Solidarity Continues

Marking four years of Romania's response to the Ukraine Refugee Situation

Bucharest, Romania | 24 February 2026

***Four years after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Romania continues to provide safety and solidarity to people forced to flee their homes. Since 2022, more than 201,000 Ukrainians have received Temporary Protection**. Under the leadership of the Romanian authorities and in close coordination with 43 Refugee Response Plan partners, humanitarian actors have worked to complement national efforts in support of refugees and host communities. The international community and humanitarian actors have mobilized, since 2022, support to Romania's response, reflecting a powerful model of partnership — national leadership reinforced by international solidarity. While progress in inclusion is evident, many refugee families still face serious vulnerabilities. One in three households experiences severe material deprivation, most rely on negative coping strategies to make ends meet, and urgent needs remain in healthcare, housing, access to essential services, and language learning.*

On 24 February 2026, UNHCR, in its role as Refugee Response Plan (RRP) Coordinator together with the Department for Emergency Situations within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, convened a high-level event in Bucharest to mark four years of Romania's response to the Ukraine refugee situation and the mid-cycle review of the 2025-2026 Refugee Response Plan. The event took place at UNHCR's Community Center for Refugees at RomExpo, which over the past four years has served as a hub where Government institutions, UN agencies, and NGOs collaborate to provide essential services to refugees. It brought together State and Government institutions, diplomatic missions, UN agencies, civil society organizations, and humanitarian partners to reaffirm solidarity with refugees and host communities, and to reflect on achievements, challenges, and the way forward. This newsletter aims to take stock of the solidarity messages and statements delivered by the participants.

125
Participants

11
Romanian Government and local institutions

25
UN agencies, national and international organizations

31
Embassies

Keynote Panel

The commemoration event opened with keynote panel interventions by **Ms. Diana Punga, State Adviser within the Presidential Administration**, **Mr. Dragoș Pîslaru, Minister of Investments and European Projects of Romania**, **Ms. Luminița Odobescu, State Counsellor and Chancellery of the Prime Minister**, and **Dr. Raed Arafat, State Secretary and Head of the Department for Emergency Situations within the Ministry of Internal Affairs**, reaffirming Romania's strong commitment to refugees affected by the war in Ukraine. The speakers highlighted coordinated national responses, the provision of essential services, and the importance of sustained partnerships with international organizations and civil society actors.

UNHCR Representative **Pablo Zapata** subsequently presented the **2025–2026 Refugee Response Plan Mid-Cycle Review**, outlining key achievements, strategic priorities, and measures aimed at strengthening inclusion and ensuring sustainable support.

The opening session underscored Romania's leadership and the shared resolve of national and international partners to advance protection, inclusion, and long-term solutions for refugees.

DISCLAIMER - The following section provides a summarized account of the speakers' interventions and are not intended as a verbatim record. They may contain excerpts from longer interventions delivered during the event.

Ms. Diana Punga

State Adviser within the Presidential Administration

The efforts made by UN agencies, NGOs, public authorities, and local communities, and their mobilisation following Russia's invasion of Ukraine is deeply appreciated. When millions of people have been displaced and families were separated, Romania provided long-term support and coordinated efforts to provide protection and stability for those seeking safety. The UNHCR Community Centre for Refugees at RomExpo stands as a model of integration and solidarity. The humanitarian response is a dynamic process which must continuously adapt to the changing realities, and that solidarity needs to transform into a lasting infrastructure of mutual support. The country remains committed to supporting those affected by the war and contributing to broader regional stability.

Mr. Dragoș Pîslaru

Minister of Investments and European Projects of Romania

In remembrance of those who lost their lives over the past four years, the intervention began with a moment of silence. Looking back at the first days of the invasion, one can strongly remember both the suffering of displaced families, and the extraordinary solidarity shown by Romanians. As an example of solidarity, Romania had a fast response and mobilised in creating the legal framework of Temporary Protection Directive. UNHCR, civil society partners, and local organizations, have provided support and sustained assistance throughout the years. This continuity is vital. The Romanian Government is committed to protecting refugees and providing support in the reconstruction of Ukraine. Moreover, the policies and programmes developed by Romania envisage a steady contribution from Romania, and are built to be replicated in other areas of the world which are in need.

