



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, 2023

SURVEY REGARDING THE SOCIAL COHESION IN THE CONTEXT OF UKRAINEAN CRISIS

„Survey Regarding the Social Cohesion in the Context of Ukrainian Crisis“

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Study developed by the Romanian Association for Health Promotion (ARPS) for UNICEF Romania

Project coordinator: Raluca Zaharia, UNICEF Romania

Scientific coordinator: Bogdan Păunescu

Research coordinator: Andreea Mitea

Methodology, research tools: Bogdan Păunescu, Soc. PhD. Raisa Zamfirescu

Fieldwork coordination: Andreea Mitea, Raluca Ileana Păun

Data analysis: Soc. PhD. Irina Zamfirache, Soc. PhD. Daniela Tarnovschi, Soc. PhD. Raisa Zamfirescu, Andreea Mitea

Authors: Soc. PhD. Irina Zamfirache, Soc. PhD. Daniela Tarnovschi

Edited by:

The Romanian Association for Health Promotion

182A Gh. Țițeica Str., Bucharest 2

Tel: 021/5277979

Email: office@arps.ro

www.arps.ro

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the worst humanitarian crises in modern European history has started in February 2022 and was brought on by the ongoing war in Ukraine, which has caused people to flee their homes and become displaced both inside and outside Ukraine's borders. The European Union and its member states offered, UNICEF has provided support to children and families since the beginning of the war, in collaboration with the Government, the other UN Agencies and local and international organizations. Monitoring the situation of immediate relief to the displaced population and support to Ukraine's neighbors. The United Nations have also committed their support to the refugee families. In Romania the refugees and the constant assessment of their needs is part of the ongoing UNICEF response to the crisis. The current research was carried out in February-March 2023, one year after the beginning of the conflict, to assess the perceptions of the Romanian population in the host communities on the people displaced from Ukraine and of the Ukrainian refugees on their own needs in order to participate more in the life of their new communities.

The Objective of the Research

The objective of the research is to understand better the manner in which Romanians perceive the people displaced from Ukraine one year after the beginning of the armed conflict and the way in which the people displaced find their place in the Romanian society and to understand better the factors that might undermine or enhance cohesion between the two communities.

The ultimate purpose of this research is to provide all actors involved in the response to the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis (governmental or civil society) insights which will help them better plan their interventions and to inform their longer-term programming to promote community cohesion between Ukrainians and host communities in Romania.

Methodology

The current research was carried out in February-March 2023 by the Romanian Association for Health Promotion (ARPS), one year after the beginning of the conflict, to assess the perceptions of the Romanian population in the host communities on the people displaced from Ukraine and of the Ukrainian refugees on their own needs in order to participate more in the life of their new communities.

The research involved: a desk-research that analyzed discussions on social media channels dedicated to Ukrainian refugee issues (especially Facebook and Telegram, two focus groups, one with Romanians, one with Ukrainian refugees, to validate the questionnaires, questionnaire-based data collection among Romanian citizens in Romania and Ukrainian refugees.

The questionnaires with which the data were collected were finalized following the organization of two focus groups, one with Romanian respondents and one with Ukrainian refugee respondents.

The focus-group with Romanians had twelve participants, seven women, and five men. Ten of them are in the 25-40 age group and two participants are over 40 years old. The participants were heterogeneous in terms of experience/contact with refugees, from those employed in NGOs or (General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection/ General Directorate of Social Assistance of the Municipality of Bucharest), to individuals who had not been involved in any way (but wanted to know more about refugees and how they can get involved), up to individuals who have a negative attitude towards the presence of refugees in Romania. This led to uneven involvement in the discussion and the slight monopolization of the discussion by those working in the field. However, all participants contributed with responses related to positive and negative aspects of the refugee situation.

The 10 participants in the focus group with Ukrainian refugees were all female, from Kharkiv, Odessa, Nikolaev and Kherson. They are all in their 30's. They came here with their children, their mothers or alone. In Ukraine, before the war, they had white collar jobs - bank employees, real estate agents, call center administrator, esthetician, or accountant. Only two have found jobs in Romania, both working in an NGO. The others are staying at home with their children or couldn't find a job in Romania. All of them are involved in some sort of education - either learning Romanian and English or continuing the online school in Ukraine.

For the quantitative component data were collected online, both from Romanian and Ukrainian sample. The questionnaires were accessible via URL link during February and March 2023, and the survey results reflect people's responses during this period. The link for the Romanians was distributed in a national online panel and targeted persons aged over 18 years old. By the end of the data collection stage, a total number of 405 questionnaires were achieved.

Regarding the Ukrainians refugees, the link for online questionnaire was shared on different social media pages and groups of Ukrainian refugees in Romania as well as on ARPS databases with contact data of refugees that were developed in previous or ongoing projects. ARPS promoted the survey to ensure high rates of participation and representation of various categories of the target population. It used various channels to inform potential respondents about the survey and promote participation. These included social media and other online channels (e.g. banners and posts on the websites and social media pages of relevant organizations). This way, a total number of 527 questionnaires were collected.

The online surveys do not claim to be representative of the target population. ARPS took several steps to make the survey as representative as possible. For example, it tried to reach out to as many people displaced from Ukraine as possible. In doing so, it aimed to account for their diversity (in terms of age, gender, religion, sexual orientation etc.), while bearing in mind that the majority of people who have fled Ukraine are women and children.

From the beginning of this report we have chosen, for ease of data presentation, to refer to the sample of respondents residing in Romania as "Romanians", irrespective of their ethnicity, and to the sample of Ukrainian refugees as "Ukrainians", which are different from Romanian citizens of Ukrainian ethnicity.

