



Area-Based Assessment

Galați, Romania
October 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; Anatolie Cosciug, ULBȘȘ and Andriana Cosciug - CSCM researcher, have contributed to this report.

Acknowledgements

A special thanks is extended to the Directorate for Social Assistance of Galați (DAS) for consulting during the development of this assessment and collecting a large part of the data presented in this report. Moreover, we are grateful to "Fundația Consiliul Național Român pentru Refugiati (CNRR)" and Inimă de copil Galați Association, who dedicated their time and effort to provide support to the survey with their rich experience and supported the data collection process.

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Area Based Assessment – Galați, Romania

As of 31 October 2023, over **6.2 million refugees from Ukraine** were recorded globally. To this date, Romania has recorded more than 4.9 million border crossings of refugees directly from Ukraine and via the Republic of Moldova. Among them, 146,000 refugees have applied for Temporary Protection, and approximately **85.000 remain in the country**. Moreover, 935.000 crossed the border to Romania through the Galați and Isaccea border points, and more than 12.000 refugees have registered for Temporary Protection (TP) in Galați.

This **Area-Based Assessment (ABA)** offers an overview of the humanitarian situation in Galați. This location was chosen for in-depth analysis due to its status as a city close to the border, which represented one of the most important entry points for refugees, and because it is among the cities with the highest number of Ukrainian refugees.

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 Galați (DAS), "Fundația Consiliul Național Roman pentru Refugiati (CNRR)" and "Inimă de copil" Galați Association. The focus of this assessment is to understand the needs and priorities of refugees in Galați, 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 Galați.

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. This primary data was obtained through quantitative surveys with refugees and host community representatives, interviews with key informants (KIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs). Data collection took place between 7 June and 17 July 2023 in Galați, and five data collection methods were employed, as explained further.

Methodology



Refugee household survey

A household-level quantitative structured questionnaire was administered to 198 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 87 individuals (face-to-face) 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 organised and 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 relevant stakeholders to the refugee response in Galați. 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 KIs 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 Galați and of 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 as indicative.

- **FGDs with the Host Community**

While participation of the host community in the other tools of the survey was adequate, finding participants from the general population in Galați willing to participate in these discussions proved to be challenging. Consequently, only 2 representatives of the Host community were engaged in an online discussion.

- **FGDs with Refugees**

The focus group discussion with refugees gathered 10 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.

- **Timing of Assessment**

It's important to note that data collection took place from June to July 2023. Given the volatile nature of the situation, the period of the year when people travel more, and the pendular movements of refugees, these findings should be interpreted as a snapshot of the refugee situation at that specific time.

- **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 determined some possible respondents to be reluctant to participate.

Key Findings



Movements - The long-term movement intentions of Ukrainian refugees in Galați are marked by considerable uncertainty. For the medium term, around **47% expressed a desire to stay in Galați for the subsequent six months**. Security conditions in Ukraine and the availability of permanent accommodation were cited as reasons for this decision, while approximately 40% of respondents were uncertain about their future plans. In the long term, there was a prevalent desire to return to Ukraine when the security situation permits. However, the lack of observable improvements in Ukraine's security situation has contributed to the uncertainty surrounding long-term plans.



Housing - While **92% of respondents are living outside collective centres**, housing still emerged as a critical challenge for refugees in Galați. The difficulties stemmed from changes in the government's housing and food assistance program and delays in the disbursement of funds. The conclusion of the 50/20 program left many refugees unable to cover rent costs, resulting in some returning to Ukraine, relocating to refugee centres, or facing eviction.



Education - The education of refugee children in Galați comes out as a concern. Approximately **46% of the children of surveyed households were not receiving any formal education** (data was collected during June and July 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 **59% 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, along with language barriers, added to the healthcare challenges. Despite these obstacles, most refugees who used medical services expressed satisfaction, except for extended waiting times, high costs for private services, and geographical distance to healthcare facilities. The items for which a positive evaluation was marked included the diversity of medical services, the facilities available and the funding system.



Humanitarian Assistance - Refugees were generally content with the humanitarian assistance (Local Authorities, NGOs and UN Agencies) programs, with around **79% expressing satisfaction**. Public sector representatives estimated that approximately 80% of identified needs were being met. However, there was a noticeable decline in aid levels and engagement throughout time. Coordination issues among non-governmental organisations (NGOs) led to service duplications and inefficient resource allocation. Critics highlighted the need for a more organised and systematised approach to aid, particularly for single mothers and vulnerable groups.



Livelihoods - A substantial portion of **refugees relied on savings (52%) and humanitarian assistance (39%) for income** after losing their jobs due to displacement. Language barriers and the lack of childcare were significant barriers to employment. Additionally, 29% reported that their households had no source of income, a stark contrast to the pre-conflict situation (9%).



Refugees-Host Community Relationship - Around 80% of respondents perceived the relationship between refugees and the host community as "positive" or "very positive." However, 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.



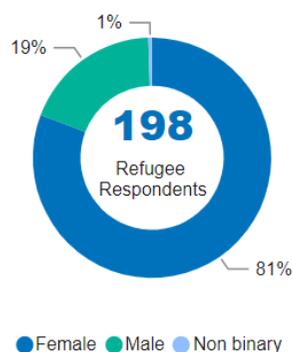
Public Authorities - Ukrainian refugees faced delays in receiving financial aid from the Romanian government, leading to frustrations. Public institutions in Galați provided various forms of assistance, including accommodation, sustenance, children's activities, and language courses. However, key informants noted that the overall support from local authorities may be somewhat limited, suggesting a need for increased collaboration and resources at the local level.

Coverage and demographics

This Area-Based Assessment covers the entire city of Galați, a city located near the border, which represents, along with the neighbouring border points, one of the most important access routes in Romania for Ukrainian refugees. It is also important to mention that Galați is among the top ten cities in Romania hosting refugees from Ukraine. A clear indicator of the importance of this geographical setting for the city of Galați is also the fact that closeness to the residence in Ukraine is the main reason why survey respondents chose to remain here for the moment.

The most significant share of participants in the refugee survey is female (81%), which is consistent with the general gender breakdown of the Ukrainian refugee population in Romania, at the time when this study was conducted. The data collected shows that 50% of the Ukrainian families residing in Galați were separated due to the conflict, thus increasing the vulnerability of the refugee group. The average household is composed of three people, and with an average of above one child per household, indications of an adult female caregiver profile of refugee respondents are taking shape.

