



THE CROSS-BORDER EFFECTS OF THE UKRAINIAN REFUGEES' CRISIS. EVIDENCE FROM THE ROMANIAN SIDE

Nicoleta Damian¹ , Bianca Mitrică² , Radu Săgeată² , Irena Roznoviețchi² 

¹ Institute of Geography, Romanian Academy, Environmental Geography and GIS Department
12 Dimitrie Racoviță Str., Sector 2, RO-023993 Bucharest: Romania
nicoleta_damian2002@yahoo.com

² Institute of Geography, Romanian Academy, Human Geography and Regional Development Department
12 Dimitrie Racoviță Str., Sector 2, RO-023993 Bucharest: Romania
biancadumitrescu78@yahoo.com • rsageata@gmail.com • mocanitai@yahoo.com

Abstract. The issue of refugees pertains to the permanent elements of historical reflection on the mass movement of people or the phenomenon of migration. The military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine not only ignited a hot spot on the conflict map of Europe, but also triggered a cascade of events difficult to anticipate. A direct result of the conflict has been the mass exodus of Ukrainians and a promise of temporary protection by the European Union to those fleeing the conflict. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), on August 17, 2023, over 4.2 million Ukrainians crossed into Romania at the crossing points between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. The Ukrainian crisis offers the opportunity to take a closer look at the governments themselves. The Ukrainian citizens who remained in Romania received help both from the Romanian Government, and from the civil society (i.e., various NGOs, civilians, volunteers); from the first days of the invasion of Ukraine, Romanian society reacted swiftly. The study aims to emphasize the great importance of raising awareness and building solidarity and support in the receiving country in order to counterbalance, alleviate and eliminate the effects of the Ukrainian refugees' crisis with respect to three main aspects: (1) the reloaded *in situ* effects, that is, the leading role of existing Romanian and, respectively, Ukrainian ethnic communities on both sides of the border in the prompt organization of humanitarian support for Ukrainian refugees; (2) the repetitive effects on the dynamics, such as the refugee flows and their territorial and time dynamic; (3) the long-term effects, i.e., the need to integrate the refugees in different fields of daily life.

Keywords: measures and actions, policies, Romania, types of cross-border effects, Ukrainian refugees.

Introduction

The military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, not only ignited a hot spot on the conflict map of Europe, but also triggered a cascade of events difficult to anticipate. Predictions vary between territorial gains for Russia (a permanent Russian military presence in Donbas, Lugansk and the Kherson region and the creation of separatist 'republics' in these areas that would later join the Russian Federation) on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the dismantling of the Russian Federation as a result of a prolonged socio-economic crisis. This may very well be the consequence of the massive costs of military operations in Ukraine and of international sanctions, which would accentuate the centrifugal tendencies given the reduced military presence

(most of the troops being engaged on the Ukrainian front) and the low morale of the troops, which would encourage riots. Both scenarios generate regional and international insecurity.

The information in the media is filled with reports of disasters that result in people being forced to flee. The past provides different examples of huge involuntary population movements in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, the Horn of Africa, or the Great Lakes Region. The dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1990 reminds us that Europe is not exempt from refugee crises (Gatrell, 2013), a situation confirmed by the unprovoked Russian military aggression against Ukraine.

Contemporary Ukrainian migration has been a subject of study for several scholars. Ukraine has been facing economic and social issues since the collapse of the Soviet Union, sparking massive emigration waves towards Western Europe and, especially, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, and Hungary due to their proximity, as well as ethnic and historical ties with Ukraine (Benč, 2016; Eröss et al., 2016; Fedyuk & Kindler, 2016; Jaroszewicz, 2018; Koroutchev, 2023a).

The escalation of the international armed conflict in Ukraine immediately resulted in a major humanitarian crisis (Benton & Selee, 2022) and large-scale migratory flows within Ukraine and towards Europe (Buchcik et al., 2023; Koroutchev, 2023a). People have been forced to flee their homes seeking safety, protection, and assistance. A direct result of the conflict has been the mass exodus of Ukrainians from their country and a promise of temporary protection by the European Union (EU) to those Ukrainians fleeing the conflict (Lloyd & Sirkeci, 2022). Millions of refugees from Ukraine have crossed borders into neighbouring countries, and many more have been forced to relocate within their homeland. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to the world's largest refugee crisis of the 21st century (Konstantinov et al., 2023a), a growing instability on multiple fronts, where cross-border and international implications prevail (Konstantinov et al., 2023b). Starting February 24, 2022, when Russia launched an unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine, millions of people have fled the war, taking refuge mainly in EU countries and in the Republic of Moldova. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), on August 3, 2022, 23.0 million persons crossed the border from Ukraine, 2.84 million of which registered for temporary protection or other similar national protection plans in Europe (UNHCR, 2023a).

The European reaction was sudden, both at a national and civil level (Åslund, 2022). European countries have made it clear that they stand with Ukraine in the conflict with Russia through swift action, sanctions and relaxation of immigration rules. Moreover, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly vote highlighted that this support extends beyond Europe: 141 of the Assembly's 193 members supported the UN resolution demanding that Russia end its military operations in Ukraine, with just five countries voting against it (Aitken & Ersoy, 2022).

In order to counteract the negative impact on the Ukrainian refugees, a temporary protection mechanism has been launched with the participation of 12 partners, covering the period March through August 2022. This emergency assistance from home affairs funds will support Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Czechia. The EU has taken concrete steps to help the refugees, including a temporary protection mechanism for people fleeing the war, funds in the form of humanitarian aid, financial and technical support for member states hosting refugees, and support for border management for EU countries and the Republic of Moldova (EC, 2022). The sudden and massive flow of Ukrainians to Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and the Republic of Moldova pushed UNHCR and humanitarian organisations to the limits of their capacities (Jurić, 2022a).

The enlargement of NATO in 2004 and of the European Union in 2007 by including Romania results in it having a geopolitical position at the EU's Eastern frontier, which translates into it securing the Eastern border and controlling the migration flows (Săgeată, 2011; Mitrică et al., 2021a). Moreover, the role of Romania as a relatively new member state of the EU and its location at the East-

ern periphery of the EU, subject it to a series of economic, social and territorial gaps at the macro-territorial level that must be taken into account in the EU policy (Mitrică et al., 2021a). Romania's borders with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova become of strategic importance, a fact emphasized by the Eastern Partnership (EaP), a joint initiative involving the EU and Eastern-European partners, such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (EEAS, 2016; Mitrică et al., 2021b).

European countries are divided, in terms of their economic attractiveness, into host countries or countries of transit. While other countries, such as Poland, are recognized as both host and transit countries, current refugees' issues have shown that Romania is seen as an escape route to Western Europe. According to the data provided by the UNHCR and the Romanian border police, since the invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops (February 24, 2022) and until August, 2023, 3,069,198 persons crossed the border from Ukraine into Romania, and 1,212,028 from the Republic of Moldova (UNHCR, 2023b). The difference between the number of Ukrainian citizens entering the country daily and the number of those leaving the country is not that great, most spending a few days in Romania until they arrange travel plans to other countries, mainly in Western Europe. This indicates that many of them choose Romania as a transit country. The refugees who arrived in Romania and the Republic of Moldova had the highest inclination to move elsewhere in Europe, only slightly less than a third preferring these countries as final destinations (IOM, 2022a; IOM, 2022b). In special situations, the Romanian government supports foreign citizens who come from the armed conflict zone in Ukraine and who enter Romania, while also not applying for asylum in Romania. They benefit from certain facilities in temporary accommodation and humanitarian assistance shelters or in other accommodation locations established at county level.

The displacement of Ukrainians affected by the war outside the country's borders also caused new challenges for the neighbouring countries they relocated to, including Romania. Social integration is a dynamic and multifaceted process requiring effort on the part of all those involved (Jurić, 2022b; UNHCR, 2023d), where newcomers are incorporated into the social structure of the receiving society (UNHCR, 2023a). The Ukrainian citizens who remain in Romania have received and still receive help both from the Romanian Government, and from various NGOs, civilians, volunteers, with Romanians reacting promptly since the first days of the invasion of Ukraine. The immediate response of civil society and NGOs helped ensure that the most urgent needs were being met by enabling refugees to access public services, medical care, childcare, education and the labour market, especially considering the different needs resulting from the gendered composition of the refugees. Additionally, the influx of Ukrainian citizens into these countries was largely made up of women and children, as men of fighting age stayed behind. Therefore, inclusion mechanisms would have to take gender and age into account (Sandilya & Deleva, 2022).

Generally, people humanely sympathize with refugees (Åslund, 2022) and the Ukrainian crisis presents a good opportunity to examine people's attitudes towards refugees (Clayton et al., 2022). The availability of safe exit options, a welcoming attitude in Europe, and an existing culture of migration facilitated the sudden and rapid growth of Ukrainian migration (Lloyd & Sirkeci, 2022). The dynamics of the response to the crisis included the rapid growth of the volunteer movement (Brzezinska & Logvinenko, 2022), while the civic mobilisation in Romania since Russia's invasion is all the more surprising when we take into account the civil society's record in the country since the fall of communism (Anghel & Trandafoiu, 2022). Compared to 2021, there was an increase in the favourable attitude towards refugees, with the highest increase being registered among young people, those with a higher education level, employers, those living in very large cities. The degree of acceptance is higher for refugees from Ukraine, but lower for those from Asia, Africa,

Latin America or the Caucasus (Lătaianu et al., 2022). Unlike Western European countries, the new EU Member States, Romania included, still have very little experience with large-scale immigration.

