

# **SURVEY REGARDING THE SOCIAL COHESION IN THE CONTEXT OF UKRAINEAN CRISIS**

**STUDY REPORT, 2023**

**„Survey Regarding the Social Cohesion in the Context of Ukrainian Crisis” Study Report, 2023**

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

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**„Survey Regarding the Social Cohesion in the Context of Ukrainean Crisis”  
Study Report**

**UNICEF Romania**

**March 2023**

**The views expressed in this study are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funders.**

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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.

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.
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 Program<sup>1</sup>. All of these potential tension lines could be solved through better communication.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

## CONTEXT

One year after the war in Ukraine began, Europe is still facing the largest humanitarian refugee crisis on the continent after the Second World War. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), records 8,104,606 refugees from Ukraine across Europe as of 27 February 2023. This amounts to around 20% of the Ukrainian population (estimated by Eurostat as of 2021). Over 2 million refugees crossed the border into Romania in the last year and 110,921 persons displaced from Ukraine are still in the country.<sup>2</sup>

The displacement of a high number of citizens from Ukraine has had a profound impact on the lives of many people, particularly those who lost their homes and livelihoods. Many struggled to find adequate shelter, food, and medical care; and the ongoing conflict has disrupted access to basic services such as education and employment.

The international community has responded to the crisis by providing humanitarian aid and assistance to those affected by the conflict. UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNICEF, the World health organization (WHO) and other organizations have been working to provide emergency shelter, food, and medical assistance to displaced persons. However, the situation remains challenging, and ongoing conflict and political instability have hindered efforts to address the crisis effectively.

Before the war in Ukraine, humanity has recently experienced a major crisis caused by the Covid 19 pandemic. Many people have suffered great losses: they have lost their jobs, their homes, their friends, their family members. The pandemic has strained most resources, but most importantly it has demonstrated the importance of social cohesion in the face of adversity. Societies with high social cohesion, where social inclusion is a value, which benefit from high social capital and which encourage social mobility have coped better.

The Romanian society has gone through many stages that have tested its resistance and resilience. The years of communism severely affected trust in each other, overturned values, alienated people from each other and made them try to survive as individuals or as a nuclear family. The regime changes of 1989 did not bring about a major change in social cohesion. Political instability due to the lack of political culture, democratic values and social trust did not help to develop feelings of cooperation and acceptance of others.

Despite the constant efforts of the Romanian civil society to increase social involvement and social cohesion, the statistical data showed that people still lack trust in the other, and that they keep their distance from otherness, that they think only of the individual good. However, the crisis period triggered by the Covid 19 pandemic has shown that Romanian society has the resources to mobilize to respond to the needs of the less fortunate. The pandemic was not even over when Russia attacked Ukraine, a neighboring state of Romania, but with which it did not have the best and most friendly relations.

The history of Romanian-Ukrainian relations was historically sprinkled with differences and misunderstandings, especially regarding the status of the Romanian minority in Ukraine. However, with the outbreak of the war and the refugee crisis, the people of Romania (regardless of their nationality) joined forces and responded promptly to the need.

Romania was little prepared to receive refugees. A recent analysis of the Romanian capacity to receive refugees showed that the hosting facilities could receive no more than 2,500 persons.

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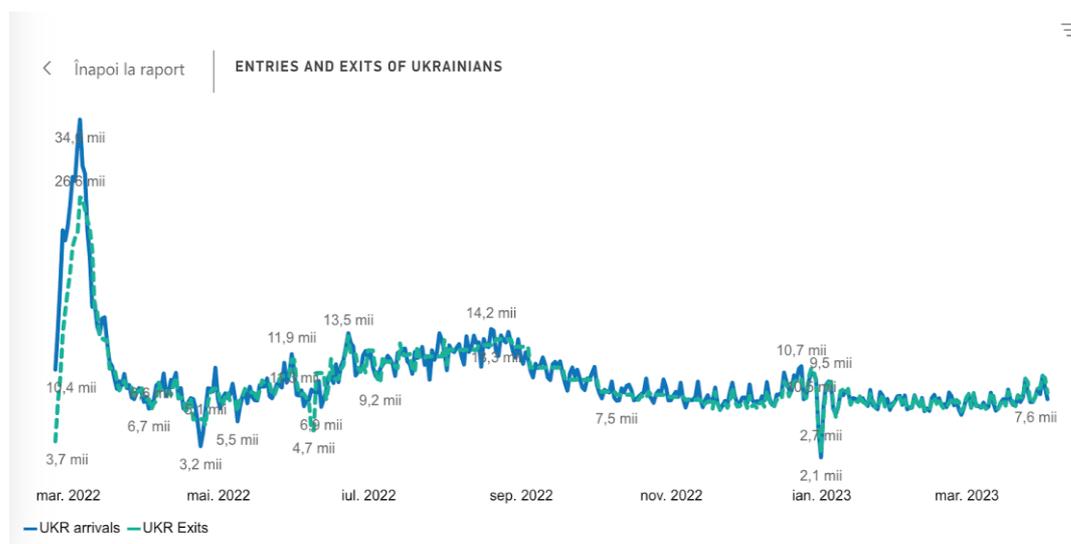
<sup>2</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10782>

According to a recent declaration from February 10, 2022 for the media outlet Europa Libera Romania<sup>3</sup>, the General Inspectorate of Immigration (GII) responded that "In the event of a possible influx of immigrants from Ukraine, the measures established by specific plans are implemented at the level of the institution. It is considered the monitoring and the permanent knowledge of the operative situation, but also the provision of the necessary operative and logistic support depending on the dynamics of the registered situation".

The reality demonstrated otherwise. The first offering services, food and accommodation was the Romanian civil society (NGOs, but also private persons). They rushed to the border, they organized transportation for refugees, and accommodation, especially in the big cities. Also, the civil society organized humanitarian aid for Ukraine, risking their lives to transport food, medicine, blankets and other necessities to the Ukrainian cities close to the Romanian and Republic of Moldavia border (Cernauti, Odessa).

This kind of proactive civil society response in Ukraine's neighboring countries has been somewhat similar, with governments stepping in afterward, but in an organized way, making efforts to organize civil society responses. It is somewhat understandable that the state, due to bureaucracy and hierarchical lines to be respected, mobilized more slowly, but came to meet the needs.

According to UNHCR data, in the first days/weeks after the outbreak of the war the number of Ukrainian refugees entering the territory of Romania (through the north-east, south-east, but also from the Republic of Moldova) was very high: from 10400, rising up to 34000 in March 2022.



The Romanian Government established an organized response to the humanitarian refugee crisis by setting up a high-level decision-making Task-Force, coordinated by the Prime Minister. Also, an operational Task-force, called the "Ukraine Commission" was set up to oversee the activities of the ministries involved in the management of the refugees 'flux in all areas of intervention, led by the Chief of Prime Minister's Chancellery. Thirdly, as the Government's official Response to the humanitarian refugee crisis document states, the Humanitarian Assistance Strategic Coordination Group was set up at the level of the Prime Minister's Chancellery, led by a Counselor of state to ensure the strategic framework of

3 Europa Libera Români, Criza din Ucraina | Cât de pregătită este România să primească refugiați. <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/refugiati-ucraina-romania/31697638.html>

humanitarian response and to facilitate the inter-agency cooperation among national, European, and international partners.

On June 29, 2022, the Government of Romania adopted the „Emergency Ordinance on the implementation of the National Plan of measures for the protection and inclusion of displaced persons from Ukraine and beneficiaries of temporary protection in Romania”, a first of its kind in the EU. The National Plan covers a wide range of essential interventions, focusing on key areas such as child protection, access to healthcare, education and housing, as well as inclusion in the national labor market. People with specific protection needs and the prevention of risks of abuse and exploitation are specifically addressed in the plan. The government measures reflected in the National Plan will help refugees regain a sense of stability through access to socio-economic rights during their stay in Romania and will increase social cohesion with the host communities.

In response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, the Government of Romania has issued over 20 pieces of legislation to meet the needs of Ukrainian refugees. Some of the legal acts have established direct intervention and support measures, while others introduced specific provisions to allow for new ways of operating.

Despite these efforts, Ukrainian refugees in Romania continue to face challenges, including language barriers, and difficulties in finding accommodation, and employment, and in accessing health services.

## SPECIFICATIONS

For a better contextualization and understanding of the data collected in the current research we used data collected by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), in the same way (online) at the end of August and almost throughout September 2022<sup>4</sup>, the ones provided by the European Commission in its Standard Eurobarometer 98 - Winter 2022-2023 (representative sample of respondents, residents in EU and several non-EU countries, data collected by face-to-face interview - CAPI), and data collected by the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (RIES) in February 2022<sup>5</sup>, August 2022<sup>6</sup> and February 2023<sup>7</sup> (representative sample of respondents, aged 18 and over, resident in Romania, data collected by telephone - CATI).

In this research, we have used exploratory samples which do not claim to accurately reflect and be representative of the Romanian and Ukrainian refugee populations. However, when analyzing the data and comparing them with the data provided by the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, we can draw some conclusions that are not affected by the lack of representativeness of the samples. The data collected by the Romanian Association for Health Promotion (ARPS) for UNICEF (referred to it in this report as ARPS data) fits very well with the data collected by the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. In order to provide a better understanding of the quantitative data we will use the information collected during the two focus groups organized to finalize the questionnaires.