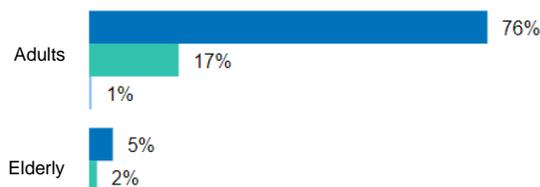
Gender of the respondents



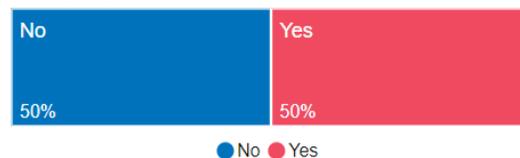
3
Average household size

1.22
Average number of children in the household

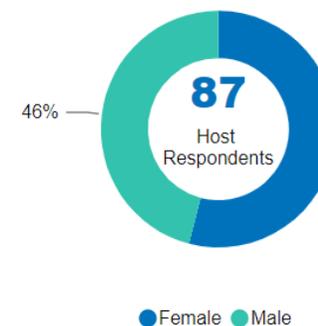
37.64
Average age



Family separated due to the conflict



Gender of the respondents



2.7
Average number of people hosted

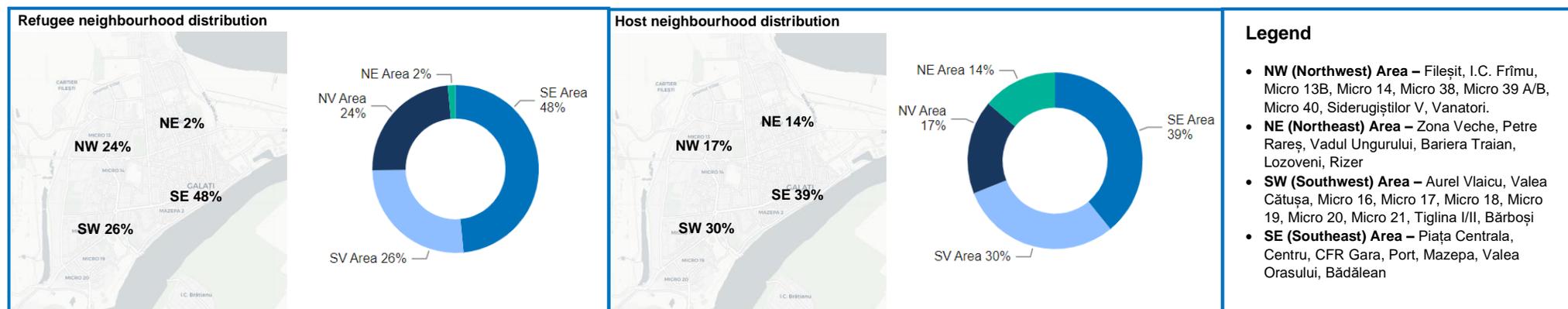
2.78
Average number of people in household

47.78
Average age

The host community survey indicates an average number of almost three people hosted for a similar number of people in the host household. 87 people participated in the host survey, out of which almost equal shares depict the gender distribution – 46% male and 54% female. The average age of the people hosting Ukrainian refugees in Galați is around 48 years, significantly older than the refugees.

In order to better illustrate the settling of refugees and the residence of hosts throughout Galati, the neighbourhoods were organised in four geographical areas. Both the hosts and Ukrainian refugees' geographical distribution in the city Galați depict a preference for the southern part of the city. Almost half of the refugees live in neighbourhoods such

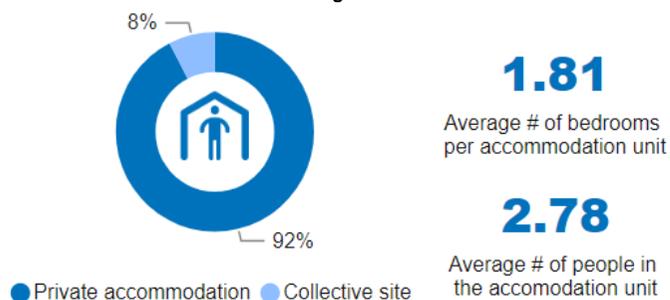
as the Centre, around the Harbour or close to the Central Market. Similarly, almost 40% of the hosts reside in the same area, while another 30% are located in the Southwestern area.



Housing conditions

Accommodation was regarded as one of the areas that have become more problematic for the refugee community, as indicated by participants in focus group discussions (FGD) and key informants (KIs). This situation is attributed mainly 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 the only one available for moving in at that moment or that it was affordable.

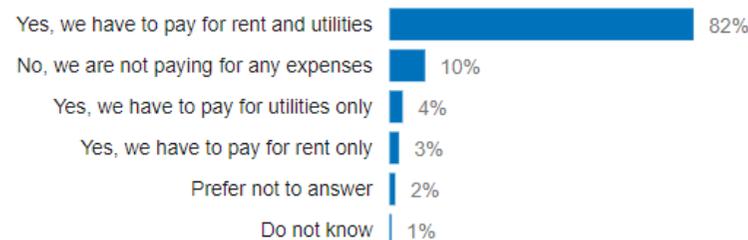
Situation of the accommodation of refugees



Time of arrival in the current accommodation

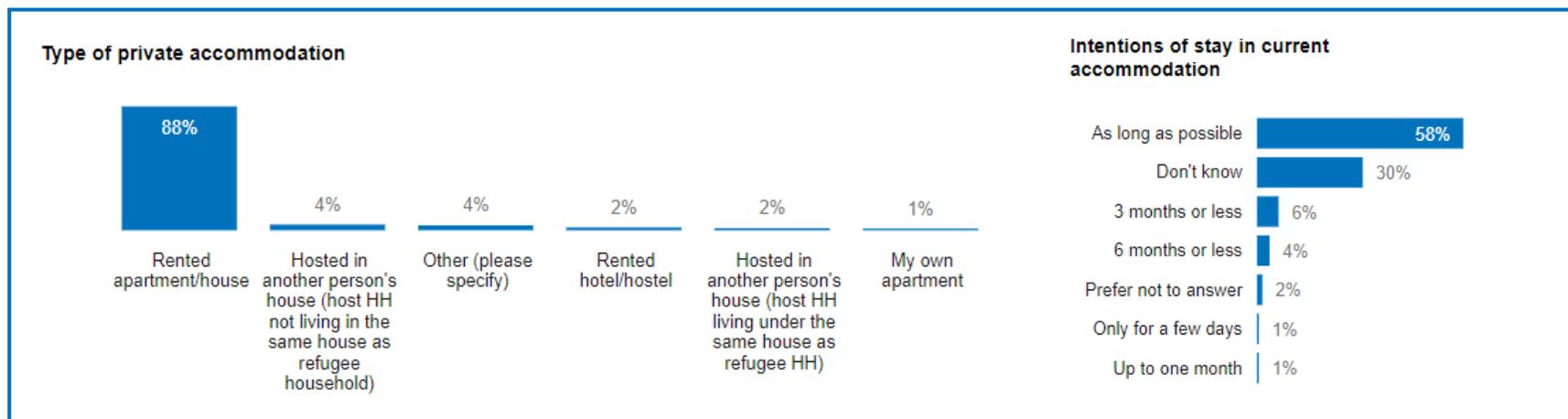


Payment for the accommodation





The majority of refugees live in private accommodations, namely rented apartments, where they pay for rent and utilities. On average, almost three people reside in two-bedroom residences. According to the data collected, more than half of the refugees intend to stay in the current accommodation as long as possible. At the same time, about 30% of them declare they do not know, adding to the uncertainty regarding their situation and future intentions, as further explained in other sections of this report.



A significant majority (85%) of the surveyed refugees reported having benefited from the government assistance programme for housing and food that provided 50 RON per day for housing and 20 RON per day for food. Four of the interviewed KIs argued that the program did not cover all the food needs. However, during the FGD, some refugees indicated they could not afford the rent anymore after the 50/20 program ended and had to return to Ukraine or move into refugee centers, or they were asked to leave their accommodation.

This situation was confirmed by three of the KIs interviewed, who explained that the change in the housing and food assistance program made it more difficult for refugees to get proper housing, while hosts highlighted that the housing situation has become more complicated in some situations leading to tension, and that the payments are delayed considerably. Regardless of this, 88% of the survey respondents stated that they had applied for the new assistance program.