Romania is regarded as a transit country for immigrants heading to Western Europe and, despite not having been confronted with an influx of refugees until Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it has developed specific policies in line with the *acquis communautaire* in order to be prepared for any situation of influx. In the EU post-accession period, Romania's refugee and asylum policies had a positive evolution due to the process of correlating the legislative framework with that of the EU (Vasile & Androniceanu, 2018). Policy guidelines on the social integration of foreigners in Romania can be found in the National Strategy on Immigration, 2021-2024. The general objective of the policy aimed at supporting the integration process of refugees is to help refugees be self-reliant, become independent from the assistance provided by the state or non-governmental organizations and actively participate in Romanian society at the economic, social and cultural levels (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2021). Although important steps have been taken to facilitate the integration process of foreigners who have benefitted from some type of protection, including the improvement of the services offered as part of the integration programmes and the improvement of inter-institutional communication, there are still problems in key areas, such as the access to the labour market, social housing, the recognition of studies and qualifications from the countries of origin of recognized refugees and persons who have acquired conditional humanitarian protection, or the inconsistent practice regarding the payment of the health insurance contributions (Radu, 2006). One of the most important issues concerning the integration of the Ukrainian refugees into the host countries is related to the services and the people's access to them (Koroutchev, 2023a), while the social and political discussions on integrating and providing care for refugees continue (Buchcik et al., 2023).

Aside from lost lives and injuries, the massive loss of human life being the first and most important consequence of the war, the economic losses are enormous and take many forms (Garicano et al., 2022). The economic costs generated by the destruction of the Ukrainian economy and infrastructure, and the cessation of economic relations with the Russian Federation are also difficult to estimate in the medium and long term on both a regional and international scale (Bloj & Buzmaniuk, 2022; Săgeată, 2022). The ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war also has an economic and social impact in Romania, such as limiting or even interrupting the economic relations that Romania traditionally had with Russia and Ukraine, thus affecting Romania's industry, the closing of businesses, the loss of jobs; a significant increase in prices can be noted due to rising inflation, financial instability and the energy crisis; a social pressure coming from the need to integrate Ukrainian refugees, which involves a series of aspects related to covering the needs of the refugees (Ilie et al., 2022).

The aim of the paper is to provide an overview of the cross-border effects of the Ukrainian refugees in Romania. Although the Ukrainian refugees are not the same as in other EU countries, in Romania a number of 139,875 registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes on August 9, 2023 (UNHCR, 2023b) and triggered problems regarding the access to services and integration. The paper highlights (1) the reloaded *in situ* effects, meaning the leading role of existing Romanian and, respectively, Ukrainian ethnic communities on both sides of the border, in the prompt organization of humanitarian support for Ukrainian refugees; (2) the repetitive effects on the dynamics, such as the refugee flows and their territorial and time dynamic; (3) the long-term effects, i.e., the main legislative documents related to the needs to integrate the refugees in different fields, such as: housing, employment, education, health, youth services, and the protection of vulnerable groups. On the other hand, the paper aims to bring to attention the results of the survey launched by the UNHCR, which aims at implementing a Protection Profiling and Monitoring exercise to regularly collect and analyse data about the profile, protection risks and the needs of Ukrainian refugees, as well as at monitoring changes over time.

Methodology and data

The methodological approach is based on the analysis of the historical and political context of the tracing of the Romanian-Ukrainian border, both on the basis of bibliographic sources, and through the analysis and processing of statistical data.

The historical analysis was focused, on the one hand, on the dynamics of the ethnic structure in the Romanian-Ukrainian cross-border area and, on the other hand, on the territorial distribution and dynamics of ethnic minority communities (Romanians from Ukraine and Ukrainians from Romania) in the 1990-2021 period. This time interval was deemed evocative for assessing the exacerbation of the impact of cross-border flows given the conditions of the disappearance of political-ideological constraints and the intensification of the cross-border traffic generated by cross-border ethnic minorities. On the other hand, said time frame is symbolic for highlighting the situation of cross-border migration at this EU external border prior to the onset of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The paper is based on a process of documentation and field research. We have employed bibliographic sources, data and statistical information, as well as historical maps and documents. The results were compared to statistics and publications by other authors who have addressed this topic. The statistical data sources took into account the evolution of the population of the studied territory and the dynamics of the ethnic structure at the censuses of the 20th and 21st centuries, as well as the changes in the relations between human settlements.

The quantitative data resulting from the study are based on the combination of official data. The official data sources are the following: the UNHCR, the Romanian Government, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the General Inspectorate for Immigration, the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (IGSU), the County Inspectorates for Emergency Situations located on the Northern and Eastern borders of Romania, as well as the Romanian Border Police. This provides us with the opportunity to accurately understand the specifics of the basic resettlement of refugees, as well as to offer an image on how Romania appeals to Ukrainian refugees.

The survey launched by the UNHCR, which has in view the implementation of a Protection Profiling and Monitoring exercise, presents the main findings based on 2,628 interviews conducted between October 2022 and August 2023 in Romania, and aims at strengthening and promoting an evidence-based protection response. Aside from Romania, this survey was also undertaken in Belarus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the Republic of Moldova, Poland and Slovakia. Individual interviews were carried out in different locations, including border and transit locations, reception and transit centres, collective sites, assistance points and community centres. Trained enumerators digitally collected the data with the help of the kobo Toolbox, which is safely stored on the UNHCR server. While respondents were randomly selected to reduce bias, a non-probability sampling was used and results cannot necessarily be extrapolated to the population of refugees from Ukraine as a whole (UNHCR, 2023c).

Results

Reloaded *in situ* effects of the leading role of ethnic communities in the Romanian-Ukrainian border-area

The Romanian-Ukrainian border is the second longest of Romania's frontiers after the one with the Republic of Moldova, and the fourth longest of the seven border sectors of Ukraine

(Simileanu & Săgeată, 2009; Mitrică et al., 2021a). It is intricate both in terms of the media which constitute the substrate of its tracing (terrestrial, fluvial, maritime and aerial), as well as in terms of discontinuity, this being the only discontinuous border of Romania (Simileanu & Săgeată, 2009). From this standpoint, it consists of two distinct sectors: a Carpathian sector, 362 km long (55.74% of the total length) and a Danubian sector, 287.4 km long (44.26% of the total length) between which the border separating Romania from the Republic of Moldova unfolds along the Prut River axis. Together, they constitute the Northern and Eastern border of Romania, which prior to 1989 had made up the Romanian-USSR frontier (Săgeată et al., 2021). The Romanian-Ukrainian border is over 649.4 km in length (National Institute of Statistics, 2022) and makes up 10.44% of the length of the EU's Eastern border. From a geostrategic point of view, it is centred around the current Euro-Atlantic border (Mehedinți, 1941a, 1941b; Simileanu, 2011; Neacșu, 2018), and the hot zone of confrontation between the strategic Rimland of the Russian Federation and the strategic containment of NATO (Popa, 2002).

These complex issues of the Romania-Ukraine border, as the EU's Eastern border, suffered direct and unforeseen pressure when the international armed conflict in Ukraine began. Then, starting the first days after the invasion of February 24, 2022, the people were forced to flee their homes seeking safety, protection, and assistance. They have become refugees, whose main entry into Romania, an EU member state, directly from Ukraine, was the Northern sector of the Romania-Ukraine border and the Southern one, through Isaccea. The borders between Romania and Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova are among the essential variables in the management of the European axis of Ponto-Baltic cooperation. The main problem in this sense derives from the contradiction between the need for the best possible security of this border – an essential condition for Romania's integration into the Schengen area – and the need for the best possible cross-border cooperation imposed by the presence of important Romanian communities both in Transcarpathian Maramureș and in Northern Bucovina, as a result of the historical circumstances that led to the drawing of the Romanian-Ukrainian border (Săgeată et al., 2014). It is precisely these two ethnic communities, namely Romanians in Ukraine and Ukrainians in Romania, that have a leading role in facilitating good communications and in preparing the immediate humanitarian support.

Ukrainian ethnic communities in Maramureș and Bukovina. According to the 2021 census, Ukrainians were the third largest ethnic group (after Hungarians and Roma) totalling 45,800 individuals, down by 5,100 compared to the previous census. From the point of view of territorial distribution, three distinct communities stood out:

- Ukrainians from Maramureș and Bukovina, respectively from the counties of Maramureș (approx. 30,000 people) and Suceava (approx. 8,000 people) form the largest Ukrainian ethnic community in Romania, amassing around two thirds of the total number making up this ethnic minority;
- Ukrainians from Dobrogea (mainly in Tulcea County), which are an extension of the Ukrainian ethnic bloc South of the Danube;
- Ukrainians from Banat, grouped in the counties of Timiș (about 7,000 people) and Caraș-Severin (2,500 people).

Ancient historical records make note of Ukrainian settlements in Northern Moldova and Maramureș, located in areas adjacent to the Ukrainian ethnolinguistic conglomerate (Slavonic in Moldova and Latin-Hungarian in Maramureș) during the 14th and 15th centuries. Over time, their cultural, linguistic and spiritual identity has been supported by contributions from the population of Zakarpattia, Galicia, Pokuttia and Northern Bukovina (Government of Romania, Department for Interethnic Relations, 2005).

