Introduction

As of November 2022, more than 7.9 million refugees have reportedly fled Ukraine, with 2.3 million refugees arriving in Romania. More than 92,000 were reportedly still in the country as of November. According to data shared by UNHCR, more than 19,600 refugees have registered for Temporary Protection (TP) in Bucharest. On average 95% of refugees have TP in Romania.

This Area-Based Assessment (ABA) is an overview of the humanitarian situation within the city of Bucharest, with a specific focus on Sectors 1 and 6 in the North and West of Bucharest. Bucharest was chosen for in-depth analysis because the city hosts the highest number of refugees from Ukraine. Following consultations with UNHCR, Sectors 1 and 6 were chosen to be the focus of the assessment due to the ease of access to refugees. As knowledge of the living conditions and needs of Ukrainian refugees outside of collective sites is limited, including those of the families that had to leave the collective sites, there was a need for insight to inform humanitarian programming and strategy in the mid to long-term interventions.

As a result, REACH Romania with support from UNHCR, conducted this ABA to inform an area-based response by authorities, as well as humanitarian and development actors with regard to the needs and priorities of refugees in Bucharest (including their access to services), social cohesion in the city and the impact the arrival of refugees has had on the local economy and access to services for the hosts. This approach is expected to enable these stakeholders to better understand the dynamics and challenges in the city to inform humanitarian response.

Methodology

The study was conducted using a mixed-methods approach: secondary data was reviewed from local actors and online sources, and primary data was collected from members of the community and key informants (KIs), through quantitative surveys, key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs).

1) Refugee household surveys: A sample of 177 refugees outside of collective sites was surveyed regarding their priority needs (including in terms of access to services), social cohesion, and movement intentions through a quantitative structured questionnaire. As the population of refugees living outside of collective sites in Bucharest Sectors 1 and 6 is unknown, the sample is purposive and the findings cannot be considered representative. The interviews were conducted face to face in Russian and Ukrainian.

2) Host household surveys: A randomised sample of 190 host community members, including 20 purposively sampled host households were surveyed regarding social cohesion and the impact of the arrival of refugees on the local economy and access to services through a quantitative structured questionnaire. As the population of host households is unknown, the sample is purposive and the interviews were conducted face to face in Romanian.
Bucharest
Situation Overview in Bucharest
As of SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2022
Area-Based Assessment

Methodology

3) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):
Four purposively sampled FGDs were organized: three FGDs with refugees and one FGD with host community members. This provided a qualitative understanding of the economic impact of the arrival of refugees in the city, the impact on the access to services and the relationship between the refugees and their hosts following a semi-structured questionnaire. The groups were to include six to eight participants each from both genders as no gender-sensitive issues were addressed. Data collection, the samples were GWHUPLQHGSUXRVLHODQGWHKLQH, cannot be considered representative of the whole population of interest, but indicative. In addition, because of the limited availability of participants, only 20 interviews were conducted.

3) FGD with Host Families: The scheduled FGD with host families could not take place in the anticipated format due to the limited availability of participants. Thus, instead of the FGD, the questionnaire was administered online through video calls.

4) KIIs: 11 KIIs were conducted with representatives from each major sector relevant to the refugee response (one health KII, three education KIIs, two local authorities KIIs, three civil society KIIs, and three business KIIs) to understand the impact of the refugee crisis on each of these sectors, what the response has been so far, as well as how different stakeholders cooperate following a semi-structured questionnaire. KIs were selected purposively after a preliminary exploration of local stakeholders. All KIs were recorded. The data were then transcribed and translated for analysis.

Challenges and limitations

1) Participatory mapping: A participatory mapping exercise was planned through mapping interviews with informed local actors and refugees to identify where refugees outside of sites are living. However, following discussions with local stakeholders, the location of refugees seemed to be spread across the city, giving little value to the exercise. As a result, the map was not produced.

2) Quantitative surveys: As there is no existing information on the number of refugees living outside of collective areas, the samples were VLVWQLQ%FQDURV3WH6FWRUV, the number of host households, during data collection, the samples were GWHUPLQHGSUXRVLHODQGWHKLQH, cannot be considered representative of the whole population of interest, but indicative. In addition, because of the limited availability of participants, only 20 interviews were conducted.

4) FGDs with the Host Community: Finding participants from the general population in Bucharest willing to participate in the discussions during work hours proved challenging. As a result, the group was smaller than initially planned with three participants, instead of the planned six.

5) FGDs with Refugees: One of the three FGDs did not meet the target number of participants and gathered three Ukrainian refugees. Findings should be considered indicative only.

7) Timing of assessment: When data collection had been completed and findings were confirmed, it informed that data collection had been completed. Participants were informed that data collection had been completed.

8) KIIs: RPLQWUYLHZVZUHFRQXFWHG online through video calls rather than in person. Additionally, several possible key informants refused to participate or lacked the availability to do so. As a result, only one KII was conducted with a representative of the health sector.