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<sup>4</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2023). Fleeing Ukraine: Displaced people's experiences in the EU - <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2023/ukraine-survey>

<sup>5</sup> Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (2023). România, la 1 an de război în Ucraina. <https://ires.ro/articol/444/romanii--la-1-an-de-razboi-in-ucraina>

<sup>6</sup> Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (2022). 6 luni de război în Ucraina <https://ires.ro/articol/440/6-luni-de-razboi-in-ucraina>

<sup>7</sup> Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (2023). România, la 1 an de la război în Ucraina. <https://ires.ro/articol/444/romanii--la-1-an-de-razboi-in-ucraina>

In February 2022, August 2022, and February 2023 RIES collected data on representative samples of adults (18 years and older) residing in Romania to find out what their opinion is about the war in Ukraine. As part of the report, they were able to compare the data collected in February 2023, one year after the outbreak of the armed conflict.

Thus, in February 2022, immediately after the outbreak of the war, 72% of Romanians declared themselves interested in the topic, one year later the percentage of those interested dropped to 66%. The decrease is not significant because one has to take into account the margins of error of the samples, eg.  $\pm 2.7\%$ . The succession of events related to the war in Ukraine has left no room for apathy towards the subject, moreover, it should be noted that the threats of nuclear risks resulting from statements made from Moscow and the disturbing news about the atomic power plant in Zaporizhzhia make the interest of the Romanians not diminish.

According to RIES data, the fear of a possible Russian invasion of Romania also does not decrease considerably compared to February 2022, from 70% to 66% one year later. Romanians are still worried about the consequences of war (economic, political, and other), 73% in 2022 and 71% in 2023 state this; the cost in human lives 71% in both 2022 and 2023; and the duration of armed conflict from 64% to 66% in 2023. However, Romanians are confident that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) will face an attack against a NATO member country in the region. However, even so, in 2023, 35% of Romanians say they feel in danger in Romania at present or depending on the evolution of events in Ukraine.

From the responses to the RIES survey (2023), it is clear that the public's position towards Romania's involvement in supporting Ukraine focuses on humanitarian issues - food and medicine, supporting refugees, and providing expertise in various fields: 94% of Romanians agree that Romania should provide food, medicine and basic necessities; 91% agree with supporting Ukrainian refugees, and 72% opt for sending experts in various fields. Less than half (40%) of Romanians agree with sending weapons.

According to the latest Standard Eurobarometer 98 - Winter 2022-2023 data, Romanians are among the most skeptical Europeans about helping Ukraine. Although Ukraine enjoys high EU-wide percentages of support from European citizens, the Eurobarometer shows that:

- 25% of Romanians disapprove of providing humanitarian aid to war-affected Ukrainians, the highest percentage in the whole EU, far behind Bulgaria - 15% disapproval and Slovakia - 11%;
- Romanians also led the way in disapproval of receiving war refugees in the EU, with a 24% disapproval rate, second only to Czech citizens (26%);
- the provision of financial support to Ukraine is also disapproved of by a large number of Romanians: 35%. Higher rates are recorded only in Slovakia, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic;
- Regarding EU sanctions against Russia, 67% of Romanians approve and 25% disapprove. The disapproval rate is highest in Slovenia, Hungary, Greece, Cyprus, Slovakia, and Bulgaria;
- EU funding of arms purchases for Ukraine is approved by 55% of Romanians and disapproved by 36%. Nine EU countries have higher disapproval rates than Romania;
- 69% of Romanians consider Russia's invasion of Ukraine a threat to EU security,
- 1 in 2 Romanians say they are generally satisfied with Romania's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, below the European average (55%);
- 71% of Romanians agree that the situation at Romania's border is a threat to their country's security;
- Romanians also associate Romania's economic problems with the war in Ukraine, with 69% agreeing that it has economic consequences for the country.

## JUSTIFICATION

UNICEF works together with the Government of Romania, local authorities, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and other UN agencies and non-governmental organizations to assess and respond to the needs of the people displaced from Ukraine, to monitor and to ensure that their rights are observed and met. This includes contributing to the creation of an enabling environment through collecting information about attitudes and perceptions and adapting its programmes to foster cohesion between the Romanian and Ukrainian communities.

If we tried to define `social cohesion`, the definition could be a simple one, something like "social cohesion is the situation that occurs when people willingly work and cooperate despite the existing differences in their demeanor, culture, and beliefs". To be socially cohesive is to have a sense of belongingness and build good relationships with community members. It opens gateways of opportunities to society members and fosters positive social mobility towards each other's well-being.

According to the research posted online conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the three pillars of social cohesion are social inclusion, social capital, and social mobility.

“Social inclusion refers to the extent of participation of an individual in the society, especially those who are disadvantaged who need to be amplified to be heard. It is also the process of involving them in addressing certain causes within the community.

Social capital is the reason behind various systems in society, economy, and politics. Citizens share values, norms, trust, which is essential in the process of social exchange.

Social mobility refers to the movement of an individual's social status in society. Its movement can either be upward and downward depending on what they are experiencing, whether they progress or diminish on the social strata.”

From this perspective, 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.

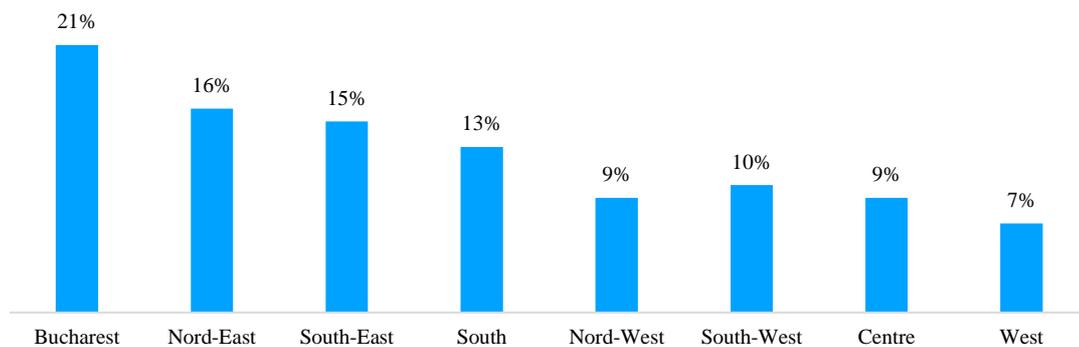
The ultimate purpose of this research is to provide all actors involved in the response to the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis (governmental or civil society) insights which will help them better plan their interventions and to inform their longer-term programming to promote community cohesion between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

## PRESENTATION OF EXPLORATORY SAMPLES

Responses to the two questionnaires, one for Romanians and one for Ukrainians, were collected online.

Based on the territorial segmentation, higher percentages of respondents were recorded in Bucharest and Ilfov (20.7%) and in North-East region (16%). (*Fig. 1*)

**Fig. 1. Territorial segmentation of Romanian sample %**



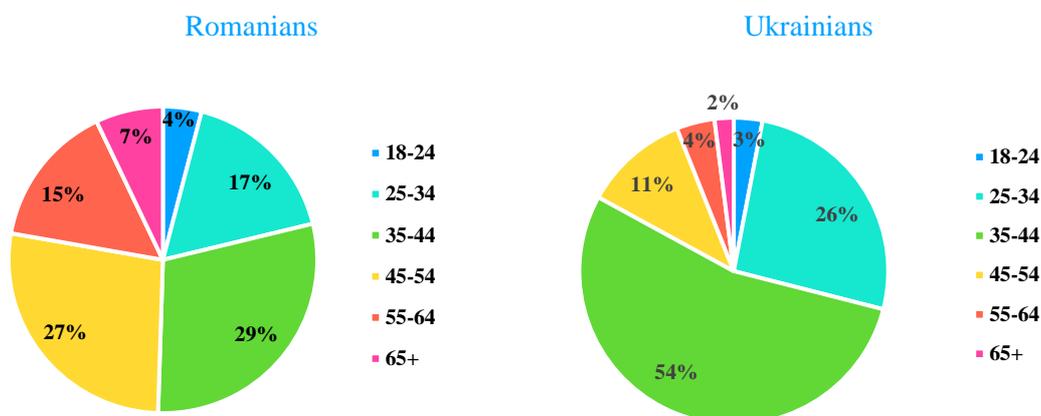
The gender distribution within the Romanian sample is close to the distribution recorded in the last Population Census conducted in 2022 (51.5% were female). (*Fig. 2*)

**Fig. 2. Gender distribution across samples**

Romanians		Ukrainians	
			
54%	46%	95%	5%

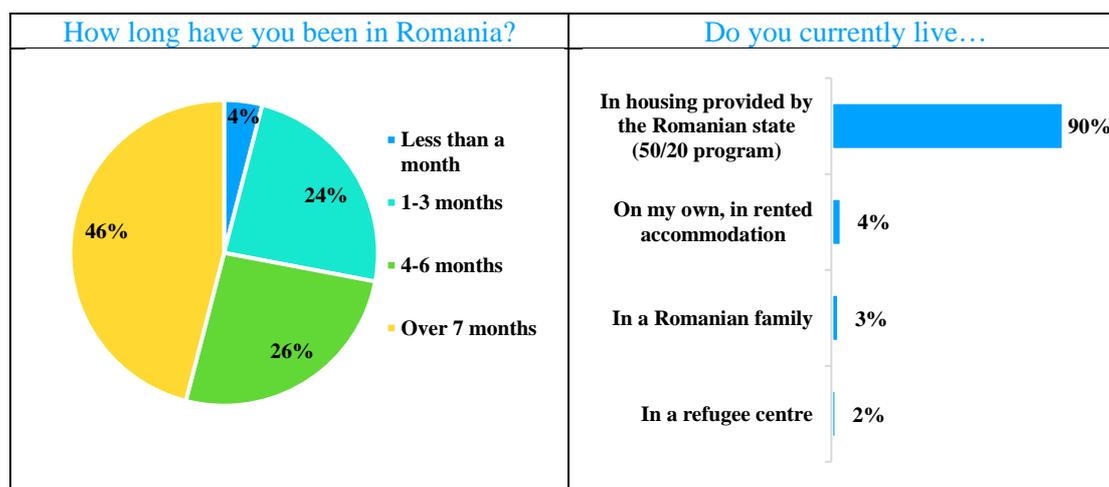
The sample of Romanians is mostly composed, 57%, adults (age group 35-54 years), and active (77% having a job). The Ukrainian refugee sample is mostly composed of adults (75%), but younger, in the age group 25-44 years, the vast majority being women, 95%. The data in terms of gender distribution is similar to the [FRA study](#) where 87% of respondents are female. The reason is very simple and relates to the conditions of exit from Ukraine immediately after the war. (*Fig. 3*)