Ukrainians in the mountain area of Bukovina, in the upper valleys of the Suceava, Moldova and Bistrița Aurie rivers are known as Hutsuls. Their language is related to the Ukrainian languages of the Ukrainian Carpathians and to that spoken in Northern Bukovina. These languages are, in turn, an integral part of the Ukrainian language. This population settled in this area in the 17th century as famous horse breeders (they even introduced a breed of horse), shepherds, animal breeders, forest workers, craftsmen making and decorating wooden and leather objects, weaving and embroidering. The decoration of Easter eggs (a craft practiced especially in the villages of Ulma, Lupcina, Paltin, Brodina, Breaza and Moldovița) has brought them international fame.

Romanian ethnic communities in Zakarpattia and the Chernivtsi region. The Romanian diaspora in Ukraine is about eight times the size of its Ukrainian counterpart in Romania, totalling 409,608 members. It is condensed in the areas bordering Romania and the Republic of Moldova (Chernivtsi, Odessa and Zakarpattia), making up 82.74% of the total diaspora, while the rest is dispersed in the areas between the Dniester and Dnieper rivers and throughout the rest of Ukraine, especially in Kiev and other large cities (Table 1).

Table 1. Romanians in Ukraine

Area	Number of Romanians	% of the total no. of Romanians	% of the area's population	Observations
Chernivtsi (Cernivețka, Chernivtsi)	181,780	44.38	19.78	Ukrainian areas near the border with Romania and the Republic of Moldova
Odessa (Odeska)	124,475	30.39	5.07	
Zakarpatska Oblast (Zakarpatska, Zakarpattia)	32,668	7.98	2.60	
Mikolaiv (Mikolaiivska, Mykolaiv)	13,333	3.25	1.05	Areas between the Dniester and Dnieper rivers
Kirovohrad (Kirovohradska)	8,413	2.05	0.75	
The rest of Ukraine	48,939	11.95	–	–
Total	409,608	100.00	–	–

Source: Popescu (2004, p. 3).

It should be noted that in the Ukrainian regions bordering the Northern sector of Romania (Zakarpattia and Chernivtsi), most Romanians (98.42% and 63.02%, respectively) are aware of belonging to the ethnic bloc to which they subscribe, even identifying as such. The analysis performed at *raion* level points to an absolute majority of Romanians in three *raions* within the Chernivtsi region (Hertsya – 93.8%, Noua Suliță/Novoselytsia – 64.3% and Adâncata/Hlyboka – 51.4% of the total population). Significant Romanian communities were also revealed in the *raions* of Reni (49% of the total population), Izmail, Podilsk, Sărata, Ananyiv, Tarutyne and Kiliya in the Odessa region (between 15% and 30%); Storozhynets (37.2%) in the Chernivtsi region and, respectively, in the Tiachiv (12.4%) and Rakhiv (11.6%) *raions* part of the Zakarpattia oblast.

The predominantly terrestrial Romanian-Ukrainian cross-border sector is a typical example of an area of ethnic merger which came to be as the result of border migration in the context of particular historical and geopolitical circumstances. Consequently, this specific context is the main driver of the Ukrainian refugee fluxes into Romania. The field research shows that the mutual connection and knowledge, especially in terms of language, were some of the main factors that have attracted, directed, and facilitated the flow of Ukrainian refugee fluxes to the Romanian border crossing points.

In Romania, the minority of Ukrainians is represented by the Union of Ukrainians in Romania (UUR). Currently, UUR has 11 county branches and one branch in Bucharest, as well as several local organizations. The Ukrainian Youth Organization in Romania and the Ukrainian Women's Organization in Romania also operate within the UUR. The UUR was involved in the collection and distribution of humanitarian aid to refugees, as well as to war-affected areas. At the same time, the opening of a fund called 'For peace in Ukraine and solidarity with the Ukrainian people' was approved in January 2022, in order to provide humanitarian support to Ukrainian citizens in conflict-stricken areas, to which ethnic Ukrainians from Romania can contribute, together with other people (UUR, 2023).

From the first days following the onset of the conflict, UUR, through all its branches in Romania, initiated actions to support the Ukrainian citizens who transited the territory of our country. These actions consisted of: accommodation, transport, food, translation services (including official documents), humanitarian aid, education, counselling and mediation, partnerships-collaborations, support and involvement in finding a job, various activities.

Other organizations of Ukrainians in Romania, which are active mainly in the online environment, are: the National Forum of Ukrainians in Rădăuți (NFUR), the 'Lesia Ukrainica' Association for Education and Culture in Sighetu Marmației, the Association of Young Ukrainians in Romania. The Romanian Government has also created web pages to help Ukrainian citizens: dopomoha.ro; sprijindeurgenta.ro; crizadinucraina.stirioficiale.ro.

Ukrainian refugee flows – effects for territorial and temporal dynamics

At the beginning of August 2023, over 4.2 million Ukrainians had crossed into Romania at the crossing points between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, 3.0 million at the border with Ukraine and 1.2 million at the border with the Republic of Moldova, while 2.5 million people crossed the border into Ukraine (UNHCR, 2023b).

The number of **incoming Ukrainian refugees** varied between almost 10,000 individuals, on February 24, 2022, the onset of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, to a peak of 40,000 individuals, registered two weeks later, which was then followed by a relatively constant number of refugees (i.e., around 12.5k individuals) during the summer of 2022. The number of refugees, although on a decreasing trend, continued to be relatively constant during the following ten months (10,000 – 11,000 individuals). After this period, the number of refugees started to increase, reaching a maximum of 20,002 on July 2, 2023. The data indicates that many of them choose our country only as a transit country, most of them spending just a few days here until they arrange travel to other countries, especially in Western Europe (Fig. 1). The age and gender structure of Ukrainian refugees crossing the border into Romania prior to August 2, 2022 is made up mainly of women, followed by minors and men (Fig. 2). It is important to note that between July 2022 and August 2023 the share of minors decrease from 28.6% to 21.0%, and, most relevant, the share of male refugees increased from 17.5% to 26.0%. Despite the martial law established in Ukraine on February 25, banning men between the ages of 18 and 60 from leaving the country, the trend recorded by male arrivals in Romania shows that the law was violated and that there was also corruption present at many of the crossing points between Ukraine and Romania and between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova.

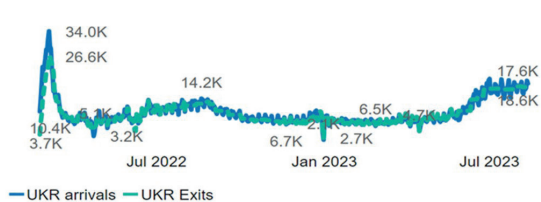


Figure 1. Entries and exits of Ukrainians, February 24 – September 18, 2023
Source: UNHCR (2023b).

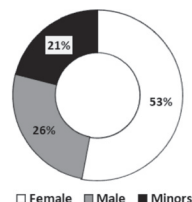


Figure 2. The age and gender structure of Ukrainian refugees crossing the border into Romania, August 2, 2022
Source: UNHCR (2023b).

The number of refugees from Ukraine recorded in Romania started from 6,748 individuals on February 24, 2022 to a maximum of 113,000 on February 24, 2023, with 93,661 Ukrainian citizens being the current number (beginning of August, 2023) (Fig. 3).

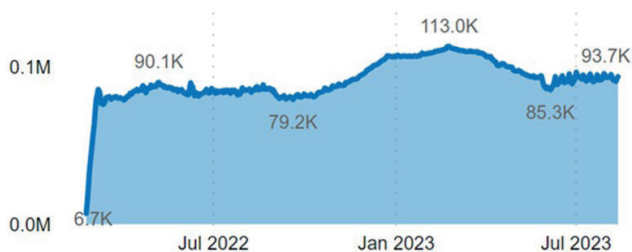


Figure 3. No. of refugees from Ukraine recorded in Romania, February 24 – August, 2023
Source: UNHCR (2023b).

In Romania, the Temporary Protection Directive came into effect on March 18, 2022. The rights under the Temporary Protection include a residence permit, access to the labour market and housing, medical assistance, and access to education for the children involved (UNHCR, 2023b; Ministry of Internal Affairs, General Inspectorate for Immigration, 2022). This temporary protection status would last for at least one year and could be extended depending on the situation in Ukraine. During this period, 52,952 people, 98,8% of which are Ukrainians, have obtained Temporary Protection. By county, the hierarchy is as follows: Bucharest, Constanța, Galați, Maramureș, Suceava, Brașov, Iași, Covasna, Cluj and Sibiu (cf. Fig. 4). The structure by age group shows that minors are the prevalent group (50.0%), followed by adults (45.7%) and the elderly (4.3%).

Out of the total number of Ukrainians who entered Romania (4.3 million) through the border crossing points with the two countries (Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova), the largest number of refugees was registered at the customs in Siret (38.8 % of the total Ukrainians), Sighetu Marmăției (14.4%) and Issacea (13.5%), all at the border with Ukraine, followed by Galați customs with 7.9% of the total number of Ukrainian refugees, and Albița (6.2%), both located at the border with the Republic of Moldova, as well as Halmeu customs (5.2%), located on the border with Ukraine. Lower percentages, under 4%, were registered in the customs offices of Iași (3.9%), Oancea (3.2%), Vicov (3.1%), followed by the checkpoints in Stâncă, Rădăuți-Prut, Racovaț, Vicșani, Vișeu Valley and Câmpulung la Tisa (Fig. 4).