Regional Refugee Response Plan For the Ukraine Situation
**Key Findings**

The long-term movement intentions of refugees were highly uncertain. In the short-term, 88% of respondents wanted to remain in Bucharest in the month following data collection. In the medium-term, 50% of respondents thought that they would remain in Bucharest for the next six months following data collection, with the security conditions and availability of permanent accommodation being the most reported reason for staying. More than a fifth of respondents (22%) reported not knowing where they would be in the six months following data collection. In the longer term, all refugees did not foresee integration and wished to return to Ukraine as soon as the security situation would allow them to do so. However, with security conditions in Ukraine showing no sign of improvement, this indicated a high uncertainty regarding their long-term plans.

Almost one in five (18%) children between the ages of 3 and 17 whose household members were surveyed did not follow any formal education at the time of data collection. While refugees who have registered for Temporary Protection have free access to the Romanian educational system, only 6% of the children enrolled due to the language barrier. Most children followed Ukrainian distance learning (30%), attended kindergartens (24%) or educational hubs (23%). The age range with the highest number of children not following formal education was 3 to 6. Although a fourth of the children followed the 50/20 programme and wished to return to Ukraine, 30% of children were unschooled, notably due to the lack of available places in free public facilities. A demand for extracurricular activities was reported, as they are seen as a solution to the lack of socialisation of minors, with 23% of households placing them in their top three needs.

The 50/20 programme was perceived as a success, but the uncertainty regarding its continuation was a cause for concern. Accommodation was considered one of the least problematic aspects for Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest. This was largely attributed to the success of the 50/20 programme that financially supports hosts who accommodate Ukrainian refugees. The amount of the grant - considered generous - encouraged many hosts to make accommodations available to refugees. Ukrainian refugees reported preferring staying in private accommodations for free than in crowded collective centres. However, the uncertainty related to the continuity of the programme, as well as the questions around its funding, created concerns. Moreover, the majority of the interviewed hosts reported that if the 50/20 funding were to end, they could no longer afford to host Ukrainian refugees.

The Social Services Directorate of the Bucharest Municipality, as well as those at the sector level, observed an increased workload and pressure following the arrival of Ukrainian refugees. Both KIs from the social services reported that the institutions were overwhelmed by an increase in workload. Putting the existing staff, especially those speaking Russian and Ukrainian, under significant pressure since March 2022. All three KIs from the public sector mentioned receiving support from UN organisations, NGOs, and the private sector, but expressed the need for additional financial support and donations to be able to continue addressing the ongoing requests for aid.

The health services were perceived as one of the most difficult to access type of assistance by refugees. While Temporary Protection grants registered refugees access to healthcare services under the same conditions as insured Romanian citizens, Ukrainian refugees and KIs reported barriers to access. Healthcare was the second most frequently mentioned priority need by the respondents (44%) and the most frequently mentioned by FGD participants. The most common barrier mentioned was the difficulty to register with a General Practitioner (GP), which is essential for general consultations, accessing prescription medication, and visiting a specialist in the public sector. Some refugees reported resorting to emergency services, even for non-emergency conditions as they are guaranteed there to be seen by a health professional, both in cases of emergency or for less serious medical conditions.

Hosts expressed significant concerns with the increasing prices of energy. All hosts interviewed but one (4/5) mentioned being worried about the increasing prices of energy. At the time of the survey, they were uncertain about the future price of utilities. In the current conditions, they thought that the 50/20 programme offered generous compensation for hosts, but if the funding were to end, they could no longer afford to host Ukrainian refugees.
### Coverage and Demographics

**Distribution of respondents by Sector**

- **49% Sector 1**
- **51% Sector 6**

**% of respondents are female**

- **84%**

**% of respondents are male**

- **16%**

**Key characteristics of Ukrainian refugee households**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>AVERAGE # OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS</strong></th>
<th><strong>AVERAGE AGE OF RESPONDENTS</strong></th>
<th><strong>AVERAGE # OF MINORS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hosts Survey Respondent Demographics</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees Survey Respondent Demographics</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Hosts Survey Respondent Demographics

- **164 RESPONDENTS**
- **70.5%** % of respondents are female
- **29.5%** % of respondents are male

**AVERAGE # OF MINORS**

- **1**

#### Refugees Survey Respondent Demographics

- **177 RESPONDENTS**
- **10%** % of households with infants (0-2)
- **30%** % of households with young children (3-6)
- **46%** % of households with school-aged children (7-17)
- **70%** % of households with children (0-17)
Respondents in the household survey said that they chose to settle in Bucharest because of the proximity to Ukraine (79%) - especially respondents from Odesa. Many also chose it because of the ease of access to transport (66%) and services (58%) and because they were able to find cheap accommodation (48%).
## Movement intentions

**Movement intentions in the month following data collection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remain in Bucharest</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other country</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to Ukraine</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other county</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the quantitative household survey data showed that in the short-term, most refugees intended to stay in Bucharest and that no respondent reported not knowing where they would stay within a month of data collection, the medium-term data showed a higher uncertainty with 22% of Ukrainian refugees not knowing where they would be six months from data collection. This uncertainty regarding the medium to long-term intentions of refugees was due to the absence of information on when the war will end.