Ms. Luminița Odobescu

State Counsellor, Chancellery of the Prime Minister

Today marks four years since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, on a day that traditionally is dedicated to love, human connections, and hope. The threat to the security of the region, the values, and the foundation of our societies continues to this day. Ukrainian civilians had to endure a brutal reality for four years. Romania has opened its borders and its arms to its neighbours, offering protection and solidarity in a moment of profound crisis. Hope and solidarity remain essential, and with that resilience, Ukraine and its people will ultimately prevail.

Dr. Raed Arafat

State Secretary, Head of Department of Emergency Situations, Ministry of Internal Affairs

24th of February is an opportunity to remember all the families who were crossing the border with Ukraine when the war started. Every year on this date, there is hope that it will be a commemoration of a past war, not an ongoing one. Even when the war comes to an end, the memories of the people who lost their lives will remain in the memory. First of all, a thank you goes to the people of Ukraine, who displayed a lot of resilience and who continue to fight for what is right. Secondly, thank you to all the solidarity in showing Ukraine they are not alone and that the war taking place is not being normalised. Romania should uphold the support to Ukraine through all means possible, from negotiations, to policy, and diplomacy, so that the next anniversary will be of a past war and the discussions will be focused on rebuilding Ukraine together.

Mr. Pablo Zapata

UNHCR Representative in Romania and Inter-Agency Refugee Coordinator in Romania

Four years after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Romania continues to provide protection to those seeking safety, while supporting their gradual integration into national systems despite persistent vulnerabilities and funding constraints. Looking ahead to 2026, the priority is consolidation and sustainability: a streamlined, nationally anchored response focused on legal protection, specialized services for children and survivors of violence, mental health support, and full inclusion in employment, healthcare, education, and social protection systems. Our strategy is clear: protect what is essential, deepen inclusion in national systems, sustain social cohesion, and consolidate a nationally led response. Predictable and timely funding will be critical to safeguard stability, protect social cohesion, and secure the progress already achieved.

Voices of Ukraine

Four years into the war, the most powerful testimony of resilience and solidarity comes from those directly affected. Representatives of refugee-led organizations and the Embassy of Ukraine reflected on lived experiences, evolving needs, and the enduring determination of the Ukrainian people. Beyond receiving support, refugee-led organizations have increasingly become active contributors to the response itself-strengthening social cohesion, supporting vulnerable families, and working alongside Romanian partners to assist both refugees and host communities. Their messages underscored both the human cost of the conflict and the importance of sustained international support for protection, dignity, and peace.

H.E. Mr. Ihor Prokopchuk

Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Ukraine to Romania

Four years after Russia's attempt to seize Kyiv in three days, Ukraine continues to resist sustained aggression at immense human cost, with defenders and civilians showing extraordinary resilience despite relentless attacks on residential areas, critical infrastructure, and essential services. The address expressed deep gratitude to Romania, UNHCR, United Nations agencies, and civil society for their unwavering support and hospitality to refugees since the onset of the conflict, noting that most Ukrainians never intended to rebuild their lives abroad and that peace cannot be taken for granted. It emphasized the importance of continued unity, countering disinformation, and sustained humanitarian, economic, and military assistance – including self-defense capabilities and measures to deprive Russia of resources fueling the war – as essential to safeguarding Ukraine's sovereignty, freedom, territorial integrity, and the future of democracy in Europe.