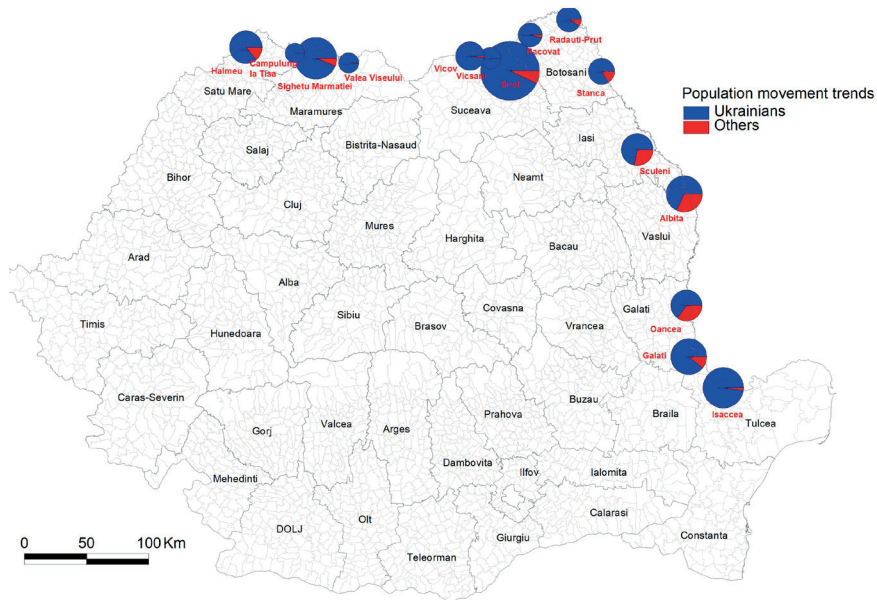


Figure 4. The structure of the Ukrainian refugee arrivals at the Romanian border crossing points with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, February 24, 2022 – August 2023
Source: own elaboration based on Romanian Border Police (2023).

Ukrainians who passed through the customs in Siret, Sighetu Marmatei and Isaccea in large numbers mostly come from the localities and oblasts located at the border with Romania, and would rather pass through these points due to their proximity and on the recommendation of other refugees who have used these crossing points.

Long-term effects – support policies, measures and actions related to Ukrainian refugees

In Romania, governmental structures (Chancellery of the Prime Minister, ministries, (inter)ministerial departments) have been involved in the immediate and long-term responses of humanitarian assistance and in the management of the process of integration of Ukrainian refugees into the Romanian host society. These actions should be supported by an adequate legislative background. Thus, over 20 legislative acts elaborated and applied by the Government of Romania to meet the needs of Ukrainian refugees and to better manage the refugee crisis in Ukraine had **effects on the legislative Romanian framework**. Some of these set out direct intervention and support measures, while others refer to specific provisions to enable new modes of operation. Among them, we would mention:

- Government Emergency Ordinance (GEO) 15/2022 regarding the mechanisms of support and humanitarian assistance by the Romanian state for foreign citizens or stateless persons in special situations coming from Ukraine;
- Government Decision 367/2022 which establishes the conditions under which the temporary protection is ensured for all persons who were forced to leave Ukraine due to the armed conflict, as well as the financing the necessary expenses sources;

- Government Decision no. 337/2022 on the granting of gratuities and facilities for the transport of foreign nationals or stateless persons in special situations from the area of armed conflict in Ukraine;
- Government Decision 336/2022 for establishing the mechanism by which natural persons who host Ukrainian refugees benefit from the reimbursement of food expenses;
- Government Ordinance 20/2022 regarding the support and humanitarian assistance provided to children, adults, people with disabilities and all Ukrainians who come to Romania;
- Government Decision 315/2022 for the settlement of Ukrainian citizens and for the provision of the necessary funds to support them during their stay on the national territory;
- Ministry of Education Order 3325/2022 by which the Romanian higher education institution decides on the recognition and award of transferable study credits for the students or PhD Candidates who cannot provide proof of completion of studies with documents issued by the higher education institution they previously attended in Ukraine;
- Government Emergency Ordinance 100/June 29, 2022 regarding the approval and implementation of the National Plan of Measures concerning the protection and inclusion of displaced persons from Ukraine, beneficiaries of Temporary Protection in Romania. The rights under the Temporary Protection Directive include a residence permit, access to the labour market, housing, medical assistance, and education for the children;
- Government Emergency Ordinance (GEO) 22/2023 for the amendment and completion of Government Emergency Ordinance no. 15/2022 regarding the granting of humanitarian support and assistance by the Romanian state to foreign citizens or stateless persons in special situations, coming from the area of the armed conflict in Ukraine.

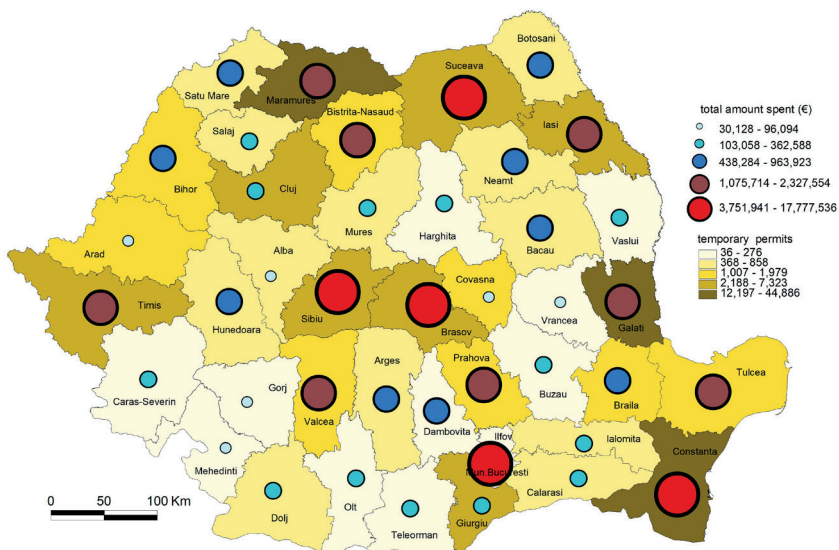


Figure 5. The amount spent on accommodation and food by county
Source: own elaboration based on Romanian Government (2022).

After February 24, 2022, the European Commission introduced the **temporary protection mechanism (TPM)**, as an effect of and support for the refugees from Ukraine. The duration of temporary protection is one year, which can then be extended in 6-month increments, for a maximum

of one other year. The TPM is applicable also in Romania, where it came into effect starting March 18, 2022. Although the number of Ukrainians who entered the country exceeded 3.8 million people, only 139,875 applied for the TPM, the counties with the most temporary permits (TP) being: Bucharest Municipality (46,392 TP), Constanța (15,955 TP), Maramureș (13,870 TP), Galați (12,522 TP), Suceava (8,014 TP), Brașov (6,070), Sibiu (3,083 TP), Iași (3,073 TP) and Cluj (2,888 TP).

The effects in terms of organizing the response structures at national, regional and local territorial levels have been visible since the beginning of the conflict, when the Government of Romania coordinated two crisis management directions: (1) a direction focusing on the response in emergency situations, led by the Department of Emergency Situations (DSU) and (2) a direction focusing on the protection of Ukrainian refugees and their integration in Romania, coordinated by the Department for Social Responsibility and Vulnerable Groups (Romanian Government, 2023a) (Fig. 6).

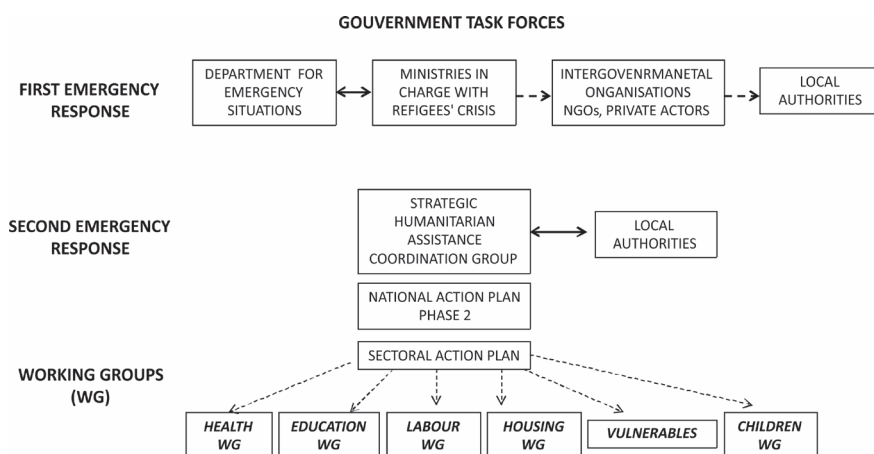


Figure 6. Ukrainian refugees management plan
Source: Romanian Government (2023b).

The second direction zeroed in on the medium and long-term protection and inclusion of Ukrainian refugees. In addition, the ‘National Plan of measures on the protection and inclusion of displaced persons from Ukraine, beneficiaries of temporary protection in Romania’ was adopted as a multi-dimensional document, which includes actions in the fields of housing, employment, education, health, children and young people affairs, and the protection of vulnerable groups.

In addition to the help provided by the Government, a number of other organizations, NGOs, hotel and restaurant owners, as well as an impressive number of individuals have come together and provided support for the people in need since their entry into the country through the various border crossings, both from Ukraine and from the Republic of Moldova.