All participants in FGDs reported an intention to return to their usual place of residence as soon as the security situation would allow them to do so. However, several still noted that despite their intentions to return, not all would be able to because of damaged accommodations. As a result, it seemed like integration is not seen as a priority by the refugee community. However, with the security conditions in Ukraine showing no sign of improvement, this leaves refugees little choice but to remain in Bucharest for an uncertain amount of time.

### Movement intentions in the six months following data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remain in Bucharest</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other country</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to Ukraine</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other county</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Influencing factors (by % of households that intended to remain in Bucharest [n=89]):

- **Security considerations**: 88%
- **Permanent accommodation**: 88%
- **Humanitarian aid**: 88%
- **Public services**: 88%
- **Easy refugee registration**: 88%
- **Improved security**: 56%
- **Public services**: 56%
- **Availability of work**: 54%
- **Presence of relatives**: 46%
- **Permanent accommodation**: 40%

This uncertainty surrounding how long refugees intend to or will have to remain in Bucharest impacts all subsequent sections of this report, notably the willingness to find employment and learn Romanian.
Temporary Protection

Temporary Protection (TP) Registration

- 7% All household members registered
- 6% Some household members registered
- 87% No household member registered

Most common counties of TP registration (by % of households that had at least one member registered for Temporary Protection [N=167])

1. Bucharest 91%
2. Constanta 5%
3. Brasov 2%

Registering for TP gives one the right to stay in Romania for one year as well as provides the right to work, free healthcare, and free education for minors, under the same conditions as Romanian citizens.²

The Temporary Protection data showed that the process was overall very accessible in Bucharest. Almost all households (94%) had at least one registered member in their household and 84% of those that registered perceived the process to be straightforward. Only 2.4% thought the process was difficult. Unlike in Constanta where only 62% of respondents had registered in the county due to significant queues, in Bucharest, 91% of respondents did not have to leave the county to obtain Temporary Protection.

Most reported required changes for easing the TP registration process (by % of households that found the registration process difficult or with some issues but accessible [N=26])

1. Make it available online 65%
2. Simplify the procedure 50%
3. Have shorter waiting times 39%
4. Have translators on site 23%

Family separation

68% of families reported being separated
32% of families reported not being separated

Respondents could select multiple answers
Four most frequently mentioned options
For the refugee community, accommodation was seen as one of the least problematic sectors according to the FGD participants and the KIs. This is in great part thanks to a national programme providing hosts with financial support, thus giving the incentive to make accommodation available to refugees. The 50/20 programme guarantees RON50 for each refugee per day to cover accommodation expenses and RON20 for each refugee per day to cover food expenses. Some Ukrainian refugees in Focus Group Discussions noted that it had become significantly easier to find accommodation under 50/20 now compared to a few months ago as the programme is promoted. Thus, more and more hosts are making some accommodations available. Hosts, Ukrainian refugees, and KIs expressed concerns regarding how much longer the programme would be maintained as its discontinuation is expected to create a housing crisis in Bucharest and the rest of Romania for the refugee community.

Most (81%) Ukrainian refugees surveyed reported benefitting from the 50/20 programme. All the FGD participants living in private accommodation only participant who was renting their private accommodation outside of the 50/20 programme confirmed that finding accommodation under 50/20 was easy, but that they preferred renting their place for privacy reasons. A large majority (95%) of those benefitting from the 50/20 support reported that their hosts shared the RON20 for food expenses every month, generally sharing the cash hand in hand. This is in stark contrast with the situation observed in Constanta, where almost all the FGD respondents reported that their hosts did not share the RON20 with them.

Although the situation was generally reported as good, there were still a few sources of tension. Participants in one of the refugee FGDs reported being accommodated in poor conditions, notably with missing essential items and unclean living spaces. They also reported a lack of willingness from their hosts to improve their situation.
## Accommodation (Host Perspective)

### Housing conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most common reasons for hosting</th>
<th>% of households that ever hosted refugees [n=20]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire to help</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial reasons</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most common hosting deterrents</th>
<th>% of households that ever hosted refugees [n=20]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overcrowding</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can no longer afford it</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most initial motivation to host refugees was the desire to help, but two of them reported that once they found out about the 50/20 programme, they also felt a financial incentive. This proportion is similar to what was observed in the household surveys. The difference between hosts who said they are financially motivated and those who did not usually correlate with how long they had been hosting. Those hosting since the start of the escalation of hostilities in February 2022 when the 50/20 programme did not exist yet tended to report that financial incentives did not play a part in their decision, unlike those who started hosting more recently.

Asked for how long they were planning to host refugees, four of the five respondents said that they planned to do it indefinitely, with three hosts specifying that this was contingent on the continuation of the 50/20 programme, as well as the survey with 50% of hosts willing to accommodate refugees indefinitely, unlike those who started hosting more recently.