**Fig. 3. Age distribution across samples**



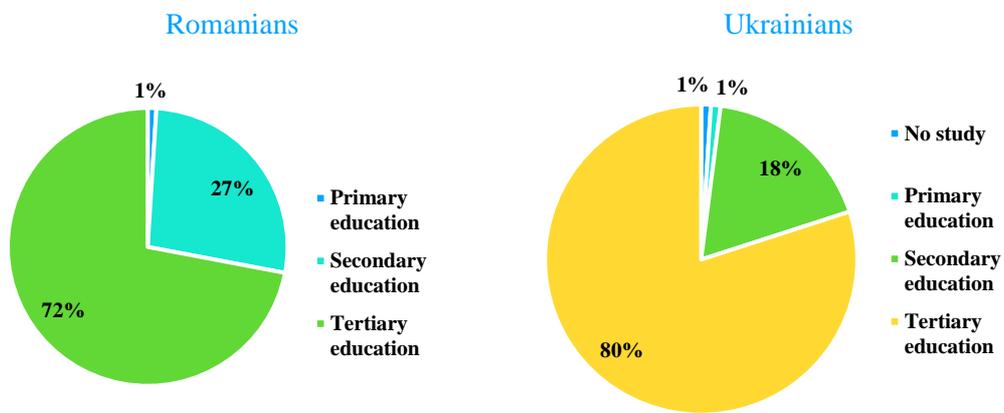
Almost half (47%) of the respondents in the Ukrainian refugee sample said they have been in Romania for more than 7 months, which means that some have been there since the beginning of the war. It is worth noting that few, 4%, of the respondents stated that they have been in Romania for less than one month. (*Fig. 4*)

**Fig. 4. Length of staying in Romania**



It is important to note that both prospective samples have in common that the majority of respondents have a high level of education: 72% of Romanians and 80% of Ukrainian refugees have tertiary education (university, college, or master's diplomas). For comparison, it should be added that the latest Census data (2022) shows that only 16% of the Romanian population has a tertiary education, 43.5% have secondary education and the remaining 40.5% have at most primary education. (*Fig. 5*)

**Fig. 5. Level of education, distribution across samples**



Obs. 1: It is important to bear this in mind because other research has shown that a higher level of education can lead to a higher level of tolerance and acceptance of diversity.

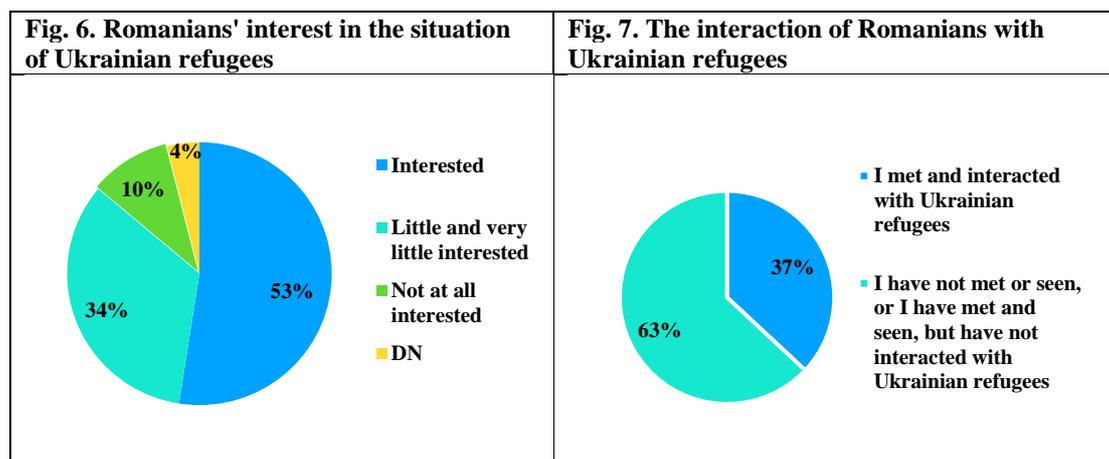
Obs. 2: From the beginning of the research, we were aware of the fact that we will have to deal with the social-desirability bias, a type of respondents' reaction that makes them answer the survey questions in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others. It can take the form of over-reporting "good behavior" or under-reporting "bad", or undesirable behavior. On the other hand, during the qualitative research, of the two focus groups, the bias can manifest exactly differently, by over-reporting bad behavior and under-reporting good behavior. It can take the form of over-reporting "good behavior" or under-reporting "bad", or undesirable behavior.

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN ROMANIA, A REALITY

*Ukrainian refugees, unlike refugees from other countries, have benefited from media attention, which has contributed to the increased involvement of the population. This media attention was incomparably bigger than in other conflict/refugee cases. (focus group participant)*

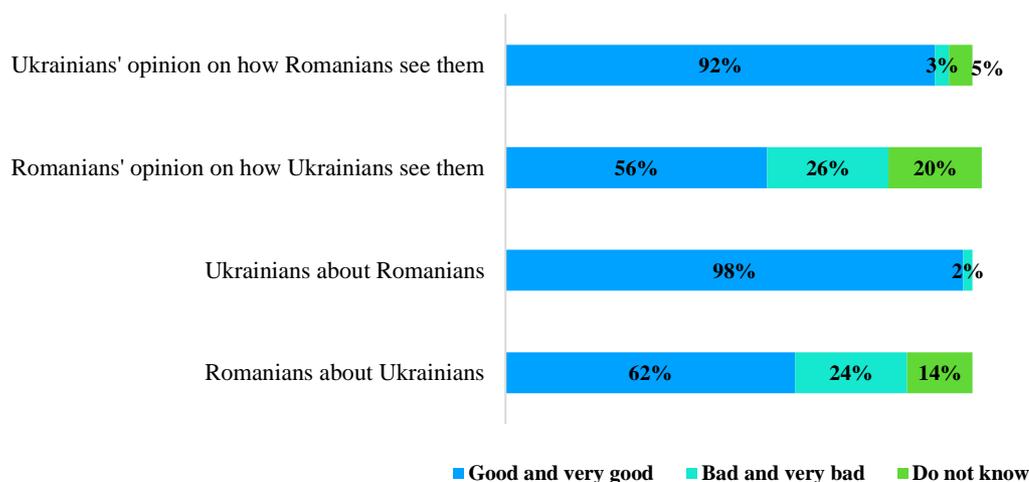
*My father highly recommended Bucharest to me because of NATO and the European Union. The planes fly, the trains run and most probably the war will not reach Romania. From Chisinau at that time we had the opportunity to go only to Bucharest. In fact, until this moment, I only knew Romania from Eurovision. This is all. I had no intention of going to Romania at all, I don't know where I planned to go, but not in Romania. (focus group participant)*

From the data collected by ARPS for UNICEF, it appears that 53% of Romanian respondents are interested in the situation of Ukrainian refugees, 34% are little or very little interested and 10% are not at all interested in their situation (**Fig. 6**). The not very high interest of Romanians in the situation of Ukrainian refugees (only 53%) can be explained by the fact that only 37% of Romanian respondents stated that they had interacted with refugees. Thus, 47% only met or saw Ukrainian refugees, but did not interact with them, and 10% neither saw nor interacted with Ukrainian refugees until now. The lack of direct, immediate contact also explains the reduced interest in the refugee situation (**Fig. 7**).



In the first part of the questionnaire, Romanians are asked what they think about Ukrainian refugees and what they think about Romanians. The same set of questions was also asked of Ukrainian refugees in the mirror (**Fig. 8**).

**Fig. 8. What Romanians think about Ukrainians and what Ukrainians think about Romanians**



The data show that 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. The same observation can be made when Romanians are asked what they think Ukrainians might think of them: only 56% say Ukrainians might have a good and very good opinion, and 20% do not know what to say. Lack of direct contact may be a variable that could explain this distribution of responses, just as "social desirability" and politeness make refugees state that they have a very good (58%) and good (40%) opinion of Romanians.

When asked what do you think is the opinion of Romanians about Ukrainian refugees, almost all respondents (92%) believe that Romanians' opinion about them is good and very good, while the rest of them don't know or think that is bad (3%) because as they say „*the Romanians are tired of us*”. Ukrainian refugees feel that they cannot afford to be rude in their responses and assessments, nor can they afford to be negative about their hosts. While some Romanians, during the focus group, believed that the Ukrainians are not grateful enough for the help they have received, there were many instances during the Ukrainian focus group where the participants showed their appreciation for everything they have received, from donations to housing or just information. In the end, it is a matter of sending the message across and showing more stories that had a positive outcome.

