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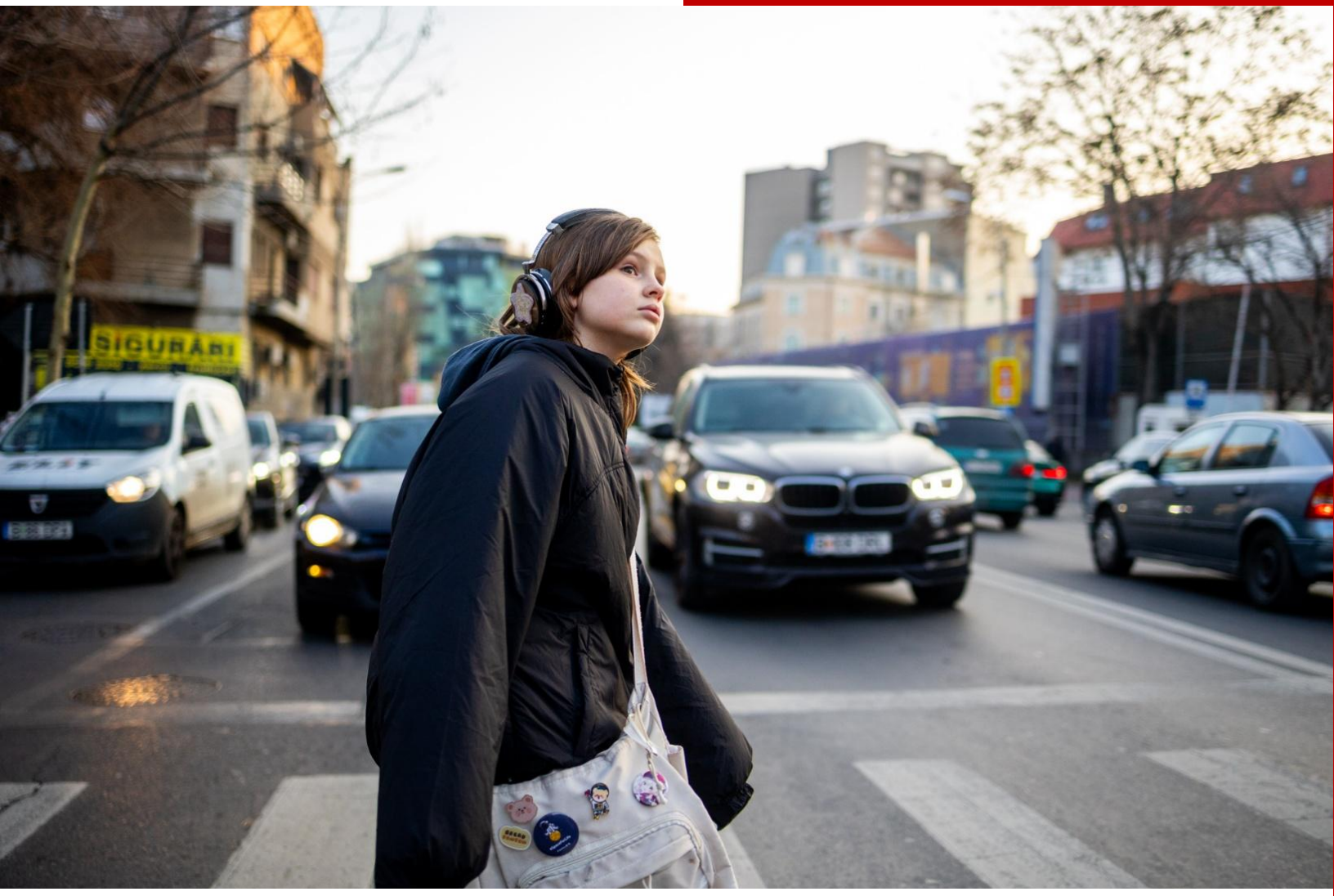

Assessment of the Needs of Ukrainian Refugee Children and Adolescents in Romania

Summary - June 2025

About the Initiative

This analysis is based on the results of an online consultation conducted by Save the Children Romania between May 28 and June 13, 2025.

The purpose of this consultation was to explore the opinions, needs, and personal experiences of Ukrainian children regarding the protection of their rights during their stay in Romania. The consultation was based on a self-administered digital questionnaire (hosted on the Kobo platform), which was completed by 355 children aged between 8 and 17 years. The questionnaire was anonymous, and no personal data was collected during its administration or analysis.

To ensure proper understanding of the questions, the questionnaire was distributed in three language versions (Ukrainian, Russian, and English), with each participant able to choose the most suitable version. The results of the consultation are indicative in nature, as the sample was not stratified.

About the Respondents

Regarding gender distribution, there is a slightly higher representation of girls in the sample (53%), while 45% of respondents are boys (the remaining 2% chose not to answer this question).

In terms of age distribution, 35% of participants are between 8 and 11 years old, 43% are aged 12 - 14, and the remaining 22% are adolescents aged 15 - 17.

In terms of residence, the majority of participants are currently located in Bucharest (102), followed by Iași (68), Suceava (58), Galați (41), Baia Mare (29), and Constanța (22).