### Expected length of stay from the date of data collection (by % of households that ever hosted refugees [n=20])

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unlimited</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 month</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 3 months</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 6 months</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Length of stay (until the time of interview) (by % of households that ever hosted refugees [n=20])

<table>
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<th>Length of stay (until the time of interview)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 months</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 weeks</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 weeks</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 3 months</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Most common means to find refugees to host (by % of households that ever hosted refugees [n=20])

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<th>Most common means to find refugees to host</th>
<th>% of households that ever hosted refugees [n=20]</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees are acquaintances</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through friends/family</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents could select multiple answers.
In the current situation, hosts reported to be satisfied with their conditions. Only 15% of them requested assistance, with the most requested type of assistance being financial support, reported by two hosts. During the host interviews, most hosts mentioned that they received no other support related to hosting refugees than from the 50/20 programme. Only one host shared that they received support from their local Church in terms of food and non-food items (NFIs). Generally, the hosts interviewed did not raise any requests for additional support. Only one host shared that they would appreciate support in the form of bedroom items needed to host Ukrainian refugees and to have a borrowing system put in place by the government or the UN. They explained that the 50/20 financial assistance is only given at the end of the month can represent a barrier to potential hosts who could not afford to share the RON20 for food at the beginning of the month from their savings.

All five hosts who were individually interviewed reported receiving financial support through the 50/20 programme. None of them reported that it was not sufficient to cover accommodation costs, including utilities. However, one respondent mentioned that the funding was sometimes delayed. The arrival of the winter season was a concern mentioned by 4 of the 5 interviewed hosts that were worried about the increased energy bills. At the time of the interview, they claimed they did not have a clear idea how high their utility bills would be, but they mentioned that 50/20 might not be sufficient to cover the cost of hosting refugees if they increased significantly and it could put their hosting into question.

Two KIs from the local authorities stressed the importance of the 50/20 programme to ensure free accommodation and good conditions for Ukrainian refugees. The programme also to some extent alleviated an already strong pressure on social services that are managing some of the collective sites according to two KIs from the local authorities.

However, some negative aspects of the programme were also identified. For instance, one KI from the NGO sector, as well as two hosts shared stories of fraud under the 50/20 programme. They claimed they were aware of fake applications being submitted or organizations hosting for a short period of time, but claiming benefits for a whole month. The two hosts who made these claims also shared that the government had gained awareness of these fraud claims and was now conducting more regular checks to deter further abuse. One of the hosts interviewed who started hosting recently did receive a government visit to ensure that they were hosting the number of Ukrainian refugees they claimed to host.

As the refugees and KIs from the local authorities, hosts brought up a concern that the programme would be discontinued. Refugees, this could cause a severe accommodation crisis and would force refugees to return to collective sites or pay rent that they might not be able to afford. This is all the more likely as hosts reported receiving no additional help other than what is received through the 50/20 programme.

92% of respondents that received support from the 50/20 programme reported that the funding came in a timely manner [n=12]

58% of respondents that received support from the 50/20 programme reported stories of fraud under the 50/20 programme. They claimed they were aware of fake applications being submitted or organizations hosting for a short period of time, but claiming benefits for a whole month. The two hosts who made these claims also shared that the government had gained awareness of these fraud claims and was now conducting more regular checks to deter further abuse. One of the hosts interviewed who started hosting recently did receive a government visit to ensure that they were hosting the number of Ukrainian refugees they claimed to host.
**Education options**

**Ukrainian distance learning** remained the main schooling option for minors between 11-17 years old. Most of the FGD participants with children selected this option, as it allowed the children to follow classes in their native language, that were also recognized by the Ukrainian government. However, some parents expressed concern regarding the limited opportunities for peer socialisation that online schooling allows for, as well regarding how unadapted to young children this method was, as it requires parental supervision. This option can also exclude children whose household does not have a computer or internet access.

However, half of the minors aged 7-10 and almost a third of those aged 11-14 were reported to be attending **educational hubs (or community schools)**. Educational hubs have been reported to be set up in multiple locations, within Romanian schools, with support from NGOs and the government. Parents participating in FGDs that chose this option for their children thought it was the most appropriate method as it allows children to follow the Ukrainian curriculum in their native language, as they would online, but also provides children with socialisation opportunities with other Ukrainian children. Three KIs reported them being hosted by local schools that also provide them with financial support needed to cover utilities. Two KIs reported that the staff of these hubs was being paid by an NGO. Two KIs, however, stated that the hubs were initially set up more as safe spaces for children. However, they eventually started to offer classes to supplement online education. One KI expressed concerns regarding children being overwhelmed because they were following both online education and attending in-person classes within the hubs. However, the main challenge reported regarding the educational hubs was that they are not recognized by either the Romanian Government or the Ukrainian one.

There were conflicting reports regarding access to the hubs, as one KI stated that all enrolment requests had been addressed, while another noted there were waiting lists. Two KIs also reported that educational hubs offered integration activities such as Romanian language and culture classes. Furthermore, one KI also mentioned one hub having mixed groups of Ukrainian and Romanian children, as well as mixed staff, also to facilitate integration.

According to the refugee household surveys, a low percentage of minors was reported to have opted for **schooling within the Romanian school system** within the Romanian system were reportedly not supported by any integration programmes.
of minors between 3 and 6 years old attending kindergarten. However, 33% of children in this age group were not attending any type of formal education. Participants across all three Ukrainian FGDs confirmed that they encountered barriers in registering their children in kindergarten, notably the lack of available spots and the fact that the remaining options were in private and costly facilities that not all refugee households could afford.