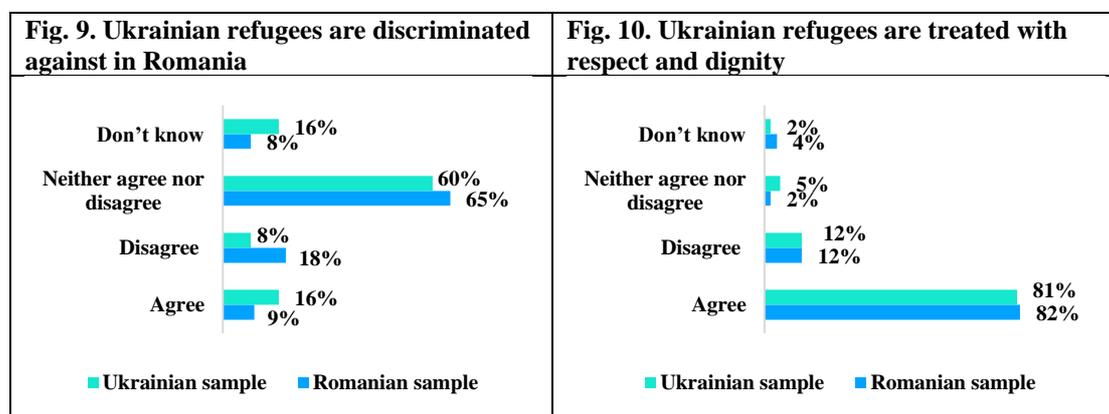
In the opinion of the participants to the focus groups, after one year of conflict, the refugee's situation, although definitely a humanitarian crisis, entered the chronic phase, characterized by routine and fatigue that led to a decrease of donations, overall mass media coverage and easily quantifiable in social media posts. We can also understand, from the focus group, that there are some relations that somehow became stable between Romanians and Ukrainians, like the ones between the owner and the renters or between the refugees and the people they contact for help (usually people working in public institutions that deal with humanitarian crisis).

RIES data (2023) show that the main feeling that 30% of Romanians feel most strongly about the armed conflict in Ukraine is "fear". The same answer appears in the RIES survey of August 2022, also 30% of the respondents mentioned it as an answer to the open question, so without having been suggested as an option. At a considerable distance are spontaneous answers such as "worried/uncertain/delusional" (13% in August 2022 and 14% in February 2023) and "compassionate/pitying" (11% and 12% respectively).

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that 25% of the Romanians participating in the ARPS for UNICEF survey stated that the mere presence of Ukrainian refugees on the territory of Romania gives them a feeling of personal insecurity in their daily life. In contrast, 93% of Ukrainian refugees stated that their presence in Romania gives them a feeling of security. It is also a way of validating their own decision to leave their country and family and to take refuge in Romania, or to leave for other countries.

The reluctance of the Romanians towards Ukrainian refugees is well surprised by the fact that 40% of the respondents of the Romanian sample consider that refugees should only be accommodated in refugee centers. Only 32% of Romanians, however, have the opposite opinion. As the RIES data and the data provided by the European Commission in the Standard Eurobarometer 98 - Winter 2022-2023 show, Romanians are quite afraid of their powerful neighbor, the Russian Federation. Romania's history is sprinkled with enough events, some quite recent and traumatic, that could explain this fear. Romanians are not so keen to help refugees compared to other nations perhaps, given the fears captured by RIES and Standard Eurobarometer data (see in the Context), for fear of upsetting the Russian Federation too much, of stirring up resentment and a desire for revenge on its part.

When it comes to discriminatory treatment, both Romanians and Ukrainians agree that refugees are not discriminated against. The same observation is true when it asked to appreciate if Ukrainian refugees are treated with respect and dignity. (*Fig. 9* and *Fig. 10*)



The above observations are supported by data from [FRA research](#) (2023: pg. 53). From this, it appears that 58% of Ukrainian refugees in Romania stated that they never felt unfairly treated in their host country. Romania leads in the hierarchy of countries considered in the survey (Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Italy, Slovakia, Poland, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Romania, Estonia) in terms of unfair treatment, with only 40% of respondents stating this. On average, 16% of respondents often or always felt treated unfairly. This proportion was higher in Italy (26%), Bulgaria (23%), and Czechia (23%).

Again, the data must be interpreted and understood in context: the Romanians cannot declare that they treat refugees badly (socially desirable), and the Ukrainian refugees show their polite side and appreciate any kind of effort positively considering their situation of dependence on someone's goodwill.

However, according to ARPS for UNICEF survey data 68% of Romanians believe that Ukrainian refugees should return to their country when the war ends; and 24% do not know. (*Table 1*)

<b>Table 1. The answers of Romanians regarding the Ukrainians - part 1</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
The presence of Ukrainian refugees on the territory of Romania gives me a feeling of personal insecurity in my daily life	25%	25%	48%	3%
Ukrainian refugees should only be accommodated in refugees centers	40%	23%	32%	5%
Ukrainian refugees are discriminated against in Romania	9%	18%	65%	8%
Ukrainian refugees are treated with respect and dignity by Romanians	82%	12%	2%	4%
When the conflict in Ukraine ends, Ukrainian refugees should return to Ukraine	68%	24%	3%	4%

Romania is a country where Ukrainian refugees feel safe (for 93% of respondents), do not feel discriminated against (only 16% say this), are treated with dignity and respect (81%), feel they could live in Romania as long as the conflict continues (82%). Half of the Ukrainians (52%) who responded to the survey said they believe it will not be too difficult for them to integrate into Romania. It should not be overlooked here that 12% (i.e. 1 in 10 respondents) do not know what to answer if they can integrate. (*Table 2*)

*Coming to Romania was not a rational decision. It was an opportunistic one and it relied on luck and fear, having to flee at a moment's notice*, the respondents of the focus group mention. The focus group participants' stories all have in common the sudden aspect of leaving – there was no time to properly plan, pack and arrange things at the destination. Some did not know where they went, as the city was under Russian occupation and they left through a humanitarian corridor on the front line. They were helped by guides or other civilians, but the fear is deeply rooted in their memories.

<b>Table 2. Ukrainians' responses to staying in Romania</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
My presence on the territory of Romania gives me a sense of personal security in everyday life	93%	4%	2%	1%
Ukrainian refugees are discriminated against in Romania	16%	8%	60%	16%
Ukrainian refugees are treated with respect and dignity by Romanians	81%	12%	5%	2%
I think I can easily integrate in Romania	52%	24%	12%	12%
I consider that I can live in Romania as long as the conflict continues in Ukraine	82%	7%	7%	5%

In terms of future plans, until the end of the conflict, 39% of refugees (almost two out of five) say they would settle in Romania for a longer period of time, but the majority 61% (i.e. three out of five) see Romania only as a temporary stopover on their way to another EU country. The data converge with the [FRA report data](#): in Romania, only 16% of refugees have applied for asylum status (compared to 61% in Germany, only in Poland the proportion is lower, at 12%); and in terms of longer-term plans, 18% of refugees in Romania said they would stay in Romania, 10% that they would stay and commute regularly to Ukraine, but the highest proportion, 49%, would plan to return to Ukraine.

## **SOCIAL INTEGRATION**

*In my experience, all the Ukrainian refugees I have met have in mind that they are going back, that the war will be over, and they have a hope in mind. I have not met anyone who came to say that they want to take their children to school in Romania, but they want to continue to do online school in Ukraine, not to fall back in school because they do not imagine that it will last very long. (focus group participant)*

As stated, the objective of this research is to better understand how Romanians perceive displaced persons from Ukraine one year after the beginning of the armed conflict and how displaced persons find their place in Romanian society and to better understand factors that could undermine or enhance cohesion between the two communities. We were interested to find out if and how the Romanians see the social integration of refugees, but at the same time we wanted to identify what the Ukrainians' perspective is.

Social integration is a multidimensional construct that can be defined as the extent to which individuals participate in a variety of social relationships, including engagement in social activities or relationships and a sense of communality and identification with one's social roles (Holt-Lunstad and Uchino 2015<sup>8</sup>). Social integration and social support are often used interchangeably but represent different conceptual approaches to understanding the influence of social relationships. For example, the classic paper by Cohen and Wills (1985) drew the distinction between structural and functional aspects of social support. Social integration is viewed as structural, because it represents the presence or absence of support, whereas perceived social support and received social support are viewed as functional aspects of relationships (e.g., Holt-Lunstad et al. 2017<sup>9</sup>).

One year after the war has started and one year dealing with a significant number of permanent (until now) or temporary refugees, the issue of integration became a priority and there are two aspects of this integration that we must analyze: first, if Romania has the specific characteristics needed for integration (solutions regarding programs, jobs, education, socialization, free time) and second, if the Ukrainians plan (and do something about) to integrate in the Romanian society.

As reflected in the data from international organizations, Romania was at the beginning of the armed conflict mainly a transit country for refugees. Many Ukrainians just came and stayed for a short period of time in Romania and then headed to other EU countries or even to other continents. Romania's socio-economic conditions were not attractive for refugees and the language barrier was another problem. However, the [FRA survey data](#) shows that Romania did not treat refugees badly: only 14% of refugees stated that they did not receive enough information about their rights and benefits in a language they could understand (only in Estonia the percentage was lower, 11%); 65% of refugees (the highest percentage) did not pay for accommodation (72% in private apartments or houses, with or without a host family, 9% in Apartment or house provided by the authorities, and 9% in Hotel/holiday apartment (e. g. Airbnb); 41% households faced hardships, compared with Spain (67%) and Italy (66%).