A number of 34 partners collaborated in the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees in Ukraine and to provide support to the authorities in responding to the refugee situation. These partners worked under the coordination of other NGOs and partner organizations, local authorities, the academic environment, to offer a model of refugee support in Romania.

Thus, at the national level, six sectoral working groups were established that dealt with the integration of Ukrainians onto the labour market, providing housing and medical services, integrating children into the education system, supporting young and vulnerable people.

More than 20 items of legislation have been passed to support Ukrainian refugee protection and inclusion; more than 150 activities were initiated by government institutions, the civil society, NGOs, UN agencies and the private sector; over 300 NGOs were involved. During this entire period, 2.45 million Ukrainians benefitted from support for temporary housing, formal education and health services (Romanian Government, 2023b).

During the time spent in Romania, the Ukrainian citizens in transit received help from both the Romanian Government and from various NGOs, regular citizens, and volunteers, as Romanians reacted promptly from the first days of the invasion of Ukraine.

The local parties involved, such as the associations and organizations that operate at the border, acted in very diverse fields of daily life, trying to cover all the needs of refugees (Flanigan, 2022). The local entities identified as being active within Romanian border areas are the following: the Association of Social Workers in Romania, the Romanian Red Cross, the 'Bucovina' Suceava County Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, the Salvation Army in Romania, the volunteers with the Suceava Association of Romanian Orthodox Christian Students, the Suceava General Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection, the Order of Malta Relief Service in Romania, the 'Casa Lui Patrocle' animal protection association in Suceava, the Suceava branch of the 'Save the Children' Organization, the Suceava branch of the National Association of Authorized Sign Language Interpreters, the Act for Tomorrow Association, the World Vision Romania Foundation; the 'Pentru Tine' Christian Association in Botoșani, the FARA Foundation, the EMAUS-Impact Suceava Centre, the Rescue 4X4 Association of Volunteer Rescuers, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Romania. Most of them acted independently of the National Plan of Measures for the protection and inclusion of displaced persons from Ukraine, beneficiaries of temporary protection in Romania, but supported its main fields of action (i.e., housing, employment, education, health, children and young people affairs, and the protection of vulnerable groups). Moreover, through their specific activities and services, the local parties were involved in offering immediate support to the Ukrainian refugees and helping them find an easier way of leading their new lives (e.g., through translation and communication 'services' supplied by different associations and members of Ukrainian communities from the border area).

Furthermore, a series of groups have been created on social media to help Ukrainian refugees, the people active on these groups offering support in terms of accommodation, meals, ensuring transport from the border to various cities in the country, or arranging transport to locations in other countries.

The Romanian volunteers had different backgrounds (social workers, psychologists, nurses, doctors, priests, socio-educational animators, students in various fields of study, translators etc.). They all had the same goal: helping and managing as well as possible the situation of Ukrainian refugees, as soon as they cross the Romanian border (Raiu, 2022).

Housing. The Romanian government subsidizes the accommodation for Ukrainian citizen in various organized private and public facilities. At the same time, the Government grants support to persons hosting Ukrainian refugees for food and accommodation expenses from the budget of the County Inspectorates for Emergency Situations. Romania is able to provide, at the national level, around 400,000 accommodation spots for Ukrainian refugees (Romanian Government, 2023c). They can be accommodated both in the spots provided by the state as well as in private units or with individuals who have expressed their willingness to offer spaces for accommodation. The related expenses, including food, are compensated from the funds set aside for this purpose from the state budget, as well as from donations. Additionally, other types of resources – foodstuffs, hygiene products and clothing – will also be provided, having been collected through the online platform created by the Government of Romania through other structures and private initiatives.

According to the Department for Emergency Situations, since the end of February 2022 the Romanian Government, the local authorities, and the civil society have provided accommodation for people who have fled Ukraine, the total number of beneficiaries reaching 97,827 individuals. The total capacity is 49,913 spots, 15.8% of which are occupied. The highest number of accommodation spots provided by the local authorities is registered in the counties of Constanța, Bucharest Municipality, Tulcea, Brașov, Vâlcea, Satu Mare, Suceava, Botoșani, Galați, and Iași (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2021; UNHCR, 2023b).

In order to facilitate the accommodation of Ukrainian refugees staying in Romania, the Government established a programme to reimburse citizens hosting Ukrainian refugees. According to the Government's Emergency Ordinance No. 15/2022, regarding the provision of humanitarian support and assistance by the Romanian state to foreign citizens in special situations, coming from the armed conflict zone in Ukraine, the Romanian government provides an amount to cover accommodation expenses according to different thresholds, that is, €150/month for a single person and €400/month for a family, as well as a sum to cover food expenses in the amount of €120/month for each person (Romanian Government, 2022). In total, over €76 million has been spent on housing for refugees, and over €152 million has been spent on food (EC, 2023). The Romanian Government has extended the period of humanitarian assistance for Ukrainian refugees from the end of 2023 until March 31, 2024.

Depending on the number of Ukrainians settled by county and the applications submitted, the largest amounts were designated for the counties of Constanta (€17,777,536), Bucharest Municipality and Ilfov County (€16,175,859), Suceava (€5,785,890), Brașov (€5,071,456), Sibiu (€3,751,941), Prahova (€2,327,554), Iași (€2,139,896), Galați (€1,829,592) and Timiș (€1,829,094).

The large sums intended for Constanța county are a consequence of the fact that a large number of Ukrainians, mainly from Mariupol, Nikolaev, Kherson, and Odessa (regions with access to the Black Sea), settled in this county, as did Ukrainians who lived near the water and who entered the country through Isaccea customs. The amount spent on accommodation and food by county shows that the higher values are in more socio-economic developed counties, such as Constanța, Brașov and Ilfov, as well as in Bucharest Municipality (Mitrică et al., 2021b), where there is also a high number of Ukrainian refugees. At the other end of the spectrum are the less developed counties from the South, South-West, and the central part of Romania. What this shows is that the amounts are high in the counties which include border crossing points or have a high socio-economic development level. The capital and the other counties, where large sums of money have been allocated, are economically developed counties, and refugees settled here in the hopes that they would have an easier life and more opportunities to find a job.

Quick research on the online press revealed that these official statistics are rounded out by daily life details and aspects/situations that show different realities, meaning delays in the payment of the sums, with a direct and negative impact on the refugees' and host Romanian families' lives. Not only does online research highlight this problematic reality, but so does the Government itself with its initiative to modify the 50/20 Program: conditioning the sum of 2,000 lei/month given to the families or single persons from Ukraine only for 4 months, requesting proof that they have a job after this limited period (according to GEO 22/2023).

Employment. Ukrainian citizens who apply for a form of protection in Romania also have access to the labour market if they want to secure a source of income from employment. Measures have been taken to integrate Ukrainian refugees into the labour market based on the Ministry of Labour's legislation, which has been amended so that all Ukrainian citizens who enter Romania and wish to be employed can do so without any notice or restriction other than a self-declaration. The

Ministry of Labour should work closely with companies, recruiters, and job search services to ensure that skilled workers find jobs quickly (Dumitrescu & Constantin, 2022). The share of Ukrainian refugees who got a job in Romania increased from 6% in March to 30% in June 2022. By June 2022, the number of employed Ukrainians in Romania had gone up to 10,000, 40% of them working in the manufacturing sector, around 17% in the construction sector and 10% in the hospitality sector (IOM, 2022a; Koroutchev, 2023b). By August 2023, 5,007 Ukrainians were working and were registered in REVISAL in Romania; 1,300 Ukrainians were being mentored during the socio-occupational integration process, and 5 job fairs had been organized (Romanian Government, 2023b). According to the recent provisions by GEO 22/2023, the support sum for Ukrainian refugees is contingent on them having a job (after the maximum 4 months of said support being paid). If they cannot get a job, they have access to the unemployment insurance system, in accordance with the provisions of Law 76/2002, with subsequent amendments and additions.

Education. On Romanian territory, all children from Ukraine, including those who do not request protection according to the Asylum Law, have access to education in educational institutions in Romania under the same conditions as Romanian students benefiting from different rights such as the right to free accommodation in boarding schools, food allowance, supplies, clothing, shoes, or textbooks.

At the end of the 2022-2023 school and academic year, 19,605 refugee pupils and students from Ukraine were officially enrolled in the Romanian national education system. The enrolment requested by school-age Ukrainian refugees is an effect of the support provided through Government Decision No. 368/26 April 2023, which introduced a conditionality linked to compulsory education (either in Romanian schools or in alternative in-person education programmes registered with County School Inspectorates) in order for refugee children from Ukraine and their families to benefit from humanitarian support and assistance (UNHCR, 2023d). There were 69 private educational hubs, totalling 9,334 beneficiaries, as follows: primary level – 4,892, secondary level – 3,539, and high-school level – 903 pupils. The Ministry of Education simplified the school enrolment process for Ukrainian children, as well as the enrolment in Romanian language courses for children and adults (Romanian Government, 2023a).

Children and young people. According to the UNHCR, a total of 539,000 Ukrainian minors fled to Romania (UNHCR, 2023b). Special protection is afforded the minors unaccompanied by their parents or a legal representative, who enter Romania coming from the armed conflict zone in Ukraine. Regarding the situation of Ukrainian refugee children, the PRIMERO application was established at the national level to register and monitor Ukrainian children entering Romania. It was developed with the technical and financial support of UNICEF Romania, and is administered by the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption (ANPDCA). Thus, by the end of June 2023, 28,020 Ukrainian children had been entered into the records of the PRIMERO application (Romanian Government, 2023a).

