NP) to achieve better results as well as how to activate the public service providers to improve support services to also benefit the Romanian (RO) citizens. In addition, these experiments can feed into the creation of a structural framework for the long-term integration of Ukrainian children in the Romanian education system, which is also supported under this TSI project.

Temporary Protection provides the Ukrainian refugee children with the right to study at Romanian public schools. The NP plans intensive Romanian language training, hiring additional Ukrainian and Romanian educators and promotes exchange of good practices and materials among the schools with Ukrainian pupils. The WB pilot project with the Ienachita Vacarescu school in Bucharest focused on how to specifically operationalize this support in the classroom and help the Romanian teacher to provide pupils that typically do not speak Romanian with the support that sustains their school attendance, improves the quality of their learning and prepares them better to enter the Romanian public school system formally from the next school year. This pilot project focused on 4 adjustments implementable in a month to help Romanian teachers:

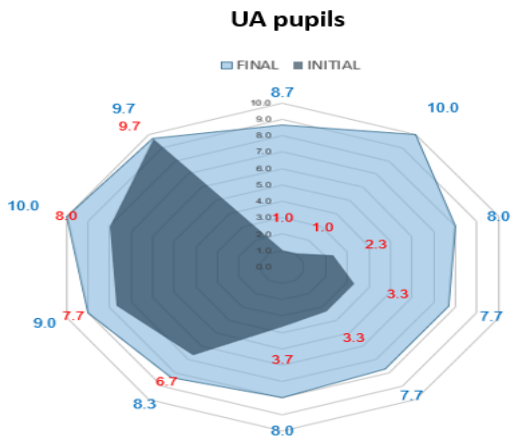
1 **Activate the existing ICT for translation** and pedagogical purposes (illustration of learning matter, automatization of assessment etc.)

2 **Get the RO teacher and UA assistant to collaborate on lesson preparation and delivery** (UA assistant ensuring preparation of learning aids including the digital ones, activation of routines with ICT, checking pupil understanding and progress)

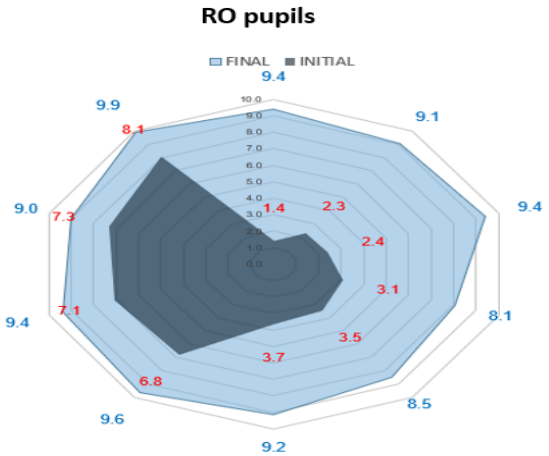
3 **Vocabulary sheets with key words for the lesson:** to maximize the language acquisition also outside of RO lessons and ensure pupils work actively with the new vocabulary

4 **Activate group work in the class** (teacher facilitates it and lectures less) and peer learning among RO and UA pupils

Based on measuring the learning quality by the ICT, the Ukrainian pupils showed improvement in all indicators. The average improvement for the Romanian pupils was even higher. This means that while adjusting the plan and delivering the lessons inclusively takes some initial efforts, the Romanian pupils benefited even more. All pupils showed improvements in their digital skills, ability to communicate and collaborate, understanding of the learning matter and engagement in the lesson, i.e., the improvements of their 21st century skills that the Ministry of Education strives for through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP).



Average improvement: from an **average score of 4.6 to the score of 8.7 out of 10**



Average improvement: from an **average score of 4.5 to 9.1 out of 10**

The WB team concluded the below 4 lessons:

1) It is not needed to wait till Ukrainian pupils speak fluent Romanian language to start engaging them in the lessons;
2) While the Ukrainian assistant meets the initial need of bridging the language gap, s/he needs to become more of an enabler and activator of independent learning of the Ukrainian pupils;
3) More group work in class allows for peer learning, learning to collaborate and building relations between the Ukrainian and Romanian pupils;
4) Enabling conditions matter – more Ukrainian pupils at school make a business case to hire support and what makes it ultimately work is the school management interested in modernizing teaching practices.

The WB has initiated an archive of inclusive lesson plans developed by the Romanian and Ukrainian teachers that can serve as the basis for supporting more national public schools in getting prepared to teach inclusively and developed a Terms of Reference for the Ukrainian assistant with the practices to accelerate the independent learning of Ukrainian pupils. As these practices are in line with the planned NRRP reforms on digital transformation of schools and modernization of the teaching practices, the refugee response in its unprecedented context can serve as a trojan horse to initiating the reforms of the schooling system.

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) intervention in Romania

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Romania was established in 2000 and is currently working with more than 140 staff and more than 150 volunteers. JRS offers comprehensive assistance for foreigners throughout all phases of the migration cycle - arrival at the borders, asylum and integration, detention, toleration, or repatriation. JRS implements projects under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund in partnerships with i.a. Save the Children and Terre des Hommes.