We asked Romanians, following their perception about how Romanians and Ukrainians treat each other, if they believe that Ukrainians are hardworking; if they can change Romanians for the better; and if they can be easily integrating in our society. Only 57% of respondents think that Ukrainians can be easily integrated into Romanian society, 52% do not think that Romanians have much to learn from Ukrainians, and about the same percentage (50%) do not think that Ukrainians would work harder and better than themselves. Only when it comes to the treatment of Romanians in Ukraine 7 out of 10 Romanians think that Ukrainians are better treated in Romania than Romanians in Ukraine. A follow-up could be useful, as there is a distinction between the Ukrainian refugees displaced because of the war and the 150 000 Romanians<sup>10</sup> living in Ukraine as part of an ethnic minority. (**Fig. 11**)

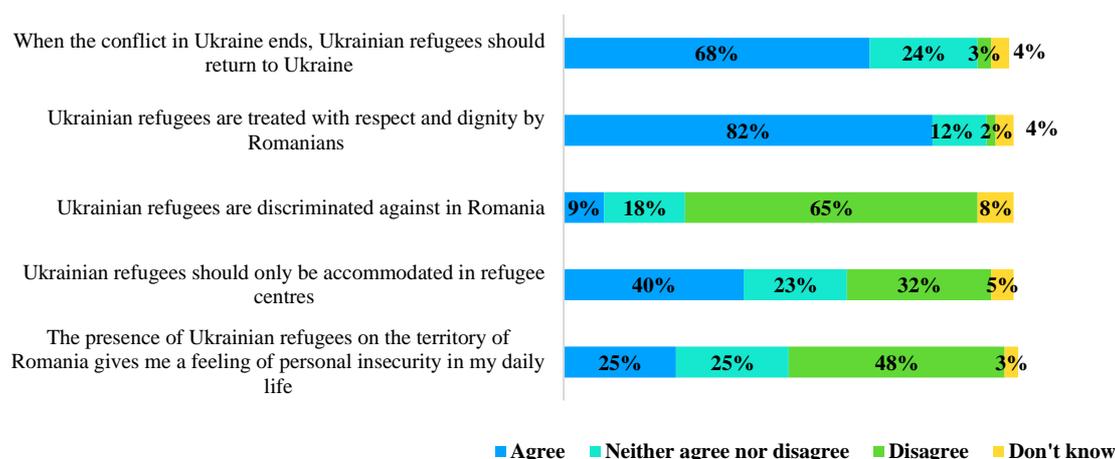
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<sup>8</sup> Holt-Lunstad J, Uchino BN (2015) Social support and health. In: Glanz K, Rimer BK, Viswanath KV (eds) Health behavior: theory, research, and practice. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, pp 183–204

<sup>9</sup> Holt-Lunstad J, Robles TF, Sbarra DA (2017) Advancing social connection as a public health priority in the United States. *Am Psychol* 72(6):517–530. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp000103>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ecmi.de/infocannel/detail/ecmi-minorities-blog-romanians-and-moldovans-in-ukraine-and-their-kin-states-engagement-before-and-after-the-war-towards-a-triadic-partnership-for-effective-minority-protection>

**Fig. 11. The answers of Romanians regarding the Ukrainians - part 2**



The next question directly addresses the issue of Ukrainian refugees in Romania. Respondents were asked directly if they agree with their presence in the country. The agreement came from 82% of Romanians (4 out of 5), but we cannot neglect the 18% who, despite their social desirability, declared that they do not agree with the presence of refugees in Romania. The main reasons given are economic instability (rising prices, increasing cost of living) chosen by 27 respondents; fear of increased crime and criminality in which refugees live, chosen by 19 respondents; the outbreak of violence or social tensions, chosen by 15 respondents; and last, chosen by only 10 respondents, the loss of jobs for Romanians. It can be seen that concerns about the costs of refugee integration are not to be ignored.

Another four out of five Romanians (83%) say that Ukrainian refugees can integrate in Romania. The recipe for integration is composed of: learning Romanian language (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%). (*Table 3*)

The focus group participants also say that in comparison to other refugees, the Ukrainian ones were treated differently, in a good sense, because of their number and because the media popularized it a lot. There were women with children, vulnerable population, and the sudden exodus generated unprecedented responses and needs. Even though the Romanians didn't have the best neighbor relations with them, the respondents consider that Romania have a lot in common culturally with Ukraine and this war can create opportunities to build good lasting relations.

The participants of the focus group also emphasize the importance of learning the Romanian language as a mean of finding a job, as there aren't many available jobs here for people who do not speak the language. Also, the participants know cases of refugees who try to work online for different companies in Ukraine and they make efforts to provide for themselves and their families. Many refugees are here with their children, so helping their children learn the language and integrate in a Romanian school are also priorities, as the Romanians consider.

<b>Table 3. Differences in social integration recipes</b>	<b>Ukrainians</b>	<b>Romanians</b>
To learn Romanian	90%	77%
To learn about Romanian culture and customs	87%	38%
To find a job	80%	59%
To enroll my children in Romanian schools	76%	38%
To get actively involved in my community	81%	49%
To make Romanian friends	80%	

When asked about these subjects, most Ukrainian respondents agreed that if they want to get integrated easily in Romania, they should learn Romanian language (90%), about Romanian culture (87%), to make Romanian friends, to be active in the community they belong, to find a job and to enroll their children in Romanian schools (80%). Again, the emphasis is on learning the language and finding a job. Their recipe for social integration is a bit modified: language, culture, job, community. It can be seen that Romanians consider that Ukrainians could easily integrate by virtue of cultural similarity, of neighborliness, however, Ukrainians feel the need for cultural guidance. (*Table 3*)

During the focus group the participants gave some examples of cultural differences, stereotypes and things they did not understand at first: for example, the fact that in Romania we do not burn candles inside the church, but in a special place outside, which they had trouble finding or that they did not understand why, in public transportation, people make the sign of the cross – they later figured out this happened when they passed by a church.

In terms of learning Romanian language, the respondents related that there are not enough Romanian classes for the Ukrainian refugees and that only ones that arrived at the beginning of the war are privileged because they found a place to study Romanian. For the ones that came later there are no more available spots and they are on a long waiting list. The ones that do study Romanian complain that it is a very difficult language, and they will need a lot more time to properly learn it, time in which they are not suitable for a job here. Most of them are also studying English, as a backup plan to find an online job.

Accessing jobs and health care services, living in the same communities and going to the same schools as Romanians are very important steps for integration. The participants to the focus group differentiate between the involvement of the individuals, highly praised, and the lateness of the state response. The private initiatives and the NGOs are also positively described. There are examples of old people that came with donations from the little that they had, people using their own cars to transport the refugees and the entrepreneurs who offered free housing in the hotels in the beginning.

Until now, 48% of them have been looking for a job and about 26% of them are in the present employed (*Fig. 12*). According to the weekly statements to *Agerpres* by the Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity, the number of Ukrainian citizens who are employed in Romania after the outbreak of war continues to increase day by day. By 18 April 2023, 6.651 employment contracts for Ukrainian refugees have been registered. Most of them, 1.730, work in manufacturing and 1.001 in construction. In terms of the counties in which they work, most of them, 2.713, opted for Bucharest. However, the number of registered contracts does not accurately reflect the higher number of people working in Romania.

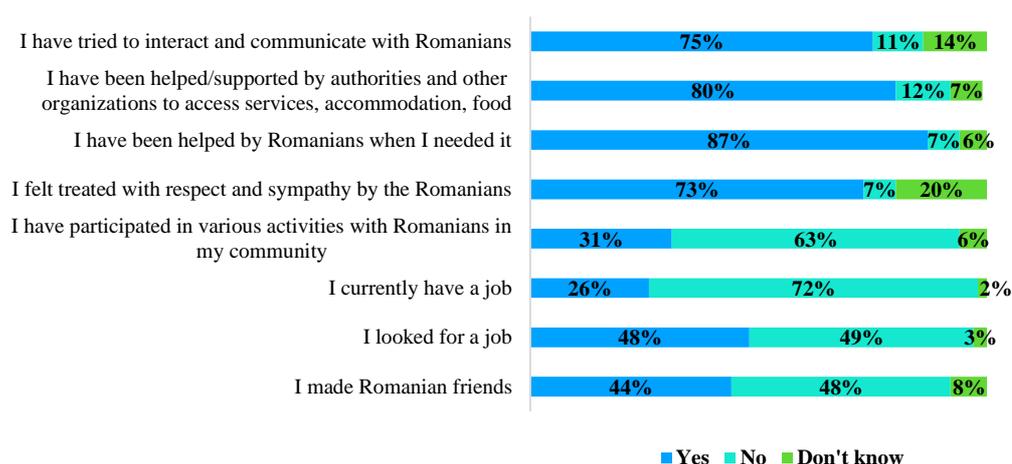
The positive interactions with Romanians came across in different instances during the focus group. For example, one participant said that she: *rented an apartment on Airbnb and when they found out that I have an Ukrainian passport, they gave me another week for free and brought two bags of food. (focus group participant)*. This is not an exception, at least during the first months these types of encounters were described often and were visible on social media.