Ms. Aliona Kabanova

President of EDNAE (Association Everyone Deserves Non-violence and Equality), Refugee-led Organization from Suceava, partner in the Refugee Response Plan

EDNAE Association emphasized the importance of sustained solidarity and humanitarian support for refugee communities over the four years of conflict. The message also reflected on the passage of time through the growth of refugee children since the beginning of the war, symbolizing both the prolonged nature of the conflict and the ongoing resilience of families, while stressing that humanitarian needs will persist for as long as the war continues.

Ms. Julia Batioha

President of ACUM (Ukrainians in Mediaș Association), Refugee-led Organization from Mediaș

ACUM (Ukrainians in Mediaș Association) highlighted the evolving nature of humanitarian needs after four years of conflict, shifting from immediate emergency assistance to long-term integration and protection of vulnerable groups. In the early stages of the crisis, support focused on basic survival needs such as food, housing, psychological assistance, and language training. More recently, efforts have prioritized sustainable inclusion, particularly for vulnerable populations such as elderly refugees, children in foster care, and individuals with serious medical conditions. The organization also underscored educational integration as a key success indicator, noting that all children who joined ACUM's education programs in 2022 have continued successfully through school or higher education. While recognizing growing global fatigue regarding the war, the message reaffirmed the continued moral responsibility to support Ukraine and its displaced populations.

Statements of Support

Representatives of national institutions, diplomatic missions, UN agencies, and humanitarian partners reaffirmed their continued commitment to supporting refugees and host communities. Their interventions highlighted the importance of coordinated action, shared responsibility, and long-term investment in protection, inclusion, and recovery efforts. Together, these statements reflect a unified message: solidarity with Ukraine and displaced communities remains steadfast.

Diplomatic Community

H.E. Ms. Angela Ganninger

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Federal Republic of Germany to Romania

Germany considers that Ukraine's resistance continues to safeguard both national sovereignty and wider European security, alongside ongoing international efforts to uphold international law and protect civilians. Comprehensive political, military, economic, and humanitarian support remains essential, as does sustained assistance to refugees and host countries such as Romania, whose leadership in response coordination and protection efforts continues to be a cornerstone of regional solidarity.

H.E. Mr. Gavin Buchan

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Canada to Romania

Canada's solidarity with Ukraine remains steadfast, grounded in sustained humanitarian commitment and long-term support for peace, sovereignty, and democratic stability. Having welcomed approximately 300,000 Ukrainian refugees, Canada continues to demonstrate concrete responsibility-sharing, while recognizing the critical role played by Romania, UN agencies, and civil society organizations in delivering protection and assistance on the ground.

H.E. Ms. Evangelia Grammatika

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Hellenic Republic to Romania

Greece positions its support for Ukraine within a broader commitment to international law and the safeguarding of sovereign borders. Having provided temporary protection to approximately 35,000 Ukrainian refugees, primarily women and children, the country continues to demonstrate concrete responsibility-sharing, while acknowledging the impact of the war on ethnic Greek communities in Ukraine, particularly in regions such as Mariupol, where many have been displaced or directly affected by the conflict.

H.E. Mr. Takashi Katae

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Romania

Japan's solidarity with Ukraine remains steadfast in supporting recovery, reconstruction, and long-term stabilization, including contributions to international mine action cooperation and post-conflict reconstruction planning. Japan also recognizes the importance of coordinated humanitarian responses, commending Romania's efforts in supporting displaced Ukrainians, while committing to continued collaboration with UN agencies, NGOs, and international partners to sustain relief, recovery, and peace-building efforts.

H.E. Mr. Paweł Soloch

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Poland to Romania

Poland has hosted large numbers of Ukrainian refugees and remains among the states receiving the highest number of refugees per capita. In addition to humanitarian assistance, Poland has provided practical operational support, including the delivery of hundreds of power generators to help Ukraine withstand attacks on critical infrastructure during winter. While humanitarian aid remains vital, Ukraine also requires defensive military capabilities to protect its sovereignty and population.