Extracurricular Activities

Attending extracurricular activities could solve the socialisation issues of some children not being able to follow formal education or doing it online. However, based on the results of the survey, when asked to choose their top three needs from a list of twelve, 23% of households answered that extracurricular activities for children were among their three main priorities.
Healthcare was the second most frequently mentioned priority need by the respondents (44%) and the most frequently mentioned by FGD participants. They also noted that they perceived it was the most difficult type of assistance to access. There seemed to be better awareness of health facilities in Sector 1 than in Sector 6 with 69% of respondents being aware of a family doctor and 44% being aware of psychosocial support services nearby in Sector 1, while 58% of respondents in Sector 6 were aware of a family doctor and 31% of psychosocial support facilities.

Despite having access to the Romanian healthcare system under the same rights as insured Romanian nationals, KIs and Ukrainian refugees noted that several barriers persisted. The most common barrier mentioned by participants is the difficulty to register with a General Practitioner (GP), which is essential for general consultations, accessing prescription medication, and visiting a specialist in the public sector. Participants in two FGD groups reported not having accepted Ukrainian patients for bureaucratic reasons, as a consultation with a Ukrainian reportedly takes more time than with a Romanian because the financial compensation received from the government is lesser than what would be received for a Romanian citizen. It should be noted that the issue is also partly structural as even some Romanian nationals struggle to find an available family doctor. As a result, one KI and one FGD participant reported that some refugees resorted to emergency services, even for non-emergency conditions as they are guaranteed to be seen there by a health professional both in cases of emergency or for less serious medical conditions.

Another barrier to accessing health services is the language barrier according to refugees in the FGDs and one KI. In addition, 83% of survey respondents reported not having accessed medical services.

**Most reported reasons for dissatisfaction** (by % of HH that reported having accessed medical services [n=42])

1. Language barrier 83%
2. Long waiting time 55%
3. High price 31%
4. Bad service 21%
5. Distance 7%

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2. Long waiting time 55%
3. High price 31%
4. Bad service 21%
5. Distance 7%

Despite having access to the Romanian healthcare system under the same rights as insured Romanian nationals, KIs and Ukrainian refugees noted that several barriers persisted. The most common barrier mentioned by participants is the difficulty to register with a General Practitioner (GP), which is essential for general consultations, accessing prescription medication, and visiting a specialist in the public sector. Participants in two FGD groups reported not having accepted Ukrainian patients for bureaucratic reasons, as a consultation with a Ukrainian reportedly takes more time than with a Romanian because the financial compensation received from the government is lesser than what would be received for a Romanian citizen. It should be noted that the issue is also partly structural as even some Romanian nationals struggle to find an available family doctor. As a result, one KI and one FGD participant reported that some refugees resorted to emergency services, even for non-emergency conditions as they are guaranteed to be seen there by a health professional both in cases of emergency or for less serious medical conditions.

Another barrier to accessing health services is the language barrier according to refugees in the FGDs and one KI. In addition, 83% of survey respondents reported not having accessed medical services.

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Satisfaction with services

Almost two-thirds of survey respondents who accessed medical services in Bucharest reported being completely satisfied with their experience. Besides the language barrier, those who were not completely satisfied reported facing long waiting times (55%), paying high fees (31%), and receiving bad service (21%).

During the FGDs, refugee respondents mentioned the high cost barrier in relation to private medical services, but reported diverse experiences with healthcare services in general regarding waiting times, costs, and quality of service. While some participants reported receiving little medical attention, being faced with long waiting times, and being charged high fees, others reported being fully satisfied with the free and quality care they received from several facilities. Overall, the experiences of healthcare services seem to be very uneven among refugees. It seems like there was a general consensus that health was better accessed through public services and NGOs, rather than in the private sector.

Mental health services

Two KIs mentioned that mental healthcare is a priority need but noted that related services are not often accessed by refugees. Three KIs explained this by a reported cultural reluctance to access mental health services because of the stigma associated with it. One KI further mentioned the language barrier, and the lack of space to hold private consultations.

However, it should be noted that more than a quarter (27%) of survey respondents reported that they or a member of their household would require psychosocial support, and 37% of respondents were aware of mental health facilities in their vicinity.

Humanitarian Assistance

Needs and available aid

The most frequently cited needs across all refugee FGDs were access to medical services, food, as well as NFIs (notably winter clothes, baby supplies, cleaning, and hygiene items. The household survey shows similar results, with the addition of economic assistance as the top need.

Two of the three Ukrainian FGDs identified mothers with young children as the most vulnerable group that should be prioritised in receiving assistance.

Almost all FGD participants reported having received humanitarian assistance in Bucharest, notably through cash and NFIs. There are reportedly numerous assistance programmes and activities that vary in the actors providing support. KIs mentioned that support was provided by local authorities, international and local NGOs, religious organisations, and volunteers. The most famous example of the type of assistance is ROMEXPO in Sector 1 - managed by local authorities - which provides assistance with information, NIFs, and health services, among others.