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, 30% of the hosts indicated bad behaviour or a conflict with the refugees, while 19% reported dissatisfaction with the governmental aid provided. Asked for how long they were planning to host refugees, more than half (54%) of the respondents said that they planned to do it for as long as it is needed, with about one-third (36%) of the hosts specifying that this was contingent on the continuation of the housing programme, as they could not afford it otherwise.

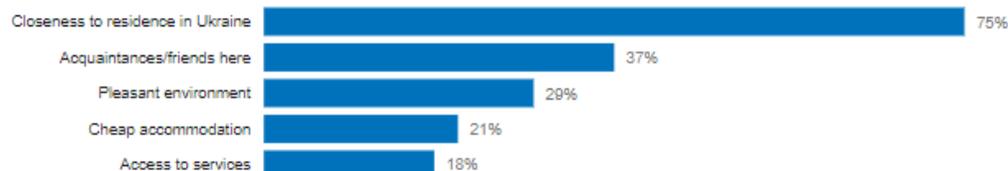
Movements

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 come to an end.

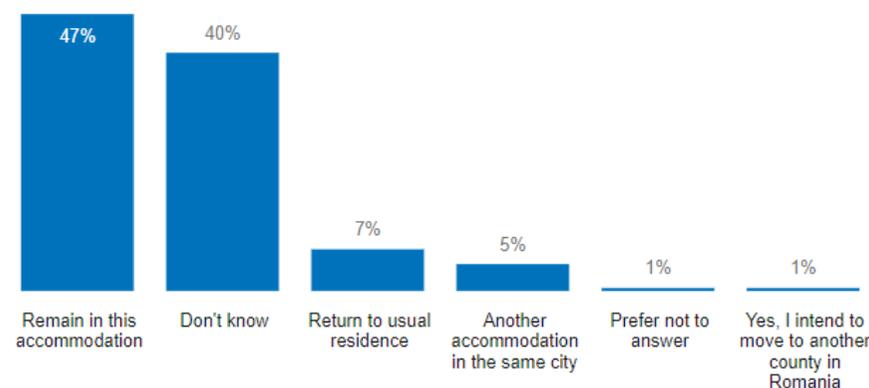
During the focus group discussions (FGDs), some participants expressed their desire to return to their usual places of residence as soon as the security situation permitted. However, given the ongoing insecurity in Ukraine, refugees find themselves with limited options but to stay in Galați for an uncertain time. The most important reason to move again within Romania in the following 6 months appears to be the need to find more permanent accommodation, followed by security concerns and the location of friends and relatives. Poor living conditions and the changes in the housing assistance program appear as less important in this regard. This uncertainty surrounding the refugees' length of stay in Galați 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 choosing to stay in Romania was the closeness to the residence in Ukraine. This factor proved to be important for about 73% of the respondents, whereas in the second place, the presence of acquaintances or friends came up (32%), and in the third place, the pleasant environment influenced the decision (28%). This ranking was identical when asking the top reasons to choose, especially Galați in the country.

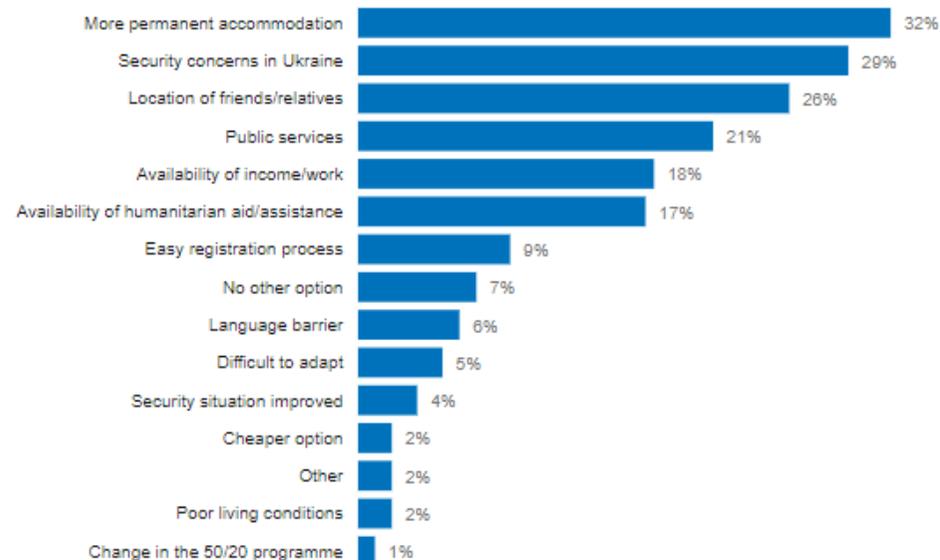
Reasons to Choose Galati



Household intention to move again in six months



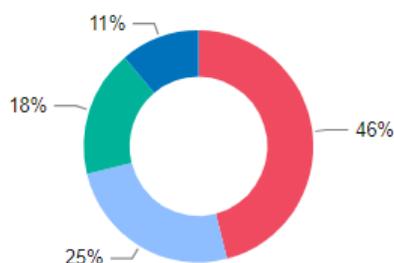
Reasons to move in the next 6 months



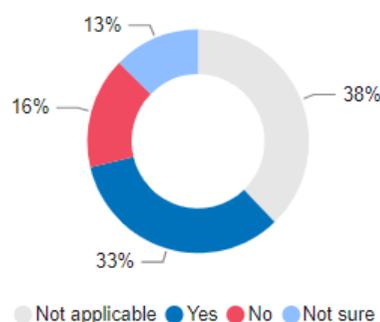
Education

The survey results indicate that the primary educational option / preference for children is Ukrainian schools, whether through distance learning or in-person attendance in Romania. Most parents with children selected this option because it allowed their children to attend classes in their native language, which was also recognised by the Ukrainian government. However, some parents expressed concerns about the limited opportunities for peer socialisation in online schooling and its suitability for younger children, as it requires parental supervision. Additionally, this method could exclude children without access to a computer or the internet.

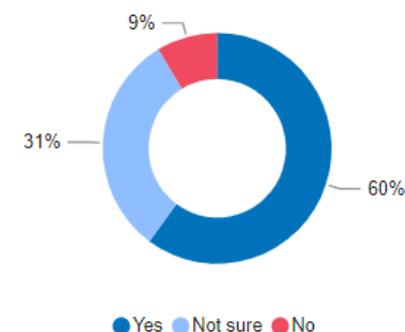
Access of children to formal education



Inclusion activities in Romanian schools



Non-formal education activities in proximity



As depicted in the visuals above, the city of Galați seems to be offering a broad range of non-formal education activities in the areas resided by Ukrainian refugees, as almost two-thirds of them declare, while the inclusion activities carried out in Romanian schools are acknowledged by one-third of the respondents. Inclusion of Ukrainian children in Romanian schools seems to be a matter of concern for the education system, as one KI in education reports that many Ukrainian children have arrived, and according to the new eligibility criterion of the updated governmental assistance programme for housing and food, they must be enrolled in school. In this context, the school inspectors are struggling to cope, especially since they are dealing with entire classes of children of different ages. Participants in the host FGD explained that the School Inspectorate allocates special places for Ukrainian children in Romanian schools, but as listener students, which means that the pupils spend one year in the audience in the class, and the percentage of children attending Romanian schools is very low, instead opting for attending Ukrainian schools sustained by NGOs or online school in Ukraine.

According to refugee household surveys, a low percentage of minors across all age groups opted for schooling within the Romanian school system, and there were few inclusion programs to support these options. Barriers to enrolling children in kindergarten included limited available spots and private facilities that were costly and unaffordable for some refugee households.

