



UKRAINE SITUATION

REGIONAL REFUGEE RESPONSE PLAN

ROMANIA CHAPTER

END OF YEAR REPORT

January-December 2023



Regional Refugee Response
for the Ukraine Situation

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Situation Overview

Romania continues to play a pivotal role as a refugee-hosting country amid the ongoing war in Ukraine. Since 24 February 2022, over 5.4 million Ukrainian refugees and third country nationals have entered Romania from Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. At the end of 2023, a total of 85,710 refugees from Ukraine were present in the country and some 149,116¹ refugees had obtained temporary protection (TP) status.

On 30 June 2022, the Government of Romania adopted the two-year National Plan of Measures (NPM) for the Protection and Inclusion of Displaced Persons from Ukraine and Temporary Protection Directive Beneficiaries, marking a shift from the emergency response to a longer-term protection and inclusion phase. On 12 April 2023, the Romanian Government's 50/20 programme,² which provided funds to Romanian hosts for accommodation and food for TP holders, was updated to link support to inclusion benchmarks³ and made refugees from Ukraine as direct beneficiary of the programme. At the end of 2023, refugees experienced delays in receiving payments for the second half of the year.

While substantial progress has been made on meeting the needs of refugees, more focus is required on aspects of social cohesion and socio-economic inclusion. At the end of 2023, according to the Ministry of Education, nearly 72 per cent of children holding temporary protection were registered with Romanian schools and early years education and care services. However, only 28 per cent of school-aged children had acquired full pupil status, while the rest remain mainly with the transitioning status of audients, as per the Romanian legislation. Overall, only about 40 per cent of school-aged refugee children report attending Romanian schools. Despite successful efforts to reduce barriers, 28 per cent of households with healthcare needs still reported problems, especially regarding mental health and sexual and reproductive healthcare, and gaps related to service provider capacity. Similarly, by the end of 2023, around 33 per cent of working-age Ukrainian nationals report to be working. Refugees frequently cite a lack of knowledge of the Romanian language, limited employment opportunities, and jobs that match their skills as major barriers to further labour market participation and socio-economic inclusion.

¹ Approximately 73 per cent of registered TP holders being women and children.

² Government Emergency Ordinance No. 22/2023 modifying Emergency Ordinance 15/2022 - through which RON 50 (US\$ 11.2) per person per day was provided for accommodation and RON 20 (US\$ 4.5) per person per day for food until April 2023.

³ These include registration of children in the education system, and actively seeking a job on the labour market through the national employment agency. See Government Emergency Ordinance No. 22/2023.

Cities at the frontline

Cities and municipalities of Romania are playing a critical role in the refugee response since the onset of the Ukraine situation. Four municipalities committed to refugee inclusion and the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees through pledges ahead of the Global Refugee Forum. The Bucharest municipality pledged to develop a comprehensive public policy to foster inclusion, combat discrimination and promote diversity and communication. Braşov municipality pledged to maintain the KATYA Centre as a one-stop-shop service centre for refugees. In Galaţi, local authorities confirmed their continued support for inclusive access to services and infrastructure for refugees, fostering an environment that enables self-reliance and socio-economic contribution to the local community. Timişoara municipal Directorate for Social Assistance pledged to build an inclusive community, involving all stakeholders, with a focus on education, health, work, culture, and social services. A municipal team will be dedicated to refugee integration which will further build bridges between the local community and the refugees.

Highlights and achievements

During 2023, 34 RRP partners worked to advance the refugee response, led by the Government of Romania, delivering complementary services and assistance in the areas of protection, gender-based violence (GBV), child protection, education, healthcare and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), as well as the provision of multi-purpose cash, and core relief items.

To support social cohesion, increase the absorption capacity of service providers in Romania and enhance the quality-of-service provision for refugees and citizens alike, RRP partners provided technical, material, and human resources support to both public and grassroots service providers. RRP partners provided technical capacity support to over 8,600 service providers on enhancing provision of services. Approximately 1,500 teachers received training on inclusive education, 1,955 persons received training on GBV prevention and response, including 227 medical professionals who were also trained on the Clinical Management of Rape and Intimate Partner Violence, and nearly 1,400 service provider staff were trained on anti-trafficking and the identification of victims of trafficking. 11 GBV referral pathways were developed enhancing care for GBV survivors. Support was provided to national child protection agencies for implementation of a case management system. By the end of 2023, the National Authority for the Protection of Children Rights and Adoption (NAPCRA) had registered more than 35,000 Ukrainian children in its case management system. Furthermore, RRP partners developed an online toolkit on Investigations and Prosecutions in Anti-Trafficking action, provided school materials and IT equipment for schools, medical equipment to public hospitals, and human resources support to governmental departments.