MAIN FINDINGS

ROMANIANS 	UKRAINIANS 
Romanians are not so much interested in the situation of Ukrainian refugees like a year before. Only one Romanian out of two is still interested, maybe due to the fact that only two out of five Romanians interacted directly with the Ukrainian refugees.	Six out of ten Ukrainians chose Romania for temporary stay because Romania is close to Ukraine and the living conditions are good.
Romanians are more distant and reserved in their assessment of refugees: only 62% say they have a good and very good opinion of them; and 14% of respondents cannot even formulate an opinion.	Ukrainian refugees think highly of Romanians and they are appreciating the help they get. Still, they perceive the routine and fatigue that led to a decrease in interest, donations, support from the Romanian society.
One out of four Romanians stated that the mere presence of Ukrainian refugees on the territory of Romania gives them a feeling of personal insecurity in their daily life.	Almost all Ukrainian refugees (93%) stated that their presence in Romania gives them a feeling of security.

ROMANIANS



UKRAINIANS



Two out of five Romanians consider that refugees should only be accommodated in refugee centers.	Eight out of ten Ukrainians consider that they can live in Romania as long as the conflict continues in Ukraine.
Seven out of ten Romanians agreed that when the conflict in Ukraine ends, Ukrainian refugees should return to Ukraine.	Five out of ten Ukrainians consider that they can easily integrate in Romania.
Seven out of ten Romanians declared that Ukrainians are not discriminated against in Romania.	Six out of ten Ukrainian declared that they do not feel discriminated against in Romania.
Eight out of ten Romanians declared that Ukrainian refugees are treated with respect and dignity by Romanians.	Eight out of ten Ukrainians declared that they are treated with respect and dignity by Romanians.
Two out of ten Romanians declared that they do not agree with the presence of refugees in Romania. Still, eight out of ten Romanians say that Ukrainian refugees can integrate in Romania.	
Romanian would accept a Ukrainian refugee: as neighbor (82%), as co-worker (80%), and as close friend (73%).	Ukrainian refugees would accept a Romanian: as co-worker (97%), neighbor as (96%), close friend (92%).
The Romanian recipe for integration is composed of: learning Romanian (77%); having a job (59%); being actively involved in the community they belong (49%); enrolling their children in schools in Romania, and learn about the Romanian culture are the last choices (38%).	The Ukrainian recipe for integration in Romania is composed of: learning the Romanian language (90%); learning about Romanian culture (87%); making Romanian friends; being active in the community they belong; finding a job; and enrolling their children in Romanian schools (80%).

The two areas which Ukrainians and Romanians consider extremely important for integration, but are not sufficiently addressed, are support to learn Romanian language and assistance in finding a job. These are two issues that could be solved through proper assistance: more available Romanian classes (online and offline) and guidance with finding a job.

Assistance for urgent issues like housing and health care services are extremely important and should be a priority, but learning the language, finding a job and building a feeling of belonging are also necessary in order to help the refugees settle and start a different life.

	Ukrainian refugees would like to be closer to Romanians than Romanians would like to be towards refugees. Four out of ten Ukrainians have made Romanian friends; five out of ten looked for a job; two out of then are currently employed; three out of ten have participated to common community activities with Romanians.
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ROMANIANS



UKRAINIANS



Four out of ten Romanians agree that Ukrainian refugees should benefit from complex services offered by the Romanian state.	Three out of ten Ukrainians agree that Ukrainian refugees should benefit from complex services offered by the Romanian state.
One out of two Romanians consider that Ukrainian refugees should: have access to the same jobs compensated medical services such as Romanians; live in the same communities; and enroll their children in the same classes as Romanians.	Nine out of ten Ukrainians declared that they have been helped by Romanians whenever they needed.
Romanians' opinions of what Ukrainian refugees should receive from the Romanian state and other organizations are: support to learn Romanian language, access to education for children, support in finding a job, and support to learn about Romanian culture and medical and social assistance.	What Ukrainian refugees received from the Romanian state and other organizations: housing and food for a limited period of time, material support and access to education for children, and medical and social assistance.
The main sources of information used by Romanians to find out information about the refugee situation in Romania are: mass media, internet, and the social media platform.	Ukrainian refugees get their source of information about issues related to their stay in Romania from Whatsapp, Telegram, Viber channels, and other Ukrainian refugees, family; and not the official sources.

Potential tension lines as resulted from the from the focus groups and desk research are: Romanians are concerned regarding the financial support for the Ukrainian refugees and see it in terms of competition; they think that Ukrainians are not grateful enough for the help they received; that Ukrainians do not want to get integrated into Romanian society, especially finding a job; that Ukrainians of receiving higher salaries in Romania, and the poor Romanians have to migrate abroad and work hard; and that Ukrainians get a preferential status, benefiting from much more support than any refugee arriving in Romania.

Ukrainians consider that Romanians seem to have gotten tired of them; and that they got a lot of money thanks to the 50/20 Program¹. All of these potential tension lines could be solved through better communication.

1. The 50/20 program was adopted in March 2022 by GEO no.28/23.03.2022, published in MO, no.282./23.03.2022, which states: "Individuals hosting foreign citizens or stateless persons in special situations, coming from the area of the armed conflict in Ukraine, shall benefit from the settlement of food and accommodation expenses from the budget of the County Inspectorates for Emergency Situations/Inspectorate for Emergency Situations Bucharest-Ilfov in the amount of 20 lei/day/person hosted for food and 50 lei/day/person hosted for accommodation. The mechanism of settlement is established by Government decision.