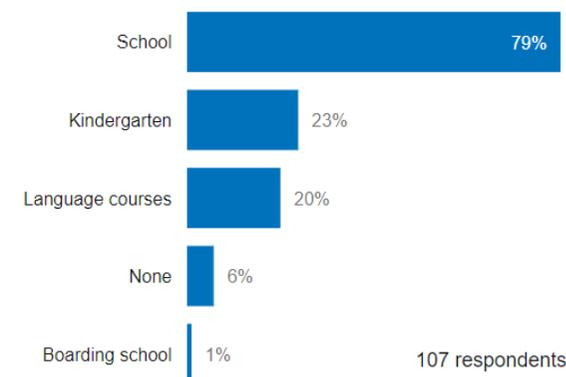
Extracurricular activities were suggested as a solution for socialisation issues for children not attending formal education or studying online, with 13% of households identifying it as a top priority among their needs. Such non-formal education activities were reported as being available in proximity by 60% of the refugees surveyed.

Furthermore, schooling within the Romanian education system was not favoured, as it lacked support for inclusion and had language barriers. While some KIs mentioned success for children who already spoke Romanian or for younger children whose education was play-based, others highlighted the challenges faced by refugee students.

It was noted during the host FGD that the arrival of refugees did not impact Romanian children's access to education, and the Ukrainian students were well received by colleagues and professors.

In summary, the primary educational choice for Ukrainian refugee children was distance learning in their native language, while some attended educational hubs. Access to kindergartens was generally available, but barriers existed to enrolling children in the Romanian school system, which lacked inclusion support. Extracurricular activities were seen as a potential solution for socialisation.

Available in person education facilities in the proximity



Adult education

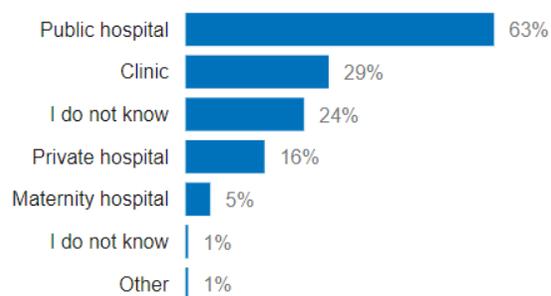
In terms of adult education, some KI reveal that the process is well organised and simplified, and there is a preparatory year for the refugees who want to attend university studies, while others report limited availability from the Universities to cooperate in inclusion initiatives. As explained during the interviews, in Universities, various NGOs organised events to promote inclusion, focusing on providing information and assisting refugee students. 1 KI explained that a major concern relates to the lack of clear processes and support within universities to help these students integrate and address their specific needs and that the absence of dedicated support and understanding of the stress and challenges faced by these students may result in their disengagement from the education system.

The refugee FGD revealed the need for improvement in language skills, especially Romanian, and retraining programs and free vocational courses are suggested as adult education initiatives to improve employment opportunities.

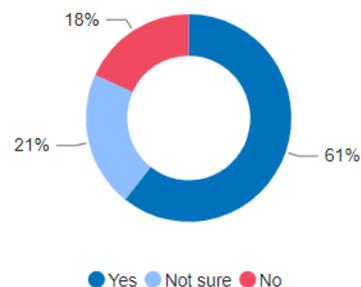
Healthcare

Healthcare emerged as the most frequently cited priority need among survey respondents, with 23% 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 64% of the refugee survey respondents reported having used Romanian public medical services since their arrival. Notably, significant numbers of respondents were aware of the availability of Family Doctors providing basic medical care in proximity (61%) and the availability of mental health and psychosocial support services in proximity (48%).

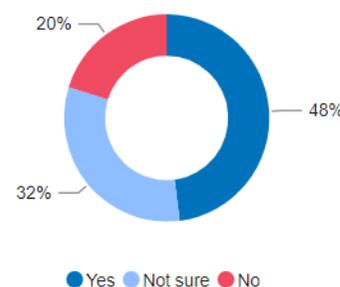
Availability of medical facilities in the proximity



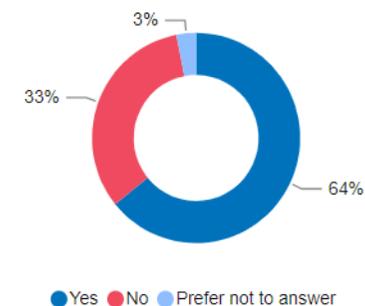
Availability of a family doctor providing basic medical care in proximity



Availability of mental health and psychosocial support services in proximity



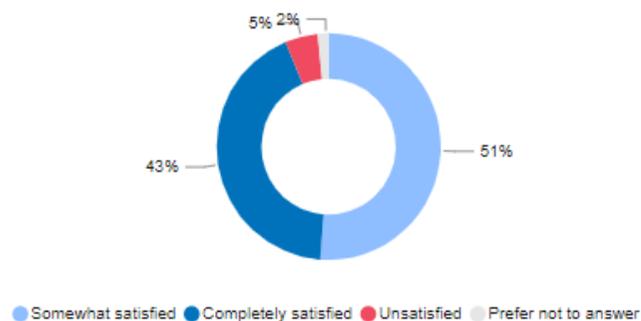
Accessed medical facilities since arrival



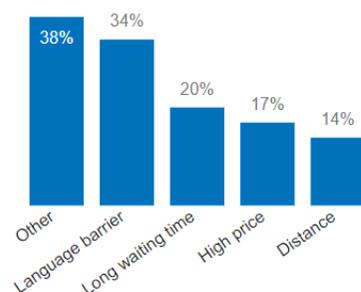
Despite having access to the Romanian healthcare system with the same rights as insured Romanian nationals, both key informants (KIs) and Ukrainian refugees pointed out several persistent barriers. The most mentioned barrier, as reported by participants, was the difficulty in registering with a Family Doctor (GP), which is essential for general consultations, obtaining prescription medication, and accessing specialist care within the public sector. Three KIs confirmed that few doctors were accepting Ukrainian patients because it implied more paperwork needed to be completed. 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.

Another significant barrier to accessing health services was the language barrier, as reported by refugees in the FGDs and confirmed by KIs. Moreover, 34% of survey respondents who expressed partial or no satisfaction with the care they received cited the language barrier as the primary reason for their dissatisfaction.

Satisfaction with medical services



Reasons for dissatisfaction with medical facilities



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. Besides the language barrier, other significant reasons for dissatisfaction were reported to be the long waiting times, high prices for the private services or the distance between the location of the refugee and the institution offering said services.

Psychological counselling

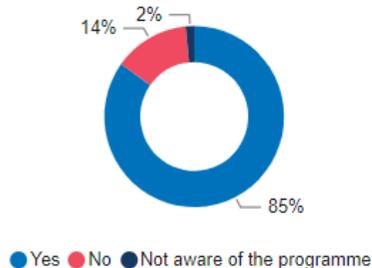
The refugees participating in the FGD mentioned that the situation with the war in Ukraine causes fear and uncertainty, and they appreciate the support provided by the psychologist present at the facility where the focus group was being held. In contrast, one of the participants mentioned the lack of awareness about specific support groups in their area of residence. Furthermore, during the discussion, traumatised children were mentioned, with one participant's child experiencing fear of toy guns, explosions, and fireworks.