As for their places of origin, before the outbreak of the war, most of the children consulted lived in Odesa (145), Kyiv (43), and Kherson (39).

Experience of Arriving in Romania

Most of the children who participated in the consultation (255 = 72%) arrived in Romania in the same year the war in Ukraine began (2022). However, there is a significant difference across age groups. The proportion of those who arrived in 2022 is noticeably lower among adolescents aged 15–17 (6 percentage points below the sample average and 9 percentage points below children aged 12–14).

Three out of five respondents (62%) mentioned that they arrived in Romania accompanied only by their mother, while one-third (34%) traveled with both parents. The remaining responses include non-responses and cases where the children traveled with grandparents, their father, or other relatives.

More than half of the participants (58%) stated that they like or like very much the place where they currently live. However, younger children expressed significantly higher levels of satisfaction compared to adolescents (a difference of 7 percentage points).

Support Networks and Sense of Belonging to the Community

When asked whom they turn to for help, most of the children participating in the consultation (91%) indicated their parents. The next most mentioned categories were friends: from Ukraine (20%) or local friends (14%), while fewer than 1 in 10 children (8%) consider teachers as people they turn to when in need of help. Analyzing the support network (the number of people a child feels they can turn to when they need help), it is concerning that 6 out of 10 respondents feel they can talk to only one category of people (usually parents), while only 5% feel they can turn to 4 or 5 support persons.

More than 6 out of 10 children feel they have friends around them in Romania, while 2 out of 10 feel they do not have any friends here. There are clear differences by age group in this regard. For example, 66% of younger children (8–11 years) feel they have friends in Romania, while this proportion drops to 56% among adolescents aged 15–17. Almost 4 out of 10 children consulted feel they are part of the local community, while 21% do not share this feeling. Girls feel more included in the community than boys (a 6 percentage point difference across the two levels of agreement), and younger children feel more integrated compared to adolescents (a 7 percentage point difference between the 8–11 and 15–17 age groups).

1 in 5 children participating in the consultation stated that they had experienced marginalization in the past month. The most frequently mentioned environments where this occurred were public spaces ("on the street or in the neighborhood where they live") and school.

Participation in Education

More than half of the participants (52%) in the consultation did not regularly attend classes in Romanian educational institutions over the past three months. However, the proportion of those who did attend regularly decreases from 53% among the youngest group (8–11 years) to 35% among adolescents (15–17 years). In addition to age, another key factor influencing in-person participation in education is the length of time since arriving in Romania. For instance, children who arrived in 2022 attended Romanian schools at a rate of 53%, while those who arrived during the previous calendar year (2024) had a direct participation rate of less than one-third (29%).

Regarding plans to attend school in Romania after the summer break ("After the summer break, do you plan to enroll in school in Romania for the next school year?"), we note that 1 in 2 respondents is considering such participation, while 29% are undecided, and 17% do not plan to attend.

Analyzing future plans based on the current school year situation, we observe that most children who are currently attending school in Romania (78%) intend to continue doing so in the next school year. In contrast, only a quarter (25%) of those not currently enrolled in school in Romania are considering a change, and more than 2 in 5 (42%) are unsure whether they will take this step.

Emotional Well-being

Only 1 in 5 children did not report experiencing any negative emotional states, while 9% of respondents chose not to answer this question. Among the negative emotions measured, the most frequently mentioned was fear of the future (43%), followed by restlessness and lack of energy (26%), sleep difficulties, and loneliness (25%). Just over half of the children consulted (51%) stated that since leaving their country of origin, they feel happy either constantly or often, while less than half (45%) report having good self-confidence.

When it comes to the feeling of happiness, there are significant differences across age groups: 59% of children aged 8–11 report feeling happy constantly or very often, compared to only 39% of adolescents aged 15–17. In terms of self-confidence, there are notable gender differences, with girls reporting lower levels of self-confidence than boys (a 5-percentage point difference in the top two levels of agreement).

The Perspective of Returning to Ukraine

59% of the children consulted would like to return to their country of origin someday, while nearly 3 in 10 (27%) are unsure whether they would want to go back.

We observe that as the age of respondents increases, the percentage of those wishing to return to Ukraine decreases (from 65% among children aged 8–11 to 45% among adolescents aged 15–17).

Almost half of the children are worried about the idea of returning to Ukraine, either due to concerns about their personal safety (48%) or because of how the country has changed since the war began (45%).

Save the Children (Salvați Copiii) is a Romanian organization (legal status: association) established in April 1990. In 1998, it was evaluated and accepted as a full member of the Save the Children International Alliance.

Save the Children Romania has been defending and promoting children's rights in Romania since 1990. In 35 years, 4.159.000 children have been involved in Save the Children Romania programs and campaigns related to education, medical and social assistance, protection against abuse, encouragement of children's participation, and humanitarian assistance.

Save the Children Romania has been creating social programs, public policies and solid practices to the benefit of the child in Romania. Due to the expertise and complexity of its nationwide projects, the organization is a key social institution, the role of which is to mediate between society and the public authority, to the benefit of the child.

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