Under the Refugee Response Plan (RRP), access to education for refugee children in Romania remains a priority and a commitment of the partners under the RRP. JRS is supporting Ukrainian refugee children with enrolment and attendance in Romanian schools, as well as with non-formal learning activities. JRS is currently running a comprehensive educational program as part of a wider approach to promoting self-reliance among the refugees and comprehensive support for integration. The project has a dual purpose – to promote social cohesion by bringing Ukrainian children in close contact with their Romanian peers and to allow parents to participate in the labour market while their children are attending schools.

Activities organized in the Education Hub at School 11 in Constanta, May 2022. ©JRS

To strengthen the national education system, JRS employs more than 100 Ukrainian teachers that are seconded to the Romanian schools, in coordination with the respective local School Inspectorates. This allows Ukrainian children to continue their national educational curriculum while in Romania and, at the same time, to be included in schools, get access to the Romanian curricula, to interact with Romanian children which -in turn- enhances social cohesion and inclusion. Through the 23 Education Hubs and various educational centres supported by JRS, over 2,500 children are enrolled and attending classes in Bucharest (Mihai Viteazu College, Ienachita Vacarescu School, Uruguay School, School 86 and 116, SEK School, and other educational centres), Constanta (Schools 6,11,16 and 40), Galati, Braila, Ploiesti and Medias.

The project built on a Plan International initiative focused on setting up Education Hubs and non-formal education centres and summer camps, as well as on building up a strong community of Ukrainian refugee teachers through organizing trainings and a national conference. Since then, a variety of partners worked together to support the educational project. New education centres in areas hosting smaller refugee communities, peer-to-peer mentoring, and psychological support is supported through UNICEF and food needs are met by World Vision providing hot meals to children enrolled in educational activities in Constanta and Galati.

Spaces for Ukrainians and Romanians youth, the National Youth Foundation

Since the onset of the Ukraine situation, the National Youth Foundation (FNT), together with its member foundations, have been responding to the Ukraine refugee influx with humanitarian support, including with material support, equipping transit centres and support to Ukrainian youth arriving in Romania.

At the end of March 2022, the FNT started to implement the model of safe spaces for young Ukrainians who arrived from the conflict zones at its youth centres. Youth centres, based on the model developed prior at the network level, are spaces where young people from the local community (Ukrainians and Romanians) have access to services and activities as support of inclusion in local communities. The youth centres also provide a space to facilitate access to educational, professional or recreational programs and activities. To eliminate language and cultural barriers, but also to create a space where young Ukrainians feel safe, the youth centres employ both Romanian and Ukrainian youth workers. Each youth centre has specialized staff who offer specialized support for learning the Romanian language to help the integration in the local community and also English language, essential for them to be able to continue their lives as normal as possible and to facilitate access to the labour market.

To date, more than 1,000 young Ukrainian people have participated in activities or benefited from educational and recreational services provided at the youth centres. Youth centres are safe space for young people - Ukrainians and Romanians together, where they feel safe, empowered and endorsed to become active in the community in which they are living.

FNT is currently coordinating five youth centres in key points of the country, where young Ukrainians have chosen to start a new life. Support from international non-governmental organizations, such as ActionAid and the Norwegian Refugee Council, allowed FNT to increase its dedicated staff in Timisoara, Botoșani and Tulcea and to open new dedicated youth centres in Bucharest and Suceava. With support of Plan International, FNT is planning to expand the intervention in another six locations.

The Nicolina Centre (Soseaua Nicolina), Iasi

The “Nicolina Centre for Humanitarian and Social Assistance” is a one-stop centre, coordinated by RRP partner FONSS, in partnership with associations like Afterhills, ParentIS and Group Our Smile operating in the municipality of Iasi. The centre, providing a complex hub of services, is benefitting from an active collaboration with the local authorities (Inspector for Emergency Situation (ISU) Iasi, City Hall, Iasi Prefecture) and is operating from a building provided by the City Hall of Iasi. The Nicolina Centre started to receive Ukrainian refugees and Third Country Nationals (TCNs) on March 24, 2022.

The Nicolina Centre has provided services to over 1450 refugees from Ukraine and many others, from Iasi community, have received psycho-social, administrative, legal and medical support in the centre. A team of over 50 social workers, psychologists, nurses and community workers, employed by the Federation of Nongovernmental Organizations for Social Services (FONSS) and member/partner organizations, are available daily -in day and night shifts- to respond to a variety of needs of refugees through an integrated case-management approach from daily accommodation and meals, to specialized psycho-social and therapeutic services, day care, non-formal education for children, rehabilitation, mediation for employment, as well as distribution of food and non-food items, through the social shop.

To work towards an integrated approach and to enhance social cohesion, in addition to refugees from Ukraine, over 1300 persons with specific needs from the Iasi host community registered as clients of the social shop. The social shop is more than a distribution point. The social shop functions as an entry gate for registering persons interested in receiving the multitude of services offered in the Nicolina Centre to refugees and in-need host community members, including for job search and job mediation.