H.E. Mr. Giles Portman

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to Romania

The United Kingdom continues to support Ukraine through sustained military, and reconstruction assistance aligned with a broader strategy to uphold security and stability in Europe. New commitments include approximately GBP 500 million for air defence capabilities and nearly GBP 600 million for humanitarian and energy reconstruction assistance. The United Kingdom continues to employ sanctions, military support, and diplomatic pressure to encourage meaningful negotiations and to help secure a durable peace that prevents future aggression.

H.E. Ms. Anna Hällerman

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Sweden to Romania

Sweden's message emphasized that the full-scale aggression against Ukraine is entering a more challenging phase, with continued attacks on critical energy infrastructure during winter conditions worsening humanitarian vulnerabilities. Sweden's support for Ukraine represents both a moral obligation and a strategic priority for European security. It was highlighted Sweden's a role as a major contributor to international humanitarian efforts, including multi-year core funding for UNHCR to support regional refugee protection and assistance programs.

H.E. Mr. Massimo Baggi

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Swiss Confederation to Romania

Switzerland's solidarity with Ukraine and appreciation for Romania's humanitarian response continue, reflecting initiatives aimed at strengthening economic cooperation and supporting long-term recovery. Switzerland has launched a EUR 500 million private-sector development fund designed to support business cooperation between Swiss, Romanian, and Ukrainian companies. Switzerland also reaffirms its commitment to international security principles, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, in line with OSCE commitments.

Ms. Ramona Chiriac

Head of the Representation of the European Commission to Romania

European solidarity is demonstrated through concrete, practical support for Ukraine, reflecting a commitment to defending European values, democracy, and regional stability. EU assistance was framed as a long-term strategic investment in security and resilience across Europe. The message also included a human-centered reflection on displacement, encouraging audiences to consider the personal and emotional realities faced by those forced to leave their homes.

Mr. Erikas Petrikas

Minister Plenipotentiary the Republic of Lithuania to Romania

Lithuania considers that long-term strategic vigilance, together with sustained support for Ukraine, is a core component of regional security policy. Despite its relatively small population, Lithuania has hosted approximately 90,000 Ukrainian refugees, with around 45,000 still residing in the country and having access to education, employment, and social services. The country has also invested in humanitarian and security-related initiatives, including education and mental health programs, demining efforts, defense technology development, as well as reconstruction, veteran rehabilitation, and child protection support programs.

Mr. Iulian Dinu

Senior Legal Adviser of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Romania

The Netherlands is committed to a collective European response, integrating humanitarian protection, military assistance, and multilateral cooperation in addressing the crisis. Approximately 125,000 Ukrainians are currently receiving protection in the Netherlands, while the country remains one of Europe's largest contributors to Ukraine's defense, with more than EUR 14 billion in military aid commitments. The Netherlands also continues to support strong European Union coordination to ensure a unified and effective international response to the ongoing war and its humanitarian consequences.

Government of Romania

Mr. Ciprian Mihai

Director, Police Chief Commissioner, Asylum and Integration Directorate, General Inspectorate for Immigration

Ministerul Afacerilor Interne

The General Inspectorate for Immigration marked four years of Romania's response to Ukrainian refugees, highlighting strong institutional cooperation and operational coordination in the temporary protection process. Working closely with UNHCR and partners, the Inspectorate efficiently issued temporary protection documents, while UNHCR provided technical support and the EUAA trained Ukrainian-language interpreters and specialized staff to assist applicants. At the RomExpo center, more than 55,000 temporary residence permits and 12,000 additional requests handled since the beginning of the conflict; nationally, permits issued exceed 198,000. These achievements reflect the professionalism, commitment, and collaborative effort of Romanian authorities, UNHCR, EUAA, and partner organizations over four years.

Ms. Helena-Omna Raicu

President, with the rank of Secretary of State – National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption (ANPDCA)

Ministerul Familiei, Tineretului și Egalității de Șanse
Autoritatea Națională pentru Protecția Drepturilor Copilului și Adopție

The National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption (ANPDCA) in Romania emphasized that child protection was a priority from the earliest days of the crisis. Romania established specialized child protection response mechanisms at border crossings to ensure the support of children arriving from Ukraine. The overall approach was guided by the principle of ensuring that no child is left without protection, care, or access to essential services.