RRP partners supported the empowerment of refugees, providing information on services and rights reaching vast numbers of refugees, through a variety of methods, including through helpdesks, hotlines, social media, and a dedicated website ([Services Advisor](#)) providing an overview of services available for refugees in Romania. Nearly 78,500 refugees received legal aid and counselling, notably in relevant legal and administrative aspects for their inclusion in Romania,

and over 7,500 refugees were supported with employment counselling, vocational training, and engagement with employers. Over 100,000 individuals received targeted cash support to overcome vulnerabilities and to meet winter needs. To provide more targeted assistance, RRP partners worked with authorities to develop a scorecard system to identify the most vulnerable refugees for services and support. The scorecard was piloted in select cash programs and will be fine-tuned in 2024 for use by other partners and in the delivery of other forms of assistance thereby increasing coherence and focus of the response.

RRP partners worked to maintain social cohesion between refugees and host communities. A successful public social cohesion campaign across social and traditional media reached over 2,4 million people via digital means and prompted over 300,000 visits to a webpage to address myths stemming from disinformation and misinformation. More than 5,600 refugees and members of host communities took part in activities building bridges and developing mutual understanding and over 9,000 refugees received language training. RRP partners supported seven local coordination initiatives in support of local authorities, providing local solutions to barriers faced by refugees to socio-economic inclusion. Additionally, RRP partners worked with municipalities in Romania to share good practices in the refugee response and to enhance peer learning.

Adolescent and Youth Taskforce

The RRP launched the Youth & Adolescents Task Force (YAD TF) as a coordination platform promoting social cohesion and cross-sectoral youth participation, aimed at sharing innovative youth-inclusive tools, participatory approaches and linking interventions to YAD needs. The YAD TF facilitates information-sharing and coordinated interventions for and with refugee YAD across RRP partners. By voicing concerns, discussing challenges, and communicating opportunities, organizations complement programmes and reach YAD in a more structured way in the face of YAD isolation and misconnection of refugee-response stakeholders to YAD-specific needs according to their age and the local context. Among the results of the TF in 2023 are a Telegram channel developed with the aim at providing a safe digital means for sharing opportunities directly with Ukrainian young people in Romania, disseminating best practices, needs-assessment results, as well as improving youth-participatory mechanisms and collaboration among members.

Gaps and challenges

Despite many achievements in 2023, challenges remain, particularly in the areas of social cohesion and socio-economic inclusion. Refugees face constraints in accessing services and inclusion in Romanian society due to systemic challenges, primarily the lack of information, administrative requirements – notably the need for proof of address in Romania, which is also required of Romanian citizens – as a prerequisite to access social protection benefits, language barriers affecting access to the labour market and education, and economic vulnerabilities. This, coupled with delays in financial assistance and dwindling assistance from humanitarian actors is



Ukraine refugees attend a Romanian language class at Suceava Youth Centre (National Youth Foundation).
Photo: Radu Andonie.

reflected in 70 per cent of refugee households reporting a decrease in purchasing power in comparison with their first months in Romania.

While refugees from Ukraine have received a warm welcome in Romania, these positive sentiments may gradually decline. Currently, over 25 per cent of refugee households surveyed in the multi-sector needs assessment reported experiencing negative attitudes, mainly discrimination or verbal aggression in personal interactions or through social media. Concerted efforts must be undertaken to maintain social cohesion and address concerns of vulnerable host communities in refugee-hosting areas, including strengthening service provisions for both refugees and Romanian citizens, particularly ahead of an intense electoral year 2024. Coordination continues to play a key role in building alliances with civil society and municipalities, for both the maintenance of the protection space, to support socio-economic inclusion, and maintain social cohesion at the community level.

A central challenge revolves around the funding levels of the RRP. In 2023, the RRP secured funding of around 51 per cent against the appeal, with national partners receiving only 25 per cent against their appeals. The financial constraints and the absence of longer-term funding pose a risk to undermining the achieved progress, with the potential to further erode social cohesion if sustained funding for system strengthening and comprehensive service delivery remains elusive.

2023 Indicators and results

Indicator	Mid-year	Final result	Target
# of individuals who received support in livelihoods and socio-economic inclusion services and development programmes.	15,991	23,432	54,950
# of individuals who have been supported in accessing protection services.	66,318	90,000	90,700
# of children provided with child protection and related services.	16,744	33,040	40,200
# of participants trained on child protection and children's rights.	191	1,258	4,250
# of GBV referral pathways established and functional.	11	11	5
# of persons reached through community outreach and prevention activities on GBV.	17,289	52,900	93,250
# of PSEA network members and partner personnel trained on SEA risk mitigation, prevention, and response.	168	359	120
# of individuals who received assistance for basic needs.	10,4704	14,6554	69,340
# of children enrolled in formal education in host countries ⁴	23,490	38,830	10,000
# of children participating in non-formal education programmes in the host countries.	39,295	73,384	19,328
# of consultations provided for mental health and psychosocial support.	6,161	8,115	27,754
# of people supported in accessing health care services.	2,816	15,990	73,050
# of people trained to provide health services to refugees and host populations.	170	759	2,950
# of individuals who received cash assistance.	36,285	10,0362	46,000
# of people reached under the RRP.	181,534	256,551	350,000
# of RRP Partners that reported on Inter-Agency tools.	30	33	34

⁴ Government enrolment figure.

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