Almost all respondents (99%) who received humanitarian assistance reported to be completely or partially satisfied.
The sudden arrival of thousands of refugees in Bucharest in need of humanitarian assistance posed challenges both for national and local authorities, as well as the humanitarian sector.

While one KI from the NGO sector mentioned that most of the assistance offered in Romania was centralised in Bucharest, they also noted that it was not all with the assistance received pointed to the insufficient quantities of what they have received (83%) and that the assistance stopped suddenly (70%). FGD participants agreed that the decreasing aid levels were their main complaint regarding humanitarian assistance. This can be explained by the early days came from private individuals and NGOs whose resources are limited and who are no longer able to support with the same level of material help. In addition, one of the host respondents stressed that considering the amount of help already provided, the number of Ukrainian refugees, and the length of the ongoing war, volunteers and staff of the local authorities and humanitarian sectors were exhausted and despite the fact the humanitarian centres such as ROMEXPO still operate, there is assistance fatigue in the city.

Another issue raised by two KIs is the fact that at the time of data collection, other than Ukraine, assistance had been given out without any conditions. However, as noted by three KIs and by members of the Ukrainian community, not all refugees received assistance. This system was not perceived as sustainable by KIs. To mitigate this, two KIs in the humanitarian sector mentioned that they imposed rules on some of their programmes to ensure their access by more vulnerable groups.

Other complaints were raised, although it should be noted that most of these were raised by one FGD group only. Participants mentioned incidents of aid diversion with individuals getting free items meant for Ukrainian refugees and selling them; aid retention with warehouses said to be full but volunteers refusing to give out certain items unless in the presence of political figures or media crews; and delays in the reception of cash grants.

A final issue reported by three KIs in the humanitarian sector and local authorities, as well as one of the hosts interviewed, was the reported discrimination against the Roma minority in Romania. These KIs and hosts reported that Roma refugees from Ukraine could be denied assistance on the basis of their belonging to the group.
The lack of information on services available to refugees and how to access humanitarian assistance does not seem to be a major issue in Bucharest. When asked to choose from a list of 14 types of information, the main information gaps they face, more than half of respondents answered "none". The issue was also not frequently brought up during the Ukrainian FGDs.

However, there were still several accounts of respondents reporting that they had received contradictory information from different volunteers and that some information gaps are remaining regarding access to health services.

FGD participants reported receiving information primarily on social media, especially Telegram channels. That is unlike what was observed in the Constanta Area-Based Assessment where these means of receiving information were viewed as inefficient because of how overloaded the channels were. However, refugees in Bucharest reported receiving most of their information from social media and 79% of the household survey respondents chose social media as their preferred means of receiving information.

The second main source of receiving information for refugees was from volunteers in humanitarian centres, while waiting in line to receive assistance. Although this was a frequently reported channel, it was not the preferred means of receiving information among respondents, notably because of the language barrier between them and the volunteers, who for the most part cannot speak Russian or Ukrainian.
Livelihoods

ABA Bucharest - September-October 2022

Main sources of income for refugee households

- Employment
- Savings
- Humanitarian assistance

62% of respondents who were working before 24 February lost their jobs

52% of these respondents were able to find new employment since being in Bucharest

Although 62% of refugees who were working before 24 February 2022 lost their job in displacement, 77% of households reported that one of the sources of their household’s income was employment - notably through another member of their household or still receiving their salary from Ukraine. However, 80% of households indicated relying on humanitarian assistance and 54% on their savings.

With household members losing employment and relying on assistance and savings, as well as depleting income, this could cause increased vulnerability of the Ukrainian households in Bucharest. As the crisis shows few signs of improvement and is becoming protracted diminishing the possibility for Ukrainians in Romania to return to their country of origin, livelihoods could become a priority in the next few months.

Five out of nine KIs noted that finding a job was not a major challenge in Bucharest. They noted that there were opportunities available, especially for those who speak English, and positions that required little oral communication did not represent a challenge for Ukrainian refugees seeking a job.

It should be noted that most respondents across the FGD groups had not found employment and thus had a rather negative outlook on the employment perspective in the city. Only one participant maintained their old job and was working remotely and one participant found work in education. This is contradicting the results of the survey and can be explained by the fact that the FGDs were all conducted during standard working hours.
Although access to employment was reported to be important in the context of integration, some barriers were highlighted by FGD participants and KIs identifying the top two main barriers to employment as the **language barrier** and the lack of childcare. The lack of childcare was a challenge for children, but those who were following distance learning also needed parental supervision. For the KIs (5/9), the language barrier, including in English was the main obstacle.

Three KIs mentioned the confusing administrative requirements as a barrier to employment. Firstly, they described the process as administratively complex by a KI in the humanitarian sector whose organisation had recruited refugees. They shared that there was little information available regarding legal requirements to hire refugees, taxation issues, and mandatory documents. They were concerned about missing any administrative steps because of oversight due to the complexity of the situation.