Communication is the key of every functional relation and this is true for the refugee and the host country also. As some Romanians could listen to more positive stories about Ukrainians in Romania, it would also be useful if they would learn more about what being a refugee means: *I showed the owners of the apartment a photo of me and the kids staying in the basement during the first two weeks of the war and they were very surprised. They asked if it was us. Is this your children? And instantly they realized that it really was a war. And then I told how I left. Maybe it's important to let them know why we came. (focus group participant)*

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.

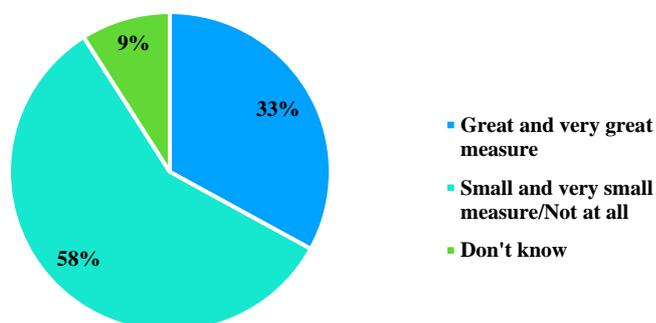
According to the refugees' statements, they were helped by Romanians when they needed it, they received support from the authorities or other organizations in accessing services, accommodation, and meals, they were treated with respect and sympathy by Romanians. This is the support part, the passive part of the integration efforts. Refugees in turn made efforts to interact and communicate with Romanians (specially to make their needs understood). Half of the refugees looked for a job (48%), 44% said they made Romanian friends, 31% participated in different activities with Romanians in my community and 26% already have a job.

**Fig. 12. What Ukrainians have done since they came to Romania until now**



Not surprisingly, more than half of the respondents (58%) said that they felt that they had become part of the community in which they live in Romania. (*Fig. 13*)

**Fig 13. Ukrainians: To what extent do you feel that you have started to be part of the community in which you currently live in Romania?**



*If a person has arrived and knows neither English nor Romanian, where can he work? Romanian is not an easy language. (focus group participant)*

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.

Three out of five Romanians do not reject Ukrainian refugees when it comes to the social integration process (living in the same communities, having access to the same jobs and children studying in the same classes). The only aspect, in this case service, that the Romanians are more attentive to and would not want to share the benefits is the compensated medical services. This attitude is understandable given the competition for the limited resources of the health system. (*Table 4*)

Table 4. Social integration for Romanians and Ukrainians	Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Don't know	
	Ro	Uk	Ro	Uk	Ro	Uk	Ro	Uk
Ukrainian refugees should live in the same communities as Romanians	63%	81%	24%	10%	10%	4%	3%	6%
Ukrainian refugees should have access to the same jobs as Romanians	64%	89%	21%	6%	13%	3%	3%	3%
Ukrainian students should study in the same classes as Romanian students	65%	65%	17%	12%	15%	18%	3%	5%
Ukrainian refugees should have access to the same compensated medical services as Romanian citizens	54%	96%	20%	2%	21%	1%	5%	2%

Four out of five Ukrainian refugees would like to access the same jobs as Romanians but, as they mentioned during the focus group, the language is the biggest difficulty in accessing a job. Learning Romanian is a priority for them, but it is not an easy language and some complained that there are not enough available Romanian classes for adult refugees. Also, they agreed that should live in the same communities as Romanians taking in consideration that the Ukrainian community in Romania had to be strong and united because of the war and one step in their integration in the Romanian society can be done by being a part of the community. (*Table 4*)

Three out of five Ukrainians (65%) believe that Ukrainian students should study in the same classes as Romanians students while 18% believe they should have special classes for their children or special educational programs (a story from the focus group is coming along with this information). Children find it easier to integrate and to make Romanian friends, according to the parents who attended the focus group. They also praised the Romanian schools and kindergartens for doing a great job in making children feel safe. (*Table 4*)

## SOCIAL DISTANCE

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been talked about the social distance that must be respected in order to get sick, aka, to limit the transmission of the virus. To get a picture of people's willingness to participate in social contacts of varying degrees of closeness with members of diverse social groups we were inspired by the scale created by Emory S. Bogardus.

We calculated the cumulative sum of five of the scale steps (partner, counted as one; close relative, counted as two; close friend, counted as three; neighbor counted as four; co-worker, counted as five) for both samples and the results shows that: for the Romanian sample the sum is 4.422, and in the Ukrainian refugee sample is 5.008. Since we are talking about the assessment of the social distance made by Romanians towards Ukrainian refugees, but also that made by Ukrainian refugees towards Romanians, we can affirm that Ukrainian refugees would like to be closer to Romanians than Romanians would like to be towards refugees. If the reluctance to marry a Romanian (somehow motivated by the status of the majority of adult Ukrainian refugees in Romania, i.e. women with children, most of them married or in a relationship) is somewhat understandable, further Ukrainian refugees are more open than Romanians especially when it comes to having relatives (76%), good Romanian friends (92%) and work colleagues (97%). However, when it comes to very close relationships, such as

marriage (26 respectively 33%), kinship (26 respectively 19%), living together (26 respectively 27%) both Romanian and Ukrainian respondents do not know what to answer. (*Table 5*)

<b>Table 5. Social distance for Romanians and Ukrainians</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>		<b>Don't know</b>	
	<b>Ro</b>	<b>Uk</b>	<b>Ro</b>	<b>Uk</b>	<b>Ro</b>	<b>Uk</b>
<b>Would you personally accept a ...</b>						
As a partner (husband/wife)	39%	42%	35%	25%	26%	33%
As a close relative (son-in-law, daughter-in-law)	53%	76%	21%	5%	26%	19%
As a close friend	73%	92%	14%	1%	14%	7%
As a neighbor down the stairs/street	82%	96%	10%	1%	8%	3%
As a co-worker	80%	97%	11%	0%	9%	3%
As a classmate of your child	80%	92%	11%	1%	9%	7%
Living together in the same house/apartment	33%	55%	40%	19%	26%	27%

But, as we pointed out at the beginning of the data presentation, the fact that the majority of respondents in both the Romanian and the Ukrainian refugees samples have a high level of education can positively influence the level of tolerance and social distance towards otherness. The clarification comes in the context that social distance data collected<sup>11</sup> in 2020 on a representative sample of Romanians shows that Romanians, in 2020, declared themselves much more distant towards immigrants (see *Table 6*). So, the social distance data collected by this survey should be considered with care.

<b>Table 6. Social distance between Romanians, Roma, and Immigrants</b>	<b>Roma</b>	<b>Immigrant</b>
<b>Would you personally accept a ...</b>		
<i>(Data from 2020)</i>		
As a close relative (son-in-law, daughter-in-law)	11%	7%
As a close friend	19%	14%
As a neighbor down the stairs/street	16%	10%

However, given the special situation, they are in, given the proximity of the war and the daily news provided by the media about what is happening in Ukraine, Romanians (39%, i.e. two out of five Romanians) agree that Ukrainian refugees should benefit from complex services offered by the Romanian state (social protection, education, health, employment), a higher proportion of respondents than in the sample of Ukrainians. It goes without saying that refugees want to benefit from as many services from the Romanian state as possible, including having the same rights as Romanians. However, as FRA 2023 data shows, only 16% of refugees have applied for asylum status (compared to 61% in Germany), the vast majority opting only for temporary protection status, which does not offer the same benefits. But it should not be overlooked that, despite the fact that the majority of respondents in the refugee sample are highly educated, 23% of respondents do not know their rights. (*Table 7*)

<b>Table 7. What rights should Ukrainians have in Romania</b>	<b>Ro</b>	<b>Uk</b>
<b>Do you think Ukrainian refugees should:</b>		
Benefit from a simple protection of the Romanian state	36%	14%
Benefit from complex services offered by the Romanian state (social protection, education, health, employment)	39%	33%
Have the same rights as the Romanians	15%	30%
Don't know	10%	23%

<sup>11</sup> Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (2020). Perceptia asupra romilor in timpul pandemiei de Covid-19. <https://ires.ro/articol/403/percep-ia-asupra-romilor-in-timpul--pandemiei-de-covid-19>

The Romanians were asked what, in their opinion, services the Romanian state or other organizations should offer to refugees. At the top were support for learning the Romanian language and children's access to education, closely followed by support in finding a job. Also, near the top of the list was support for learning about Romanian culture and customs, and, surprisingly (because it's about cost), medical and social assistance. However, only two out of five Romanians agree that refugees should receive material support and money, three out of five Romanians think that refugees should be supported with accommodation and meals only for a limited period of time. Romanians think of support in terms of social integration but that would require an effort on the part of the refugee: help to learn the language (which is very different), children to be in school, to find a job, medical and social assistance and support to learn about Romanian customs and culture to integrate more easily.

Ukrainian refugees gave answers about the services they benefited from in Romania, provided by the Romanian state or other organizations. In the first place, with a significant difference of percentage points, are the accommodation and meal services offered for a limited period of time; then material support, money, and access to education for children. Also, in the middle of the hierarchy are medical and social services and language learning. Support for learning about Romanian culture and customs, and for finding a job is at the bottom. Ukrainian refugees report that they have been supported to survive in Romania for a period by being offered basic services, including some medical assistance. However, as the data shows, they were not supported in their efforts to integrate socially: language, culture, and customs courses, but especially support to find a job. (*Table 8*)

FRA 2023 data confirm the current results: in Romania, 72% of refugees answered that they live in a private apartment or house, with or without a host family, 9% in an apartment or house provided by the authorities, 9% Hotel/holiday apartment (e.g. Airbnb). The situation looks good compared to the European average, with Romania leading the list of countries where refugees are accommodated in private apartments or houses. Romania is also the country with the highest number of respondents who say they do not pay for accommodation: 65%, followed by Italy (58%) and Slovakia (53%).