Health. Ukrainian refugees benefit from the medical services, medical supplies, medicines, and medical devices provided by the Romanian Government together with its partners, under the social health insurance system, thus ensuring a full integration into the health system. A total of 19,594 Ukrainians received emergency medical services (3,170 persons were hospitalized and 4,590 persons were transported to the hospital by ambulance), the total expenditure of the Ministry of Health on medical services totalling over €8 million (Romanian Government, 2023a).

Integration of Ukrainian refugees into Romanian society. Overview of the survey conducted in Romania by the UNHCR 2022-2023

The survey developed by the UNHCR regarding the Ukrainian refugees in Romania is used here as a premise for offering a complex and objective reflection on good results as well as on the problematic aspects which have emerged during the process of integrating the Ukrainian refugees. The survey launched by the UNHCR, which aims at implementing a Protection Profiling and Monitoring exercise, presents the main findings based on 2,628 interviews (making up the real-time situation for a total of 7,270 household members) conducted between October 2022 and August 2023 in Romania (among other countries, such as Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the Republic of Moldova, Poland and Slovakia). This survey was carried out in different locations, including border and transit locations, reception and transit centres, collective sites, assistance points and community centres (UNHCR, 2023c). An overview of the survey conducted in Romania by the UNHCR 2022-2023 enabled us to conduct a general evaluation of the impact of legislation, mirrored through measures and actions for helping the integration of Ukrainian refugees into the host Romanian society (as mentioned and described above). There are domains where the impact could be evaluated: (1) facilities for the refugees to create new households, (2) access to rights in Romania, (3) access to school, medical care, labour, and (4) gaps detected in the integration process.

The four aspects of the integration of Ukrainian refugees into Romanian society are evaluated:

(1) facilities for the refugees to create new households: the Ukrainian refugees arrived in Romania, as in the other host-countries, together with relatives. Thus, they could (re)create their own Ukrainian households in a new and secure space. The structure of household members by age group and gender shows that females prevail in all age groups, but especially in the 18-34-year-old age group (16% females and 6% males) and the 35-59-year-old age group (23% female population and 8% male population). Only the children display a balanced gender structure: 6% of children between 0-4 years of age and 27% between 5-17 years of age; both categories have the same share of girls versus boys. The majority of households are made up of one or two adults with dependents (34% and 32%, respectively) and 11% of households are made up of a single person. The fact that the refugees have the possibility to rebuild relationships in a secure space, their own family and household is the most important result of all the initiatives undertaken for their integration.

(2) access to rights in Romania: regarding the legal status and documentation, the vast majority of respondents (95%) have applied for temporary protection in Romania and 87% of them have received a positive decision. The reasons for not applying for temporary protection were the decision to not settle in Romania (60%), or the submission of asylum (27%) or residency (7%) requests. Consequently, there was no significant gap or need to be protected or supported by the Romanian authorities.

(3) access to school, medical care, labour and housing:

- regarding the access to education, despite the facilities provided by Romanian authorities and the fact that 53% of households include children between 5 to 17 years of age, a significant share of 68% of households with school-aged children reported at least one child not registered for education in the host country. The main reasons for not enrolling their children in the Romanian education system is them preferring to attend school online and having Ukrainian teachers (86%), as well as the language barrier (37%). These two causes are often coupled together (Fig. 7). A share of 17% of households include children between 0 to 4 years old, 41% of whom have access to the education system;

- the access to healthcare is described by the refugees in need of medical services as difficult (17%);
- the access to the labour market is reflected in the percentage of people employed in Romania (20%), employed remotely (13%) and unemployed (17%);
- most respondents have found accommodation in rented facilities, government-provided facilities, collective sites, with relatives, or provided by their employer (Fig. 8).

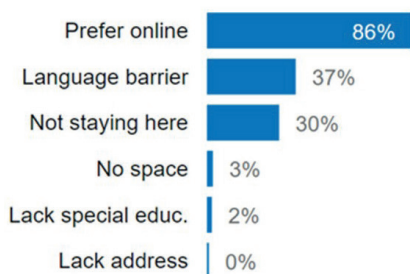


Figure 7. The main reasons children are not enrolled in Romanian schools
Source: UNHCR (2023c).

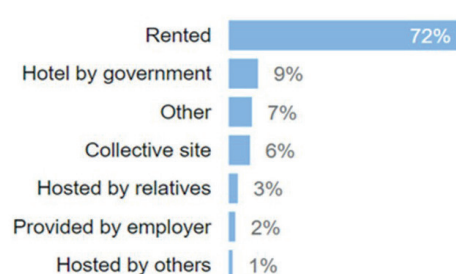


Figure 8. The current accommodation of Ukrainian refugees
Source: UNHCR (2023c).

(4) the gaps and needs detected in the integration process are reflected through the reasons for leaving the accommodation facility, due to unemployment or due to the difficulties encountered and declared as such by the refugees in accessing different services (e.g., healthcare, education).

Thus, the main reasons for having to leave an accommodation facility within 3 months were the end of the programme (31%), being asked to leave (21%), moving to another location (19%), or the inability to afford it (18%). The main reasons for unemployment are: the language barrier (42%), a lack of opportunities (22%), a lack of education recognition (10%), not staying in Romania (10%), a lack of information (9%), the lack of childcare (7%).

The main difficulties in accessing the healthcare system are: the language barrier (61%), the long wait period (47%), the inability to afford it (39%), a lack of information (29%), denied access (12%) and documentation (6%) (Fig. 9).

A share of 5% of households mentioned having children who are separated from both parents and 17% of households mentioned having at least one family member with special needs, such as a disability or serious medical conditions. These situations require special attention from the entities involved in the management of refugee help.

Generally the main urgent needs of the respondents (Fig. 10) are related to material assistance (46%), education (43%), employment (41%), accommodation (37%), food (25%), healthcare (20%), information (11%), childcare (10%), or legal advice (9%) (Fig. 10). For a better integration of the refugees, they express different needs, such as financial aid (46%), job opportunities (30%), healthcare (25%), education (22%), accommodation (20%), or legal status (12%). The preferred information channels are social media (86%), friends/family (55%), websites (32%), followed by phone calls (18%), in person contact (10%), email (9%), written information (3%).

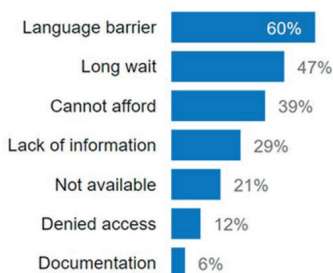


Figure 9. The main difficulties accessing the Romanian healthcare system
Source: UNHCR (2023c).

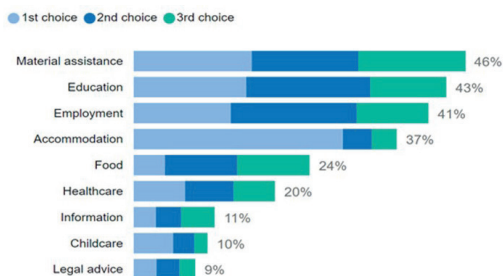


Figure 10. The urgent needs of Ukrainian refugees in Romania
Source: UNHCR (2023c).

This brief analysis of the current situation of Ukrainian refugees in Romania, rendered objectively and as complexly as possible by an international organization (i.e., UNHCR), allows us to appreciate that the Romanian authorities, together with other entities from the civil society, have made great efforts to ease their situation. Of course, there are also problematic cases, resulting from dysfunctions in the fund administration process, from random, inappropriate attitudes, both on the part of the host society and on the part of the refugees. What matters is the strength and speed with which Romanian society banded together to help and, above all, the exemplary attitude of volunteers and citizens from all over the country, but especially from the border areas, who had direct and immediate contact with the tragic situation of the refugees.

Conclusions

The approach of effects associated with the cross-border aspect of the Ukrainian refugees' crisis is a difficult issue for several reasons: firstly, the expansion of the interest area, namely the study-area which is the border between Romania and Ukraine on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the border between Romania and the Republic of Moldova, which the Ukrainian refugees passed in order to arrive in Romania or to travel farther away, to the EU or the rest of the world; secondly, the dynamic character of the war in Ukraine, as the cause of the arrival of the Ukrainian refugee flows on Romania's 'doorstep', among other countries. Thus, the number of refugees is hard to predict and, implicitly, the specific humanitarian support is hard to ensure together with its necessary quality and quantity; thirdly, in this complicated and dynamic context, the possible effects associated with the cross-border aspect of the Ukrainian refugees' crisis are insufficiently analysed in terms of their duration, intensity, cascading side effects or the appropriate ways to solve those which may have a negative impact.

Despite these difficulties and based on different national and international (e.g., UNHCR) official data sources, the study identified three types of effects of the border crossing by the Ukrainian refugees: (1) the reloaded in situ effects, that is, the leading role of existing Romanian and, respectively, Ukrainian ethnic communities in the border area, in the prompt organization of humanitarian support for Ukrainian refugees; (2) the repetitive effects on the dynamics, such as the refugee flows and their territorial and time dynamic; (3) the long-term effects, i.e., the permanent need to integrate the refugees in different fields of daily life.

The survey developed by the UNHCR on the Ukrainian refugees in Romania was approached for a comprehensive illustration of good results or issues detected thus far during the long and complex process of their integration.