Two KIs added that there was also some unwillingness to work on the part of the refugees, both because they were hoping to return to Ukraine as soon as possible and did not want to commit to a position, or because they used to have high-profile jobs in their country of origin and were not willing to accept a position they perceive as worse or with lower income. The latter was also argued by Ukrainian refugees in two of the FGDs.

Although not a single respondent in the household survey reported facing discrimination in the labour market, several respondents across two of the three FGD groups claimed that they were offered to be paid less than Romanians and with longer working hours. One respondent also reported that their partner was taken in unpaid trial periods several times but never hired and thought they were being exploited. One person also thought Ukrainian refugees were purposefully discriminated against at the hiring stage.

Two of the KIs from the business sector who work for a large company reported having an internship programme targeting refugees, which also included training and psychological services. They reported working closely with the United Nations Organisations (UNO) and NGOs in designing and promoting the programme. The two KIs emphasized the need for closer cooperation with the government. The third KI from the business sector also reported the need for support from the government, further reporting that private initiatives which had offered support in the immediate time after the escalation of hostilities in February 2022 affected businesses and employees.
Livelihoods

Impact of the escalation of hostilities on the financial situation of hosts’ households

- Positive & negative: 53%
- Negative: 22%
- No impact: 8%
- Do not know: 3%

Hosts in the FGDs and the household survey generally noted an increase in prices since refugees arrived in Bucharest, but almost all took into account the fact that the escalation of hostilities in February 2022 was the factor that caused the inflation, not the arrival of refugees themselves. The only sector of the economy where there reportedly was a price increase because of refugees was the price of rent. This was linked to the revenues from the 50/20 programme which are reportedly considerably higher than rent costs before the programme. Business KIs noted they did not experience any sudden increase in demand following the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest. There were exceptions of restaurants that chose to serve free meals to refugees and have a significant increase in demand, but their cases were not representative of the business sector in general. The increase in demand that mechanically occurs when more individuals live in the same area seems to have been so minimal that it was not felt by the business KIs that were surveyed. Besides this, most people reported that the local economy had been relatively unaffected.

Other than employment programmes, two business KIs shared that several companies and organizations offered **free language classes** to Ukrainian refugees to facilitate their integration in Bucharest and on the job market.

Finally, a business KI also explained that their company arranged for Ukrainian refugees to work in any location where their organisation had an office, ensuring continuous employment for their employees. This is similar to the findings from the household survey where 68% of the respondents who did not lose their job in displacement said they were able to work remotely and 20% were able to work for the same company in a different office.

Economic Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPLOYED BEFORE 24 FEBRUARY 2022</th>
<th>NOT EMPLOYED BEFORE 24 FEBRUARY 2022</th>
<th>EMPLOYED IN OCTOBER 2022</th>
<th>NOT EMPLOYED IN OCTOBER 2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was noted by several KIs, as well as host communities, that a part of the refugee population is well-off economically. They saw this as an opportunity for investment that had the potential to make the economy grow as reported by three host community members. However, two host community respondents thought that the arrival of refugees could have a negative economic impact on hosts, implying that the government funding that was directed towards Ukrainian refugees through 50/20 and other forms of government support was financial support that would not reach the Romanian people.
### Impact of the arrival of refugees on the local economy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of Households Reporting an Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive &amp; negative</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No impact</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Nature of the impact of the arrival of refugees on the local economy (by % of households that reported an impact [n=88])

- **Prices increase**: 92%
- **Rent prices increase**: 75%
- **New job opportunities**: 18%
- **Increased workforce**: 9%
- **High maintenance costs**: 9%
- **Decreased access to services**: 7%

### Local Authorities

Authorities were reported to be **highly involved in the refugee response, particularly the social services**, which were responsible for the management of assistance and centres at the local level. Both KIs from the social services reported that the **institutions were overwhelmed** while their capacity has not increased dramatically. They also reported changes in roles, as part of the staff was dedicated full-time to the refugee response and thus their cases were covered by other colleagues. All three KIs from the public sector mentioned receiving support from both UNO and NGOs, as well as the private sector, and one also mentioned receiving support from religious organizations as well. Both KIs from the social services expressed the need for additional support in terms of donations and other types of financial assistance to be able to address the existing request for aid.

Apart from the Department for Emergency Situations (DSU), which was noted to be the coordinating body for the response at the national level, **other institutions were reportedly less engaged**, with two KIs mentioning that the division of the responsibilities among institutions was unclear and one reporting the lack of clarity in the relevant legislation was making institutions less willing to take action. Additionally, while TP registration grants refugees access to multiple services by law, three KIs reported issues with the implementation of these rights. One KI reported that a new policy had been published according to which refugees with TP registration would receive financial assistance (separate from the 50/20 programme), but at the time of the interview, that had not been put into practice. Further, two KIs reported differentiated access to medical services – one having accounted for registering visits and refugee patients by GPs, difficulties in following the legislative procedures for registering visits and refugee patients by GPs were also reported by three KIs to be one of the main barriers for refugees accessing family care. Further, two KIs noted that there is a need for more emphasis and clearer guidelines on integration.