Social services

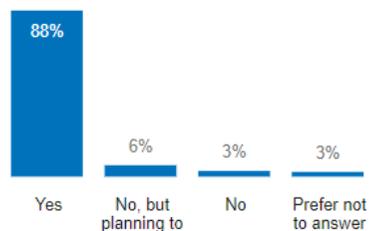
Nearly all participants (88%) in the survey reported having applied for the housing and food assistance program and only 10% experienced difficulties in the process. Among the most frequently mentioned difficulties encountered were related to the required documentation and long queues or waiting times.

According to both the KIIs and the 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.

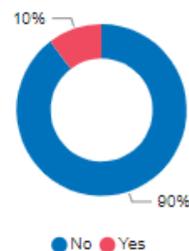
Beneficiaries of the 50/20 programme for housing and food



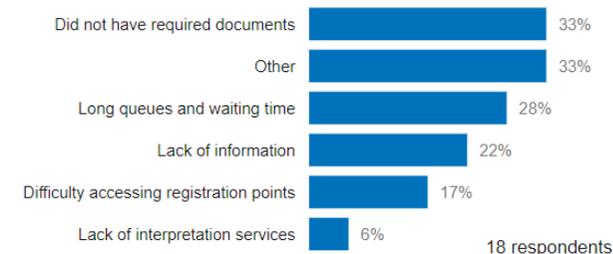
Household applied for the new accommodation / food expenses programme for Ukrainians



Difficulties experienced in applying for the new accommodation/food expenses programme



Difficulties experienced in applying for the new accommodation/food programme



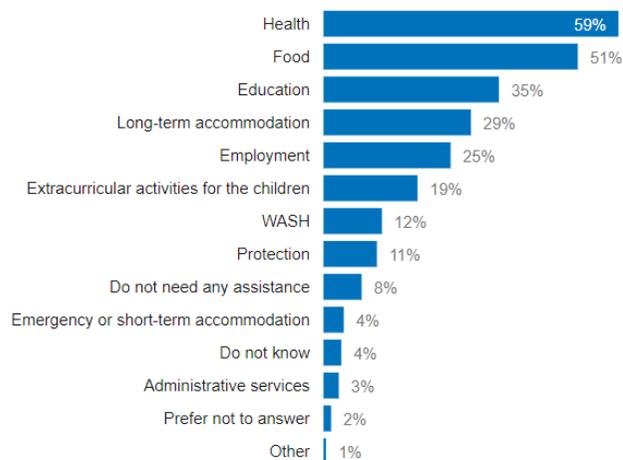


Needs

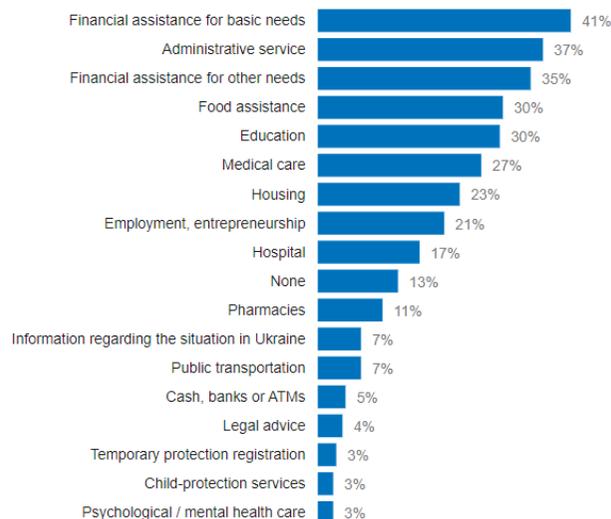
The most mentioned needs in the refugee focus group discussions (FGDs) included access to medical services, food, and access to education, which is confirmed by the responses in the refugee survey. Another topic of interest in the needs of the refugees emerging from the FGDs is related to childcare services. The household survey yielded similar results, with the addition of financial assistance ranking in the top services requested. In terms of priority needs, more than half of the respondents indicated these are related to health and food and about one-third to education. In addition to these immediate needs, employment and long-term accommodation are of interest for close to one-third of the survey participants. On the other hand, refugees are less interested in services such as psychological or mental health care, child protection or accessing banking services.

In terms of information needs, the refugees indicated that the services they are most interested in are temporary protection procedures, followed by health-related services and housing. On the other hand, information about the situation in Ukraine or psychological and mental health care are the domains less selected as topics of interest. In regard to information channels preferred by Ukrainian refugees, receiving information from community groups or face-to-face appear as most desirable. Official websites, in return, are among the least preferred information channels, being chosen in only 2% of the responses.

Top 3 priority needs



Types of services requested



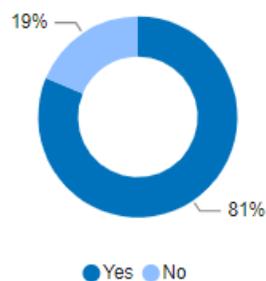
Information needs



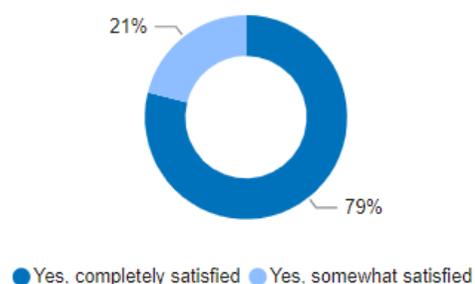
Humanitarian assistance

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

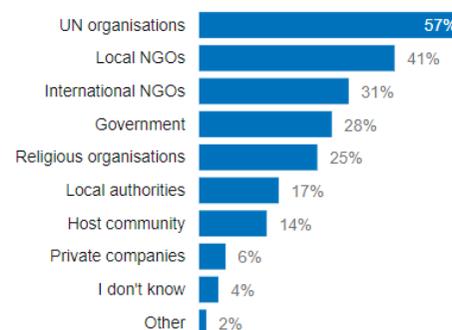
Beneficiaries of assistance in the crisis response since arriving in Romania



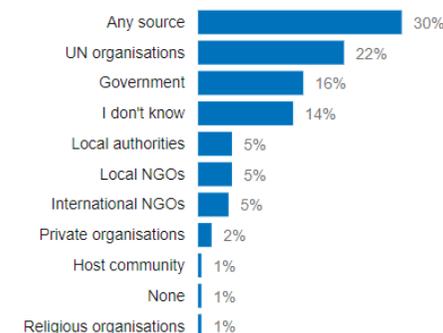
Satisfaction with the crisis response assistance received



Providers of assistance in crisis response



Preferred sources of assistance



Furthermore, almost all respondents who had received humanitarian assistance reported being either completely or partially satisfied with the aid they had received.

The sudden influx of thousands of refugees in Galați, requiring humanitarian assistance, presented challenges for national and local authorities and the humanitarian sector. One of the KIs working in public services estimated that the assistance provided covered about 80% of the refugees' needs. However, FGD participants identified decreasing aid levels as their primary grievance regarding humanitarian assistance. 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, considering that some of them are running out of funds. Additionally, one host respondent 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 result in a further decrease in the amount and quality of assistance the local community provides and may indicate that more coordination is required in the humanitarian endeavour.