The integration of Romania and Ukraine in the European regional cooperation structures, as well as the establishment of the Euroregions cross-border cooperation have been vital steps towards improving the framework of cross-border cooperation (Ilieş, 2003; Ilieş, 2004; Boar, 2005; Săgeată et al., 2014), but the Russian invasion of Ukraine subsequently and significantly diminished the efforts undertaken in this regard. Given all this, the best possible management of decent cross-border relations developed with the aid of ethnic communities is paramount as an essential precondition for effective and sustainable regional cooperation.

The main conclusions of the study developed by the UNHCR on the Ukrainian refugees in Romania show that 36% of respondents are currently working remotely or are self-employed in Romania, the majority of respondents (95%) applied for Temporary Protection (or similar schemes) in the country, while 68% of households with school-aged children (5-17 years of age) reported at least one child not registered in the Romanian education system. Regarding access to healthcare services, 45% of respondents with infants (0-4 years of age) are not able to access childcare services in Romania, and 17% experienced difficulties accessing the healthcare system in the country; the majority of respondents (84%) stated at least one urgent need, such as material assistance, food, employment, and so on. During their stay in Romania, 35% of respondents temporarily visited Ukraine at least once since their initial displacement.

Romania has made significant progress in recent years in the management of asylum policies, triggered last year by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It is important to look at the evidence available for the provisioning of and access to healthcare, education, or the labour market for migrants so as to identify the obstacles to accessing socio-economic services. There is a need to improve the existing data on migrants' socio-economic features, needs for and access to socio-economic services in order to be able to provide optimal services according to the needs of the migrants (Lebano et al., 2020). In the case of Ukrainian refugees, legislative changes and the mobilisation of civil society to provide assistance have decreased the possible barriers posed by language, legislation, finances, and the lack of trust, especially towards the authorities (Dumitrache et al., 2022). Despite the unprecedented governmental efforts to face the Ukrainian refugee flows and to solve the most urgent related issues, mainly due to economic and bureaucratic reasons, there are still problems pertaining to a better integration of the Ukrainian refugees. Some proposals have been made, which include more flexibility regarding the labour market, the swift recognition of refugees' qualifications and experience, the option of working remotely, especially for women with children (Koroutchev, 2023b).

In so doing, development practitioners can support governments in strengthening their institutional systems for the provision of critical services, ensuring the sustainability of investments and better supporting refugees in their transition towards self-reliance and towards becoming contributors to the economy (Del Carpio et al., 2018). It is exceedingly important to find the circumstances in which refugees returned to their homes and how they engaged with those that had been left behind and with whom they might hope, at some stage, to reconnect (Gatrell, 2013). The paper also highlights the fact that the urbanization of refugees is not a new issue, but one that has become a growing concern for policy-makers, aid agencies and scholars as the numbers of refugees moving to cities has accelerated (Sanyal, 2012). The local administration of the main Romanian cities became involved in the emergency response process, offering their infrastructure for the needs of the refugees, in addition to organisational resources. Perhaps the most tangible sign that those Ukrainian refugees who wanted to stay on in Romania are integrated into urban daily life is that on the streets, in shops and malls, as well as in parks, one notices Ukrainian people. All these actions benefit from the great support of the General

Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (IGSU) by way of the County Inspectorates for Emergency Situations and the Bucharest-Ilfov Inspectorate for Emergency Situations.

Romanian authorities continue to support the Ukrainian refugees settled in Romania by facilitating the creation of the Platform called *dopomoha* (the Ukrainian word for ‘help’) in 2023 by Code for Romania in partnership with the Department for Emergency Situations of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the UN Refugee Agency, the International Organization for Migration, the Romanian National Council for Refugees (*Dopomoha*, 2023). The aim is for civilians fleeing the war in Ukraine to be able to find all the relevant information in order to seek protection in Romania.

The field research reveals the specific and detailed needs of Ukrainian refugees which should be considered by the central and local authorities and by the entities involved in immigration and integration issues. Despite the groundwork developed to support the Ukrainian refugees, it was only in October 2023 that the legislative framework for the recognition of studies of Ukrainian refugees was established. Due to this delay and to the lack of linguistic abilities (the language barrier is intensified by the fact that Ukrainian refugees do not even speak English) many refugees have lost not only their homes, but their professions as well.

Acknowledgement

The current study was carried out within the framework of the projects titled ‘Regional geographical studies in view of sustainable development and trans-sectoral cooperation’ and ‘Geographical studies on the population dynamics in Romania’ as part of the Research Plan of the Institute of Geography.

References

- Aitken, C., & Ersoy, E. (2022). War in Ukraine: The options for Europe’s energy supply. *The World Economy*, 887–896. <https://doi.org/10.1111/twec.13354>
- Anghel, R.G., & Trandafoiu, R. (2022). A glimpse of humanity: How Romanians have mobilised to help Ukrainian refugees. *LSE European Politics and Policy (EUROPP) Blog*. Retrieved from http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/114705/1/euoppblog_2022_03_08_a_glimpse_of_humanity_how_romanians_have.pdf
- Åslund, A. (2022). How Can Europe Handle the Ukrainian Refugee Challenge? *CESifo Forum*, 4(23), 3–7.
- Benč, V. (2016). Growing migration of Ukrainians into Slovakia: new migration patterns as a result of the unstable situation in Ukraine. In D., Drbohlav & M., Jaroszewicz (Eds.). *Ukrainian Migration in Times of Crisis: Forced and Labour Mobility* (pp. 130–167). Prague: Charles University.
- Benton, M., & Selee, A. (2022). *The Ukrainian Conflict Could Be a Tipping Point for Refugee Protection*. MPI report. Retrieved from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/ukrainiandisplacement-refugee-protection>
- Blój, R., & Buzmaniuk, S. (2022). Reception of Ukrainian refugees. Between emergency responses and long-term solutions. *European Issues*, 629, 1–6.
- Boar, N. (2005). *Regiunea transfrontalieră româno-ucraineană a Maramureșului [...]*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană Publishing House.
- Brzezinska, O., & Logvinenko, I. (2022). Gender and the Ukrainian refugee crisis: the case of Poland. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 5(3), 402–405. <https://doi.org/10.1332/251510821X16563278060380>

- Buchcik, J., Kovach, V., & Adedeji, A. (2023). Mental health outcomes and quality of life of Ukrainian refugees in Germany. *Health Qual Life Outcomes*, 21(23). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12955-023-02101-5>
- Clayton, K., Ferwerda, J., & Horiuchi Y. (2022). The Stability of Not-In-My-Backyard Attitudes toward Refugees: Evidence from the Ukrainian Refugee Crisis. <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/wn32u>
- Del Carpio, X., Seker, S., & Yener, A. (2018). Integrating refugees into the Turkish labour market. *Forced Migration Review*, 58.
- Dopomoha (2023). *Ucrainenii care se adăpostesc din calea războiului sunt bineveniți în România*. Retrieved from <https://dopomoha.ro/ro>
- Dumitrache, L., Nae, M., Mareci, A., Tudoricu, A., Cioclu, A., & Velicu, A. (2022). Experiences and Perceived Barriers of Asylum Seekers and People with Refugee Backgrounds in Accessing Healthcare Services in Romania. *Healthcare*, 10(11), 2162. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare10112162>
- Dumitrescu, A.L., & Constantin, V. (2022). The socio-economic impact of migration in the EU: in the case of Ukraine refugees. *Global Economic Observer*, 10(1), 7–15.
- EC (2022). *Fluxul de refugiați din Ucraina*. European Council. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/eu-migration-policy/refugee-inflow-from-ukraine/>
- EC (2023). *Romania: Report on the national response to those displaced from Ukraine*. European Commission. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/romania-report-national-response-those-displaced-ukraine_en
- EEAS (2016). *Eastern Partnership*. European Union External Action Service. Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/eastern-partnership/419/eastern-partnership_en
- Eröss, Á, Kovály, K., & Tátrai, P. (2016). *Effects of the Ukrainian Crisis in Transcarpathia: the Hungarian Perspective*. CMR Working Papers, 92/150. Retrieved from <https://depot.ceon.pl/bitstream/handle/123456789/11158/WP92150.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Fedyuk, O., & Kindler, M. (Eds.). (2016). *Ukrainian Migration to the European Union. Lessons from Migration Studies*. Cham: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-41776-9>
- Flanigan, S. (2022). *The roles of NGOs in migration policy & services in Romania with a focus on Ukrainian migrants*. Report on U.S. State Department funded American Councils Title VIII Research Scholar Program Fellowship.
- Garicano, L., Rohner, D., & Weder di Mauro, B. (2022). Introduction. In L., Garicano, D., Rohner & B., Weder di Mauro (Eds.). *Global Economic Consequences of the War in Ukraine. Sanctions, Supply Chains and Sustainability* (pp. 1–12). London: CEPR.
- Gatrell, P. (2013). *The making of the modern refugee*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ilie, C., Pârvu, M.C., & Niță, A.M. (2022). The socio-economic effects of the Russian-Ukrainian war on Romania. A sociological perspective of the impact of the war on the attitudes and behaviors of Romanians. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, 76, 215–227.
- Ilieș, Al. (2003). *România între milenii. Frontiere, areale frontaliere și cooperare transfrontalieră. Studiu geografic [Romania between the millennia. Borders, border areas and cross-border cooperation. Geographical study]*. Oradea: Oradea University Publishing House.
- Ilieș, Al. (2004). *România. Euroregiuni [Romania. Euroregions]*. Oradea: Oradea University Publishing House.
- IOM (2022a). *Ukraine Displacement Survey, Romania*. Retrieved from https://displacement.iom.int/sites/default/files/public/reports/IOM_ROMANIA_Profiles_and_Inclusion_Survey_21_4_22_0.pdf
- IOM (2022b). *Ukraine Displacement Survey, Moldova*. Retrieved from <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/publicmoldova-%E2%80%94-displacement-surveys-ukrainian-refugees-and-tcns-09-march-22-april-2022>
- Jaroszewicz, M. (2018). *Migration from Ukraine to Poland – the trend stabilizes*. OSW report of Center of Eastern Studies. Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies.
- Jurić, T. (2022a). *Predicting refugee flows from Ukraine with an approach to Big (Crisis) Data: a new opportunity for refugee and humanitarian studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1101/2022.03.15.22272428>
- Jurić, T. (2022b). *Ukrainian refugee integration and flows analysis with an approach of Big Data: Social media insights*. <https://doi.org/10.1101/2022.04.18.22273958>