Ms. Mădălina Radu Turza

Adviser on Social Policies, Bucharest City Hall

Bucharest Municipality reaffirmed its continued commitment to supporting refugees through local-level humanitarian and social integration efforts. The municipality was among the first local authorities to respond to the crisis in 2022 and has maintained active engagement since then by providing access to social services, coordinating with non-governmental organizations, and supporting local integration programs for displaced persons and vulnerable communities.

UN Agencies and Humanitarian Partners

Mr. Mircea Mocanu

International Organization for Migration

The International Organization for Migration considers that the war in Ukraine has strengthened regional cooperation and institutional solidarity. The message emphasized that the crisis, while devastating, has encouraged greater operational coordination between European actors and civil society. IOM's perspective is focused on migration management, protection pathways, and long-term recovery, with the hope of eventual stabilization and return to normalcy for displaced populations.

Ms. Anna Riatti

UNICEF

UNICEF presented the humanitarian impact of the war through key child protection and education indicators. Since 2022, more than 3,200 children have been killed or injured, over 1,700 educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed, and approximately 2.5 million children remain displaced. Additional survey data indicated that many adolescents have experienced repeated displacement and psychological distress, including reduced confidence in their future opportunities. UNICEF emphasized continued cooperation with national authorities and partners to ensure access to education, healthcare, and social protection while preventing violence, exploitation, and abuse of children.

Dr. Mariana Arnăutu

World Vision Foundation Romania

World Vision described its response as combining emergency humanitarian aid with longer-term resilience and integration programming. Since the start of the crisis, the organization has supported 352,000 people, including 160,000 children, with an investment of approximately USD 20 million. Assistance included cash transfers, food and hygiene supplies, and shelter support to more than 300,000 people. Additional programming focused on child protection and psychosocial recovery for over 32,000 children and families, education access for more than 6,000 children, and livelihood support for about 5,000 people, with a significant share of beneficiaries coming from host communities to promote social cohesion.

Looking Ahead

Four years on, Romania's response to the Ukraine refugee situation stands as a testament to sustained solidarity, coordinated action, and shared responsibility. While challenges remain and needs continue to evolve, the collective commitment of national authorities, international partners, civil society, and refugee-led organizations demonstrates that solidarity is not a one-time gesture, but an ongoing investment in protection, inclusion, and stability. As the response moves forward into its fifth year, continued partnership and resolve will remain essential to ensuring that no one is left behind.

Acknowledgement

UNHCR would also like to express its gratitude to all the Romanian and international guests for their participation in the four-year marking of Romania's Refugee Response and ongoing support to Ukrainian refugees. Among them, we would like to acknowledge the participation of: Representatives from **the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education**, and **the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES)**, the Ambassadors of **Bulgaria**, **Finland**, **Slovakia**, **and Spain**, representatives of the Embassies of **Austria**, **Czechia**, **Denmark**, **Estonia**, **France**, **Italy**, **the Republic of Korea**, **the Republic of Moldova**, **Norway**, **Portugal**, **Slovenia** and **the United States of America**, and partner organizations such as **AIDRom**, **Ateliere Fără Frontiere**, **CNRR**, **the National Youth Foundation**, **Project Voyager**, **Salvati Copiii România**, **WHO**, **Tineri pentru Tineri**, **Terre des Hommes**, **JRS**, **FONSS**, **Asociația Red Panda**, **IFRC**, **Novapolis**, **Commit Global**, **Plan International, EBRD** and **FDSC** for demonstrating their continued leadership, commitment, and collaboration in supporting refugees and host communities.

For more information

Simina Costea, Assistant Inter-Agency Coordination Officer, UNHCR Romania, Email: costea@unhcr.org