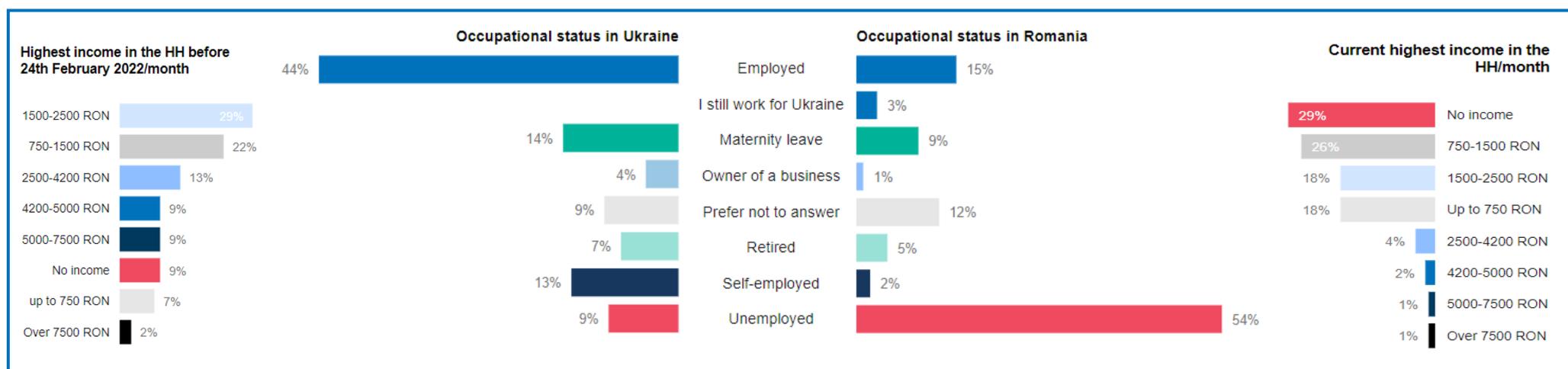
Another issue raised by three key informants was related to the lack of coordination among NGOs, which has led to duplications of services and inefficiencies in resource allocation. Other concern raised during the refugee FGD was that there is a critical necessity for better organised and systematised aid, especially for single moms and other

vulnerable groups. Finally, KIs working in NGOs emphasised the need for a well-maintained database of refugees to track and distribute support effectively and suggested the establishment of an emergency response fund for NGOs to address urgent needs.

Livelihoods

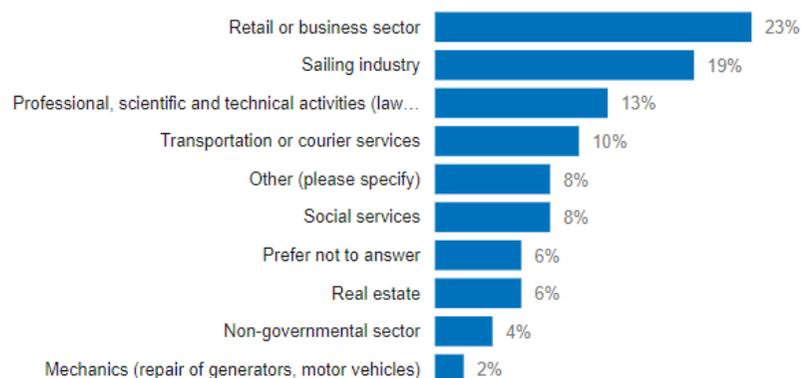
The armed conflict in Ukraine has brought about severe changes in the lives of the displaced people. In this context, a significant decrease of almost 30% can be observed in the numbers of employed people before and after 22 February 2022, while the share of respondents who are still working for Ukraine represents only 3%. Consequently, the reporting of unemployment has grown from 9% before the start of the war to more than 50% at the time of the survey.

For those who do continue to be employed, the IT and computer technology industry, as well as non-governmental organisations, offer jobs for over one-third of the participants in the study. On the other hand, it seems that among the most affected were the people who worked in the sailing industry, where there was a decrease in employment from 19% to 4%. A significant decrease can also be observed for professional, scientific and technical activities, but this may also be attributed to the fact that these types of activities usually require special accreditations and permissions to be practised within a country or enrol in professional associations. Interestingly, one of the sectors where Romania is confronted with a lack of workforce, the hospitality industry, only employs 4% of the refugee participants in the study.

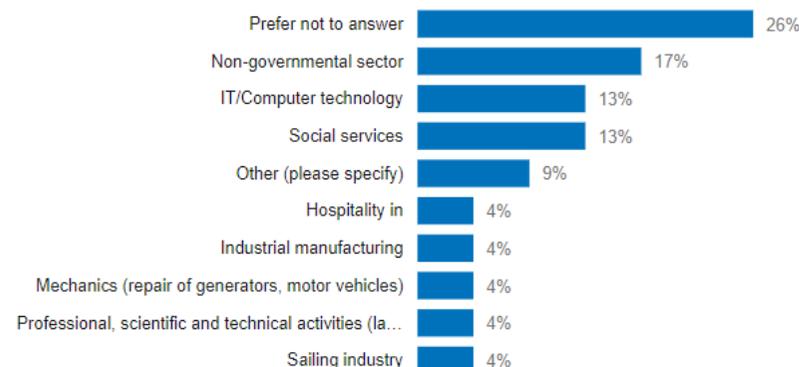


Important changes have also occurred concerning the household's income, with almost one-third of the refugees reporting not having any source of income at the time of the survey, as opposed to under 10% in the same situation before the invasion. The least affected appear to be the respondents with the higher level of income, in the equivalent of over 7.500 Ron. In addition to this, another 44% live on minimum incomes of up to 1.500 Ron, adding up to more than 70% of respondents at risk of severe poverty.

Field of work in Ukraine



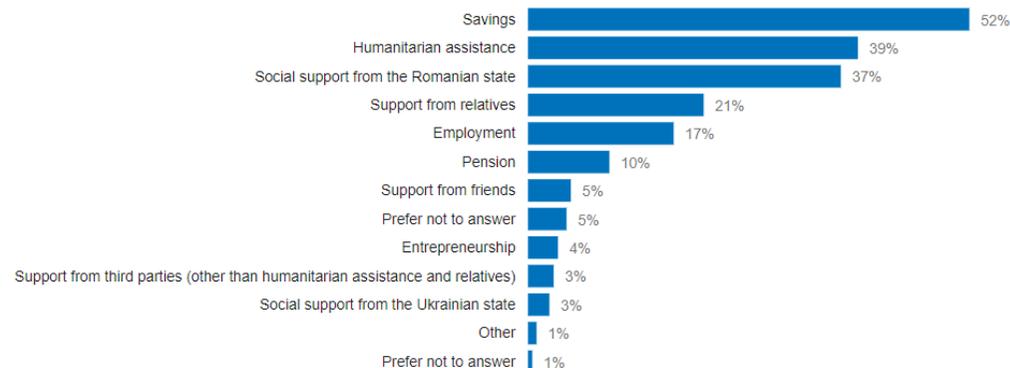
Field of work in Romania



In this context, savings, humanitarian assistance and social support have become the main source of income for most of the respondents. Another source of income reported in 21% of the responses typically came from another member of their household or individuals still receiving their salaries from Ukraine. 29% of the respondents indicate their household doesn't have any source of income, compared to only 9% in this situation before the start of the conflict.