- Konstantinov, V., Reznik, A., & Isralowitz, R. (2023a). The Impact of the Russian–Ukrainian War and Relocation on Civilian Refugees. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 28(3), 267–269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2022.2093472>
- Konstantinov, V., Reznik, A., & Isralowitz, R. (2023b). Update: Civilian Refugees of the Russian–Ukrainian War. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 28(6), 568–570. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2022.2135288>
- Koroutchev, R. (2023a). Ukrainian migration during the first year after the beginning of the Russian armed conflict in 2022. *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs*, 9(2), 164–177. <https://doi.org/10.47305/JLIA2392191k>
- Koroutchev, R. (2023b). Internal displacement of the Ukrainians. Migration towards Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria. *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie VI, Geografía*, 16, 43–65. <https://doi.org/10.5944/etfvi.16.2023.37182>
- Lătăianu, G., Burcea, M., & Stefan, B. (2022). *Refugiații din Ucraina și percepția războiului [Refugees in Ukraine and the perception of war]*. Bucharest: Biroul de Cercetări Sociale.
- Lebano, A., Hamed, S., Bradby, H., Gil-Salmerón, A., Durá-Ferrandis, E., Garcés-Ferrer, J., Azzedine, F., Riza, E., Karnaki P., Zota, D., & Linos, A. (2020). *Migrants' and refugees' health status and health-care in Europe: a scoping literature review*. *BMC Public Health*, 20, 1039. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-08749-8>
- Lloyd, A.T., & Sirkeci, I. (2022). A Long-Term View of Refugee Flows from Ukraine: War, Insecurities, and Migration. *Migration Letters*, 19(4), 523–535. <https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v19i4.2313>
- Mehedinți, S. (1941a). Fruntaria României spre răsărit [Romania's border to the East]. *Revista Fundațiilor Regale*, VIII(8-9), 250–273.
- Mehedinți, S. (1941b). România în marginea continentului. O problemă de geopolitică românească și europeană [Romania on the edge of the continent. A problem of Romanian and European geopolitics]. *Geopolitică și Geoistoria. Revistă Română pentru Sud-Estul European*, I(1), 59–66.
- Ministry of Internal Affairs, General Inspectorate for Immigration (2022). Migration. Retrieved from <https://igi.mai.gov.ro/en/>
- Ministry of Internal Affairs (2021). *Strategia națională din 19 august 2021 privind imigrația pentru perioada 2021–2024*. Retrieved from https://igi.mai.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/strategia_nationala_din_19_august_2021.pdf
- Mitrică, B., Dumitrașcu, M., Mocanu, I., Grigorescu, I., & Șerban, P. R. (2021b). Territorial competitiveness, cohesion and sustainability in Romania's urban border areas. *Geografisk Tidsskrift-Danish Journal of Geography*, 121(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00167223.2021.1910055>
- Mitrică, B., Săgeată, R., Șerban, P.-R., Mocanu, I., Grigorescu, I., & Dumitrașcu, M., (2021a). Northern and Eastern Romanian Border Counties – Socio-Economic Development at the Fringe of the European Union. In M., Lacny (Ed.). *The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and its impacts on cross-border cooperation* (pp. 118–145). Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- National Institute of Statistics (2022). *Anuarul Statistic al României [Romanian Statistical Yearbook]*. Bucharest: National Institute of Statistics.
- Neacșu, M.-C. (2018). *Simion Mehedinți și geopolitică românească [Simion Mehedinți and Romanian Geopolitics]*. Bucharest: CD Press.
- Popa, N. (2002). *Frontiere, regiuni transfrontaliere și dezvoltare regională în Europa Mediană [Borders, cross-border regions and regional development in Middle Europe]*. Timișoara: West University Publishing House.
- Popescu, I. (2004). Românii din Ucraina – partea I. *Dacoromania*, 18, 1–26.
- Radu, M. (2006). Politica și practica privind integrarea imigranților și refugiaților în statele europene. *Calitatea Vieții*, XVII(3–4), 319–341.
- Raiu, S.L. (2022). *Ce au văzut și ce au trăit voluntarii care îi ajută pe refugiații din Ucraina. 34 de interviuri*. Contributors. Retrieved from <https://www.contributors.ro/implicarea-institutiilor-si-ong-uri-in-ajutorarea-refugiatilor-perceptia-voluntarilor-care-ofera-sprijin-refugiatilor-ucraineni/>
- Romanian Border Police (2023). Trafic online. Retrieved from <https://www.politiadefrontiera.ro/traficonline/>
- Romanian Government (2022). *Emergency Ordinance 15/2022*. Official Gazette of Romania no. 193.

- Romanian Government (2023a). *Romania's response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis. Monthly snapshot – June 2023*. Retrieved from <https://protectieucraina.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Refugee-Response-Snapshot-June-2023.pdf>
- Romanian Government (2023b). *Romania's response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis*. Retrieved from <https://protectieucraina.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ANNUAL-STATUS-REPORT-ROMANIA-DEC-2022-2-1-1.pdf>
- Romanian Government (2023c). *Ukraine-Together we help more*. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.ro/ro/pagina/ukraine-together-we-help-more>
- Romanian Government, Department for Interethnic Relations (2005). *România – o Europă în miniatură. Scurtă prezentare a minorităților naționale*. Bucharest.
- Săgeată, R. (2002). Criza agroalimentară mondială determinată de conflictul Rusia-Ucraina. *GeoPolitica, Revistă de Geografie Politică, Geopolitică și Geostrategie*, XX(94), 124–139.
- Săgeată, R. (2011). Frontiera de nord în contextul aderării României la spațiul Schengen. *GeoPolitica, Revistă de Geografie Politică, Geopolitică și Geostrategie*, IX(41-42), 197–208.
- Săgeată, R., Mitrică, B., Damian, N., Persu, M., & Baroiu, D. (2021). Areas of ethnic merger in the Carpathian cross-border sector between Romania and Ukraine, geopolitics and geohistory. In M., Lacny (Ed.). *The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and its impacts on cross-border cooperation* (pp. 146–172). Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Săgeată, R., Nancu, D., Mitrică, B., Persu, M., Damian, N., Popescu, C., Mocanu, I., Grigorescu, I., Guran, L., Șerban, P., & Baroiu, D. (2014). *Euroregiunile de cooperare transfrontalieră din bazinul inferior al Dunării. Studiu geografic [Cross-border Euroregions in the Lower Danube Basin]*. Bucharest: Romanian Academy Publishing House.
- Sandilya, H., & Deleva, Z. (2022). How Europe can include Ukrainian refugees in society. *Social Europe*. Retrieved from <https://socialeurope.eu/how-europe-can-include-ukrainian-refugees-in-society>
- Sanyal, R. (2012). Refugees and the City: An Urban Discussion. *Geography Compass*, 6, 633–644. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12010>
- Simileanu, V. (2011). Sistemul geopolitic ponto-baltic [The Ponto-Baltic geopolitical system]. *GeoPolitica, Revistă de Geografie Politică, GeoPolitică și GeoStrategie*, IX(41-42), 5.
- Simileanu, V., & Săgeată, R. (2009). *Geopolitica României [Geopolitics of Romania]*. Bucharest: Top Form.
- UNHCR (2023a). *Ukrainian refugees situation*. Retrieved from <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>
- UNHCR (2023b). *Ukrainian refugees situation. Romania*. Retrieved from <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10782>
- UNHCR (2023c). *Regional protection profiling and monitoring. Protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine*. Retrieved from <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiejYwMDFhMzMtMTJjZS00NzU1LTkzYzgtNTNhN2FiNjU3Y2RlIiwidCI6ImU1YzM3OTgxLTY2NjQtNDEzNC04YTJjLTk1NDNkMmFmODBiZSIsImMiOj9>
- UNHCR (2023d). *Ukraine Situation Inter-Agency Romania Update June 2023*. Retrieved from <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/102040>
- UUR (2023). *Raportul activității Uniunii Ucrainenilor din România privind ajutorarea ucrainenilor refugiați pe teritoriul României de la începutul invaziei armate a Federației Ruse în Ucraina*. Uniunea Ucrainenilor din România. Retrieved from <https://uur.ro/razboiul-din-ucraina/>
- Vasile, O., & Androniceanu, A. (2018). An Overview of the Romanian Asylum Policies. *Sustainability*, 10(5), 1461. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10051461>