There is a **high level of coordination reported, particularly between NGOs and authorities** [n=5]. Further, one KI mentioned that the refugee response plan of the government was developed in coordination with UN organisations. One KI, however, reported that there is no centralized coordination structure, mentioning that UNOs and the government each have their coordination groups. This report is further corroborated by local stakeholders.
Evolving dynamics

According to the household surveys, there is a marked discrepancy in the perception of the intercommunity dynamics between the refugee and host communities. Refugees overwhelmingly perceived the relationship as good or very good (93%) and no respondent reported that it was bad. On the other hand, the majority of respondents in the host community thought that the relationship was neutral (81%), with 11% even perceiving the relationship as bad or very bad.

Respondents across all three refugee FGDs shared that their relationships with hosts were generally very supportive and compassionate due to their situation. However, almost all reported some isolated but noteworthy hostile interactions (developed in the next section). Despite overwhelmingly positive interactions, all groups agreed that the quality of the relationship between hosts and refugees had decreased in the last few months.

On the hosts’ side, host family respondents reported that the interactions between the host and the refugee communities were positive for the most part. However, host community respondents in the FGD thought that the relationships was neutral, without tension, or positive interactions, as there were no interactions between the refugee and host communities as far as they knew. They stressed having encountered Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest before but reported them not mixing with the local population and staying in groups. Unlike what was reported in the refugee FGDs, no host surveyed reported that the relationship between the two communities worsened, and two mentioned that they thought it had improved with the local population accepting Ukrainian refugees more.

A noteworthy comment by one of the hosts can partly explain the acceptance and the high number of host families willing to accommodate refugees: “I thought it had improved with time, but it seems there has been a marked decrease in the last few months.”

The most frequently reported source of tension by KiS, Ukrainian refugees, and hosts was the perception that the refugees are economically advantaged and thus do not deserve the support they are being offered in comparison with local vulnerable groups. Refugees in one of the FGDs added that these perceptions could be legitimate due to the attitude of some of the Ukrainian refugees that reportedly feel entitled to the help they receive despite apparent wealthiness and can have arrogant behaviours.

During two FGDs with Ukrainian refugees, several participants complained about tensions with Romanian volunteers or staff working in distribution centres. They reported incidents of aggressive verbal behaviour and disrespectful comments. It should also be noted that tensions with Russian citizens within Bucharest were highlighted by several participants within one of the Ukrainian FGDs. They shared stories of aggressive behaviours from Russian citizens towards Ukrainian citizens and vice versa.

Sources of tension

The most frequently reported source of tension by KiS, Ukrainian refugees, and hosts was the perception that the refugees are economically advantaged and thus do not deserve the support they are being offered in comparison with local vulnerable groups. Refugees in one of the FGDs added that these perceptions could be legitimate due to the attitude of some of the Ukrainian refugees that reportedly feel entitled to the help they receive despite apparent wealthiness and can have arrogant behaviours.

It should also be noted that tensions with Russian citizens within Bucharest were highlighted by several participants within one of the Ukrainian FGDs. They shared stories of aggressive behaviours from Russian citizens towards Ukrainian citizens and vice versa.
The **language barrier** has been one of the most reported issues across both household surveys and qualitative data. As can be seen on WKH SUHYLRXV SDJHRPPXQFLFDWRQ GLFXOWLH are the most reported cause of tension for host respondents. This is supported by the accounts of Ukrainian refugees in the FGDs reporting animosity on the part of a minority of hosts regarding their inability to speak Romanian. Generally, the language barrier is said to create distance between the refugees and hosts as they generally do not understand each other, and do not have a common language to communicate in. It also prevents more formal integration of refugees in Bucharest society, notably by PDNLOJ LW PRUH GLFXOWLH WR QG HPSORIPHQW.

**Language classes** are thus seen as a solution promoting the integration of Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest. However, there are FRQJLFWLOJ UHSRUWV QO DFFHVWRQDQJXDLQW classes, with one KI reporting there is a demand and one reporting their language classes DUH QRW DWWHQGHG 6RPH SUREOHPV UHODWLOJ WR language courses were also reported, such as them not being adequately planned [n=2] or scheduled during working hours [n=1].

Beyond these formal events, integration can be facilitated through social events. Participants in two of the three Ukrainian FGDs mentioned that they thought that having more frequent interactions with hosts would facilitate relationships and help the two communities understand each other better. These events already appear to take place at the initiative of both the refugee and host communities, as 66% of refugee respondents reported having taken part in social integration events.

KIs also shared some of their initiatives to facilitate cultural integration. A business KI reported that their company provided cultural training to refugees to understand better the culture of their hosts. In addition, a KI representing local authorities explained that the town hall had organised cultural programmes around Romanian history and traditions to facilitate the integration of Ukrainian refugees into the culture. These events have been reported by refugees, host community respondents, and KIs as a good practice for integration to facilitate the learning of the two communities about each other.

However, as previously mentioned within the Movement Intentions section, during FGDs, all the refugee respondents in all the FGD groups expressed their desire to return to Ukraine and uncertainty related to the length of their stay in Romania. As a result, integration is not always seen as a priority.
Endnotes