The combination of household members losing their jobs, relying on assistance and savings, and experiencing a decrease in income could potentially heighten the

Main sources of income





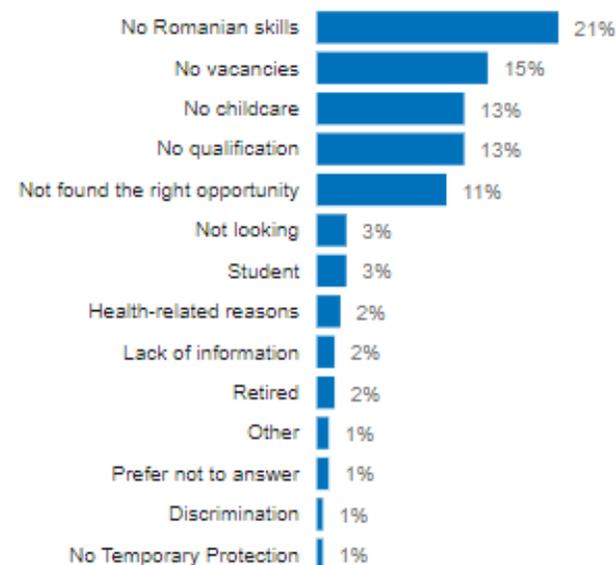
vulnerability of Ukrainian households in Galați. Given the protracted nature of the crisis and the limited signs of improvement, the issue of livelihoods may become a more pressing concern in the coming months.

While the significance of employment access in the context of inclusion was acknowledged, participants in focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informants (KIs) pointed out certain impediments. The qualitative data aligns with the findings of the household survey, as a larger proportion of FGD participants and KIs identified the primary obstacles to employment as the language barrier and the lack of childcare. Specifically, refugee FGD participants regarded the absence of childcare as the most substantial hindrance, noting that it posed challenges in finding suitable schooling options for their children and required parental supervision for those engaged in distance learning. For 7 out of 10 KIs, the language barrier, including proficiency in English, emerged as the primary obstacle. Another significant issue highlighted throughout the interviews is that Ukrainian qualifications are not recognised in the EU. On the other hand, the refugees explained during the FGD that apart from the fact that the language barrier is a serious impediment in finding qualified jobs, single moms with small children are not able to get employed due to the lack of childcare services available. Some of them also mentioned discrimination based on age and disability as an impediment to accessing the Romanian labour market.

Additionally, two KIs highlighted the significant administrative requirements as a barrier to employment. The process was described as administratively intricate, while one KI also mentioned that some refugees displayed a reluctance to work. This hesitancy stemmed from their desire to return to Ukraine as soon as possible, leading them to avoid committing to a job. On the other hand, some of the KIs implied that the 50/20 housing and food assistance program did not create incentives for people to get employed. In this context, the change of the program would be expected to lead to an increase in the number of Ukrainians employed in Romania.

One of the KIs interviewed suggested legislative changes to accept the "service contract" as a legal form of employment and implement a fast-track process for diploma legalisation. In addition to this, KIs explained that the Galați region is generally a poor one; most of the jobs available are for minimum wage, and many Ukrainian refugees are not willing to be employed in positions that are not equivalent to the ones they previously held.

Reasons for unemployment





Economic impact on the host community

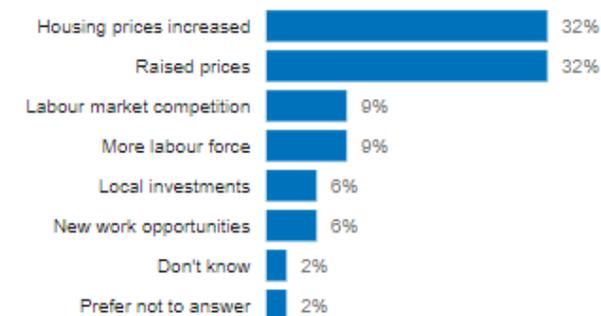
In both the focus group discussions (FGDs) and the household survey, hosts generally acknowledged a rise in housing prices in Galați since the arrival of refugees. However, nearly all of them attributed this inflation to the escalation of hostilities in February 2022 and other domestic and international 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.

Key informants (KIs) noted that there was no sudden surge in demand following the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Galați. 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 surveyed business KIs. Additionally, most individuals reported that the local economy had remained relatively unaffected and that the local labour market was little impacted because the majority of Ukrainians don't work. When it comes to professional status, 60% of hosts were employed during the survey period, 14% were the owner of a certain business, and 12% proved to be freelancers. The remaining 15% were retired (10%) or preferred not to answer; furthermore, a small minority were on maternity leave. In this context, one of the KIs explained that the employment of refugees had minimal impact on the labour market, but it could potentially increase tax revenue through their contributions.

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 in the period of the new governmental support program, the vast majority, 87%, stated that they continue providing accommodation to refugees. Only 3% were planning to stop hosting, whilst the remaining respondents were uncertain. Several KIs, along with members of host communities, observed that a portion of the refugee population had significant economic resources. They viewed this as an opportunity for investment that had the potential to stimulate economic growth, as noted by host community members. All in all, for the host population in Galați, the arrival of Ukrainian refugees is estimated to have had a positive impact (31%), rather than negative (5%).

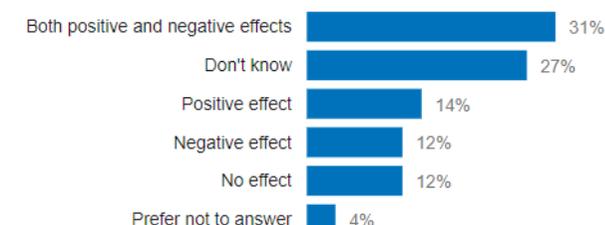
Economic impact of refugee arrival

Hosts assessment

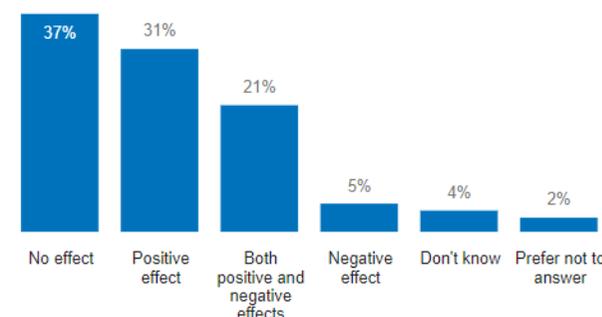


Economic impact of refugee arrival in host community

Host perspective



Influence of the conflict on host family



Inclusion

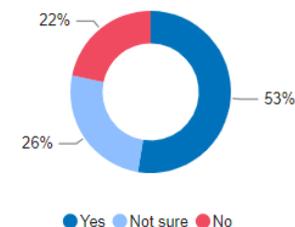
Based on the survey data, more than half of the refugees (53%) and a similar number of hosts (46%) reported being aware of formal inclusion events. Furthermore, 77% of the refugees surveyed declared they had participated in inclusion events, and more than 90% of them found these initiatives useful or very useful. Inclusion initiatives include church events, recreational activities, participation in volunteer centres, events for seniors organised by local NGOs or recreational activities like going to the bowling alley. Refugees participating in the focus group discussions (FGDs) report positive experiences despite the language barrier, but once again, the lack of childcare or supervision in order to participate in such events is mentioned as an obstacle. 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. During the host FGD it was reported that the inclusion campaigns are centred more on the cohesion between refugees and NGOs, rather than with the host community. They also state that the language barrier is the main impediment to inclusion, as language courses have good participation from refugees, but they are not enough to learn the language at the level of being able to engage or even maintain a conversation.