<b>Table 8. What Ukrainian refugees should get and what they get</b>		
	<b>Romanians' opinions</b> <i>What Ukrainian refugees should receive from the Romanian state and other organizations</i>	<b>Ukrainians' responses</b> <i>What Ukrainian refugees received from the Romanian state and other organizations</i>
Support to learn Romanian language	82%	63%
Access to education for children	80%	75%
Support in finding a job	76%	33%
Support to learn Romanian culture and customs	72%	37%
Medical and social assistance	70%	67%
Housing and food for a limited period of time	64%	89%
Support to bring your family to Romania	60%	49%
Material support, money	41%	76%

The distribution of responses shows that the support received by refugees from the state and civil society is different from what Romanians consider necessary.

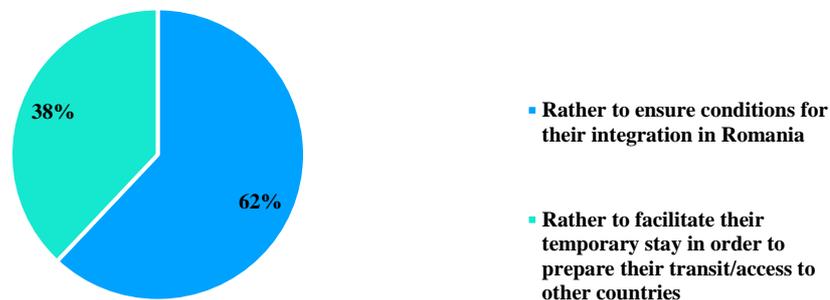
The participants in the focus group believe that there are many public and private initiatives with the purpose of integrating the refugees in the Romanian society. Although the state is considered to be overwhelmed, its efforts are appreciated – the state tries to help them, to integrate them (to enroll children in school, for example).

In the opinion of the participants to the focus group, from the point of view of the Ukrainian's willingness to integrate, the refugees fall under three very different categories:

1. The refugees that make great effort to learn the language, who enrolled the children in Romanian schools, who are active within both communities, Romanian and Ukrainian. They are also the ones who are starting to plan a future in Romania.
2. The refugees that are waiting to be unconditionally helped. They make no effort to integrate in the Romanian community, but demand assistance with everyday supplies, like food and clothes. They feel that is their right, as war refugees, to receive help. They are assertive and claimant.
3. The refugees that are most resistant to change. They have no desire to integrate, they only socialize amongst themselves and will leave at the first opportunity.

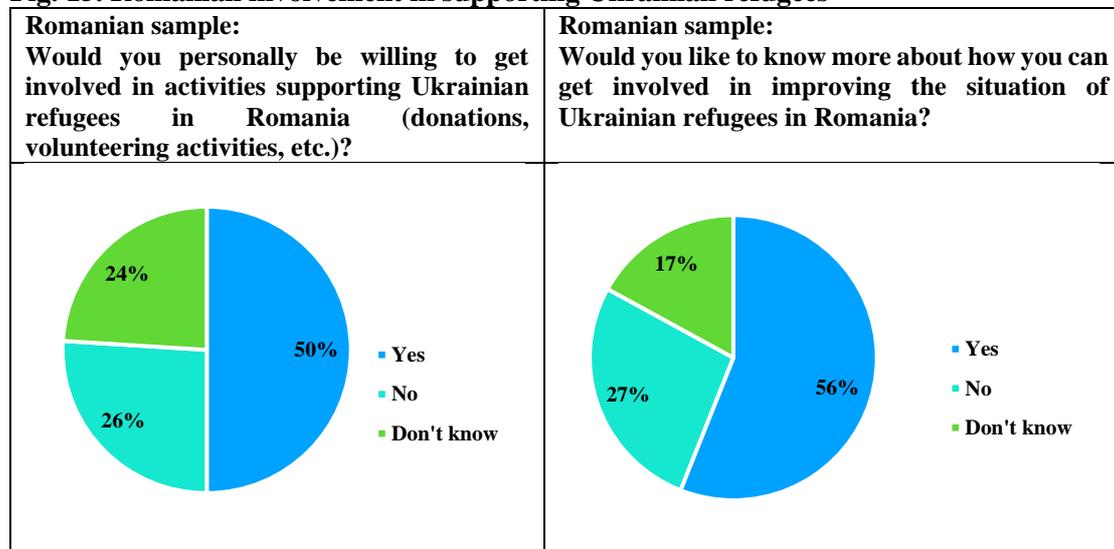
The answers of the Romanians to the question "What Romanian authorities should do about Ukrainian refugees" clearly demonstrate that for the Romanians the social integration of the Other implies first of all an effort made especially by the Other, without much support and services. Romanians would like Ukrainian refugees to be integrated (62%), but, as shown above, not with much effort from the state and organizations. (*Fig. 14*)

**Fig. 14. What Romanian authorities should do about Ukrainian refugees?**



Only half of the Romanian respondents say they would get involved in activities to support Ukrainian refugees and about half are interested in learning more about the possibility of helping. Again, it should be noted that Romanian respondents have a higher level of education than the national average, which could influence their statements and behavior. (*Fig. 15*)

**Fig. 15. Romanian involvement in supporting Ukrainian refugees**



## INFORMATION

*We have a group in the sector and we are trying to answer if there are any newcomers: where to go with a child? What schools do you find? Where can you find a plumber? Where to get a haircut? Anything. There wasn't a question left unanswered. Someone will surely answer.*

The hierarchy of the main sources of information used by Ukrainian refugees to inform themselves about issues related to their stay in Romania shows the following: in the first place (19%) are the discussion groups on Whatsapp, Telegram, Viber channels, and other Ukrainian refugees, family; then follows the internet in general (16%); on the third place (14%) are social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Reddit, TikTok) followed by websites of international organizations (UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO, etc.). Unfortunately, the official websites of Romanian authorities rank last (3%) in the responses of Ukrainian refugees. (**Table 9**)

<b>Table 9. Sources of information used by Ukrainians</b>			
<b>Ukrainian sample: What are your main sources of information on issues related to your residence in Romania? Multiple responses</b>	<b>No. of responses</b>	<b>Percent from the total number of responses</b>	<b>Percent of Cases</b>
Other Ukrainian refugees, family	416	19%	80%
Romanian citizens, Romanian friends	106	5%	20%
Media (written press, television, radio)	72	3%	14%
Internet in general	356	16%	69%
Discussion groups on Whatsapp, Telegram, Viber channels	404	19%	78%
Facebook or other social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter, Reddit, TikTok)	314	14%	60%
Online groups and platforms in Romania that are made especially for refugees from Ukraine	209	10%	40%
Official websites of Romanian authorities	61	3%	12%
Websites of international organizations (UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO etc)	241	11%	46%
	2179	100%	419%

The participants said, during the focus group, that mass media is not as focused on the war and the refugees anymore, which makes the problem seem not so big right now, as it has somewhat dimmed. However, in the beginning of the war, the media exposure (public) was very high and this, the participants believe, correlated directly with the greater involvement of Romanians. Also, the geographical proximity of the conflict, similarities between Romanians and refugees from Ukraine (especially religious similarities), the socio-demographic structure of Ukrainian refugees (women, children and elderly – which generated empathy more easily compared to refugees from countries like Syria who are perceived as Muslim men) made Romanians pay attention to the conflict and the displacement of the refugees. Help was and is given out of empathy, they consider, because Romanians thought they could be in their place.

Refugees are mainly looking for information about access to health and social services (84%) and access to support measures provided to Ukrainian refugees by authorities/non-governmental or international organizations (83%); followed by information about Romania in general, Romanian culture, Romanian customs, etc. (75%) and accommodation possibilities (74%); followed by access to education, schooling (71%) and Romanian language lessons (70%). Only half of the Ukrainian refugees are interested in looking for a job in Romania and the last place is taken by information about how they could transit to other countries in Europe (23%). (**Table 10**)

<b>Table 10. Main information sought by Ukrainian refugees</b>	<b>Great and very great measure</b>	<b>Small and very small measure/Not at all</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>Ukrainian sample: To what extent are you interested in finding information about</b>			
Jobs in Romania	54%	36%	10%
Access to health and social services	84%	14%	2%
Access to education, schooling	71%	24%	5%
Accommodation possibilities	74%	20%	6%
Romanian language lessons	70%	24%	7%
Access to support measures provided to Ukrainian refugees by authorities/non-governmental or international organizations	83%	11%	7%
Romania in general, Romanian culture, Romanian customs, etc.	75%	20%	6%
Transit to other countries in Europe	23%	58%	20%

The hierarchy of the main sources of information used by Romanians to find out information about the refugee situation in Romania shows the following: the first place is occupied by the mass media (29%); followed by the internet (24%); in third place (15%) are social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Reddit, TikTok); the fourth place is shared, approximately equally, by information provided by friends, family, work colleagues and Official websites of Romanian authorities in the field.