As mentioned previously in the Movement Intentions section, during FGDs, the majority of refugee respondents expressed their intention to return to Ukraine and uncertainty regarding the duration of their stay in Romania. This lack of clarity regarding their future stay is also recognised by the host community, with both host community respondents and Key Informants (KIs) acknowledging that refugees do not plan on settling in Galați for the long term. In this context, inclusion is not considered a priority by either community, and investing limited resources of time and energy in learning Romanian does not seem to be the most approachable solution for refugees. Therefore, English classes are seen as a preferable solution to communication challenges faced by both communities, as opposed to Romanian classes. Although the impediment to inclusion, several KIs report that Romanian language courses are unattended since most people don't see Romanian as an important skill to develop or that language courses are being held, but they are not really accessible for people with small kids.

In addition to this, children's activities are seen as crucial for inclusion, as many respondents are mothers with young children. On the other hand, KIs note that efforts have been made to integrate the Ukrainians, like providing psychological assistance or organising a playground for children.

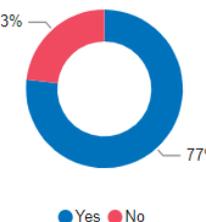
Awareness of formal inclusion initiatives

Refugee perspective



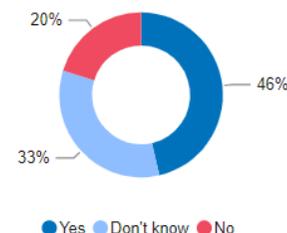
Participation to inclusion activities

Refugee Perspective



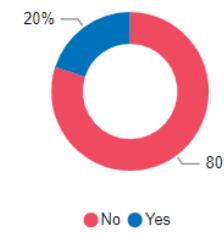
Awareness of formal inclusion initiatives

Host community perspective



Participation to inclusion activities

Host Community perspective



language is reported as the main

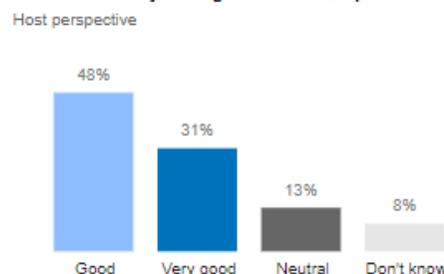
Access to psychological support services and counselling has also been identified as a crucial element for the inclusion of the refugee community, as emphasised by KIs and host community respondents. One KI involved primarily in children's assistance underscored the significance of a more coherent legal framework and institutional involvement in facilitating the inclusion of Ukrainian refugees.

The dynamic of the refugee-host community relation

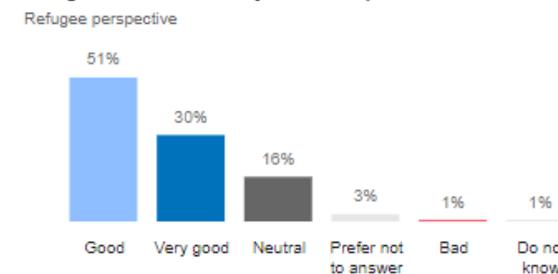
Based on the surveys, the perception of the relationship between refugees and host communities was consistent, with around 80% describing it as "good" or "very good," while only 1% of the refugees consider it to be "bad" or "very bad," and the rest either unsure or considering it neutral.

Several KIs noted that when Ukrainian refugees initially arrived in Galați, 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. Furthermore, some participants in the refugee focus group discussion (FGD) reported that they have had problematic experiences with landlords due to financial instability and delays in payments in the housing program, while similar issues were reported in the host community FGD.

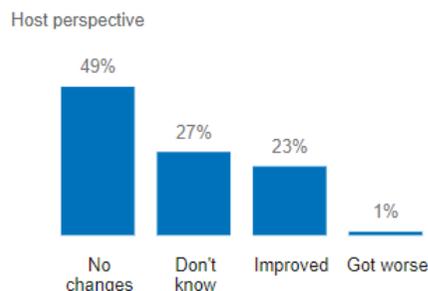
Host community - refugees relationship



Refugees - host community relationship



Evolution of host community - refugees relationship



Across both household surveys and qualitative data, the language barrier emerged as one of the most frequently mentioned issues. As indicated below, 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, almost half (49%) of the hosts report no changes, while 23% believe it improved and only 1% that it got worse. However, there's a noticeable difference between the survey results and the insights gathered from focus group discussions and interviews. In the qualitative data, the host community members and Key Informants (KIs) more often depicted the relationship as neutral, characterised by limited interactions and occasional tensions.

Relationship with public authorities

During focus group discussions (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 vulnerable 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 can create confusion and frustration among refugees and underscore the importance of efficient administrative processes.

Key informants (KIs) outlined the responsibilities of the General Inspectorate for Immigration in Romania, emphasising its role in managing immigration matters and establishing the rights and obligations of refugees. This agency plays a crucial role in ensuring that refugees receive the support and protection they are entitled to under international and domestic laws. Public institutions in Galați have provided various forms of assistance, including accommodation, food, children's activities, and language courses. This reflects the multifaceted approach taken by public institutions to address the needs of refugees comprehensively. KIs also noted the support offered by local authorities, such as Galați City Hall and the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, in organising facilities for refugees. However, they also suggested that the overall support from local authorities may be limited, indicating a potential need for increased collaboration and resources at the local level.

A KI from a non-governmental organisation (NGO) raised concerns about complicated paperwork processes and difficulties in contacting and cooperating with local authorities. These challenges may hinder the efficiency of support delivery and highlight the importance of improving communication and collaboration between NGOs and governmental bodies.

The KIs also emphasised the necessity of maintaining a well-structured database of refugees to track and distribute support effectively. A comprehensive database can improve coordination among agencies and ensure that refugees receive the assistance they require promptly.

The complex nature of providing support to refugees in Romania is underscored, involving multiple stakeholders, administrative processes, and challenges that need to be addressed to ensure that refugees receive the assistance and protection they require in a timely and efficient manner. Coordination, communication, and streamlined administrative procedures are essential for improving the support system for refugees in the country.

Conclusions

The crisis in Ukraine has resulted in a significant influx of refugees into neighbouring nations, including Romania. Galați, situated in eastern Romania, has become home to a substantial population of Ukrainian refugees. This comprehensive evaluation delves into various facets of the Ukrainian refugee encounter in Galați, encompassing their movements, housing, education, healthcare, humanitarian aid, livelihoods, their association with the host community, and their engagement with public authorities. While on the long term, most of the participants in the study do not intend to move, the long-term plans of Ukrainian refugees in Galați are characterised by substantial uncertainty. In addition to this, the prospects for the inclusion of Ukrainian refugees into the host community remain limited due to an uncertain future outlook.

The primary hurdle to inclusion, employment, and access to healthcare and education services for Ukrainian refugees in Galați has been the language barrier. In this context, healthcare emerged as a top priority, with 59% of respondents emphasising its significance. Challenges encompassed difficulties in registering with a Family Doctor, acquiring prescribed medications, and accessing specialist care.

Although the relationship between the host community and refugees remains positive, there has been a decrease in community involvement, likely attributed to some degree of fatigue. Housing has emerged as a significant challenge for Ukrainian refugees in Galați, linked to the changes in the housing and food programme. Notably, a significant portion of refugees, accounting for 29%, indicate that they lack any source of income. With the ongoing and protracted nature of the crisis and minimal signs of improvement, livelihood concerns may become increasingly pressing in the coming months.

The intricate nature of providing support to refugees in Romania is underscored, involving numerous stakeholders and administrative particularities that must be addressed to ensure timely and efficient assistance and protection for refugees. Improved coordination, communication, and streamlined administrative procedures are important to enhance the support system for refugees within the country.



AREA-BASED ASSESSMENT

Galați, Romania

October 2023

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