<b>Table 11. Sources of information used by Romanians to find out about Ukrainian refugees.</b>	<b>No. of responses</b>	<b>Percent from the total number of responses</b>	<b>Percent of Cases</b>
<b>Romanian sample: Where do you get your information about the refugee situation in Romania?</b>			
Friends, family, work colleagues	124	13%	31%
Media (print media, television, radio)	271	29%	67%
Internet	223	24%	55%
Facebook or other social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter, Reddit, TikTok)	136	15%	34%
Official websites of Romanian authorities in the field	115	12%	28%
I do not inform myself on this subject	60	6%	15%
Others	1	0%	0%
Don't know	9	1%	2%

When it comes to the trust given to information sources, Romanian respondents' answers contradict the hierarchy presented above, when they were asked about the information sources they access. Thus, the Official websites of Romanian authorities in the field are the first place in trust (65%), even though they are the most rarely accessed, then Friends, family, and work colleagues (60%); the third place is the mass media (54% of respondents trust it), the internet on the fourth place (50%) and on the last place is social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Reddit, TikTok). (*Table 12*)

<b>Table 12. Romanians' trust in information sources about Ukrainian refugees</b>	<b>Very much/Much</b>	<b>Little, very little/Not at all</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>Romanian sample: How reliable are the following sources of information regarding the situation of Ukrainian refugees in Romania?</b>			
Friends, family, work colleagues	60%	30%	10%
Media (print media, television, radio)	54%	39%	6%
Internet	50%	41%	10%
Facebook or other social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter, Reddit, TikTok)	39%	48%	13%
Official websites of Romanian authorities in the field	65%	28%	7%

## POTENTIAL TENSION LINES

Following the analysis of the discussions in the two focus groups organized to validate the questionnaires, and the desk research, several lines of tension between Romanians and Ukrainian refugees emerged. Although, a considerable part of Romanians has a positive about the refugees and although they consider that the refugees could integrate and be part of the Romanian society, there are still some potential tension lines. The first three potential tension lines come from the focus-groups organized with Romanians, the fourth from the focus-group with Ukrainian refugees, and the last two from the desk research.

First potential tension line is related to the financial support, a topic not properly explained by the authorities: *where do this money come from? (focus group participant)*. During the focus group it was discussed about „*who helps the poor Romanians?*”.

The second potential tension line came up when the participants said that the Ukrainians do not seem grateful enough for the help they received. *An enormous amount of work has been done for them and they do not seem to appreciate what they have and what they have received (focus group respondent)*. An explanation for this is that mass media does not show documentaries or at least short stories about Ukrainians that are thankful and that also managed to find jobs, make friends and try to make a better life for them here, even if it is a temporary one.

The third tension line is the perception that some Ukrainians are not willing to integrate (learn the language and find work) because they want to return home. Overall, Ukrainians are perceived to be less likely to integrate than Romanians who emigrated to other countries are. Although the discussion during the focus group did not differentiate between a refugee and a migrant, we have to take into consideration the differences between these two categories<sup>12</sup>.

The fourth tension line was expressed during the focus group with Ukrainians. It refers to the fact that Ukrainians consider that Romanians seem to have gotten tired of them, they feel a generalized fatigue towards them and, more often cases of bullying are seen. Throughout the focus group discussions, the need for communication campaigns became apparent: campaigns targeting Romanians to inform them more about the refugees, about their struggles and campaigns targeting Ukrainians, who feel safe in Romania and would like to continue to feel safe, despite the previous examples. Romanians should learn more about the refugees, about their struggles but also about finding hope in Romania. Ukrainians should learn about others feeling safe in Romania and starting to build a new life here.

The fifth tension line concerns the 50/20 Program<sup>13</sup> (expenses for accommodation and food from the state budget for Ukrainian refugees<sup>14</sup>), initiated by the Romanian government in March 2022. Tensions has started to occur between Romanians and Ukrainians and even between Ukrainians due to this program. On the one hand, the Romanians are accused of benefiting from a lot of money thanks to the program, money for refugees that is paid to Romania by the European Union. On the other hand, Ukrainians are accused of not appreciating the support they receive, and some earn money by renting their homes in Ukraine and living here for free.

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<sup>12</sup>OHCHR states that “migrant” is a neutral term used to describe a group of people who have in common a lack of citizenship attachment to their host country. Usually, a migrant chose to leave the home country for financial reasons. A refugee is strictly defined in international law as a person who is fleeing persecution or conflict in her or his country of origin. It is important to underline that refugees are entitled to the full protection of refugee law, including protection from expulsion or return to situations of persecution where their life and freedom are at risk. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Migration/GlobalCompactMigration/MigrantsAndRefugees.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> Few information about the program are available here: <https://dopomoha.ro/ro/programul-5020>

Ukrainians are presented as not being entitled to receive EU funds because they are not EU citizens, that they have a preferential status, benefiting from much more support than any refugee arriving in Romania.

The sixth tension line was discovered in the comments made to an article with the Ministry of Labor, mentioning how many Ukrainians got a job in Romania. Ukrainians were accused of receiving higher salaries, that Romanians work hard abroad because they have no jobs in Romania.

## CONCLUSIONS

The media played a very important part in making the war and the refugees humanitarian crisis visible. Unlike other refugees' crisis (Syria, for example), the Romanians say that this "hit closer to home", as we empathized with the refugees thinking this could happen to us. Similarities were also mentioned from a cultural (and religious) point of view.

However, there is a difference in Romanians' behavior at the beginning of the war when many people got involved and donations were flowing (the acute phase) and now, when people got tired of bored with the refugees' crisis and the number of people helping dropped (the chronic phase).

Leaving Ukraine was not a planned action. For all Ukrainian respondents it happened suddenly, it was based on luck and opportunity. However, even if Romania was not the first choice (or a choice at all), no one regrets arriving here. The respondents seemed grateful for the help they received and were very conscious about their limitations (language being the most important barrier in their integration).

Ukrainians' day to day life is a marathon between the Romanian school, the Ukrainian online school (as some of the children attend both) and learning Romanian and English. From the focus groups respondents two were employed, the rest were enrolled in some type of education and took care of their children.

Romania is a desirable state because it is permissive as inclusive, more so than any other state – this is the Romanians' perception about why Ukrainian refugees decide (or choose) to remain here, at least temporarily. They do not have similar benefits in other countries and, as refugees talk amongst themselves, they know Romania is the best state to be in.

The perception about the others' opinions is positive, with both Romanians and Ukrainians thinking that the others have a good opinion about them. They also say that they have a good opinion about the others.

The negative stories are anecdotal and do not have power of generalization. However secluded, the bullying cases cannot be totally dismissed and perhaps they could be addressed through comprehensive communication campaigns. These campaigns could also focus on telling stories about the refugees, their lives, how they decided to come here and how they integrated in Romania. For the Ukrainian refugee, stories of safety could be helpful, of how to make a new life in a new country and hearing positive outcomes from other refugees.

Medical services, food and housing are the basic needs that must be satisfied and this can make a person feel safe. Navigating the medical system is not always intuitive, so issues like when to call the emergency services and when to go to the emergency room could be clarified through a communication campaign. Another complicated area for Ukrainian refugees is related to the specialized medical services and some clarification on how to find specialists or how to get a referral from a family doctor could be very useful.

The Romanian respondents consider that the state should make more efforts towards integrating the Ukrainians, like support them to learn the Romanian language and to find a job and to provide access to education for their children. This is also stated in the survey, as the Romanian respondents believe that the Romanian state should support Ukrainian refugees to learn Romanian language.

There are not enough Romanian classes for the Ukrainian refugees and this translates further in not being able to find a job. Learning the language is the key for integration, for finding a job,

for being part of the community. If these two issues could be addressed, it would facilitate integration in the Romanian society.

Romanians divide the Ukrainian refugees in three categories:

1. The refugees that make great effort to learn the language, who enrolled the children in Romanian schools, who are active within both communities, Romanian and Ukrainian. They are also the ones who are starting to plan a future in Romania.
2. The refugees that are waiting to be unconditionally helped. They make no effort to integrate in the Romanian community, but demand assistance with everyday supplies, like food and clothes. They feel that is their right, as a war refugee, to receive help. They are assertive and claimant.
3. The refugees that are most resistant to change. They have no desire to integrate, they only socialize amongst themselves and will leave at the first opportunity.

Most Ukrainian refugees agreed that if they want to get integrated easily in Romania they should learn about Romanian culture, learn Romanian language, have Romanians friends, be active in the community they belong, find a job and to enroll their children in Romanian schools.

While the Ukrainian community seems very strong, they have common activities and keep in touch regarding all aspect of everyday life, openness to making new friends, to finding a way to integrate exists. However, lasting relations between Romanians and Ukrainians were not mentioned by either side, and this lack of socialization is a strong indicative of poor integration.

The main sources of information mentioned, for Ukrainians, are Telegram channels (all), Facebook, Viber and WhatsApp. Official mass-media was not mentioned. The respondents mention that they find on social media (Telegram and Facebook) all the information they need about medical services, education, what to do in their free time, how to spend free time with children, help for Ukrainians in Romania.

The main sources of information for the Romanian respondents are TV, Internet and social media. Most reliable sources, however, are official websites and family, friends and work colleagues.

As both Romanians and Ukrainians mention informal sources of information, it could be a solution to use Facebook, Telegram, WhatsApp and Viber for official information also. As all official institutions have pages on social media, those could be more accessible for the respondents than their web sites.

In conclusion, after one year, the humanitarian crisis became a chronic situation. The state and the people involved must find a way to deal with the things that can be controlled: proper information and communication, access to basic services (housing, food, health services) and finding a way to help Ukrainians access Romanian classes and finding a job. These two issues are extremely important not only for the refugees who must find means to survive, but also for the reluctant Romanians who feel that help should be conditioned somehow. Immediate help should be given for those that are just now arriving in Romania. For the rest of them, who have been here for months, the efforts should focus on integrating them in the Romanian society.

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