

TEMPORARY PROTECTION

THE ONGOING STRUGGLE OF ROMANI REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC, HUNGARY, MOLDOVA, ROMANIA, AND SLOVAKIA



CHALLENGING DISCRIMINATION PROMOTING EQUALITY



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Author: **Michal Zalesak**

Editor: **Hannah Crane**

Researchers: **Gwendolyn Albert, Ion Bucur, Eugen Ghita, Judit Ignaz, Bernard Rorke, Florentina Manea, Michal Zalesak**

Cover Design: **Sophio Datishvili**

Layout: **Dzavit Berisha**

Photography: **Vojin Ivkov**

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Address: Avenue de Cortenbergh 71, 4th floor, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

E-mail: office@errc.org

www.errc.org

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INTRODUCTION

FLEEING UKRAINE

More than two years have now passed since the beginning of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. One of the main effects of the invasion has been the related refugee crisis; as of 14 March 2024, almost six million refugees had left Ukraine for other European countries while a further 500,000 made their way to non-European countries.¹

The actual number of Romani refugees who were amongst those fleeing Ukraine is unknown, however estimates suggest figures around 100,000.² According to the most recent National Population Census for Ukraine, conducted in 2001, almost 48,000 Ukrainian citizens registered as of Romani origin. However the number is likely to be much higher, with estimates suggesting the population of Roma in Ukraine was somewhere between 200,000 and 400,000 people. Zakarpattia, Kharkiv, and Odessa Oblasts had the highest Romani populations.³

The situation for Romani communities in Ukraine has been grim since long before the outbreak of war. Roma are regularly targeted by far-right pogroms and hate crimes, which are subsequently not investigated properly by the authorities. Often, the brutality comes from police officers. Like many European countries,

Romani children are often taught in segregated settings meaning they receive a lower standard of education. Another significant problem, made even more urgent due to the war, is the lack of identity documents; overall, about 17% of Romani people are undocumented leading to further barriers.⁴

As three EU Commissioners stated on International Roma Day: “We know that in times of crisis, vulnerable groups are hit particularly hard.”⁵ Roma in Ukraine have been living in disadvantaged conditions and facing discrimination for decades, so when the full-scale invasion started in February 2022, forcing many of them to leave, they might have thought their situation would improve once they moved to safer countries. However, this was not the case. Most of those who left Ukraine were women with children and elderly people, due to the requirement for military-aged men to stay and help with the war effort. Often they did not know anyone, and did not understand the local language. Some of them did not even understand Ukrainian, since they spoke Hungarian or Romanes. Among them were people who had never attended school and were illiterate. Their access to information has, as a result, been limited, putting them in an extremely vulnerable situation.

1 UNHCR, Ukraine Refugee Situation, visited on 22 March 2024. Available [here](#).

2 European Commission, International Roma Day: Statement by Vice-President Jourová, Commissioners Dalli and Várhelyi, 7 April 2022. Available [here](#).

3 Minority Rights Group, Roma in Ukraine. Available [here](#).

4 ERRC, Written comments concerning Ukraine for consideration by the Human Rights Committee, 2020. Available [here](#).

5 European Commission, International Roma Day: Statement by Vice-President Jourová, Commissioners Dalli and Várhelyi, 7 April 2022. Available [here](#).

A DIFFERENT COUNTRY, THE SAME STORY

Many of the Romani refugees from Ukraine sought refuge in countries bordering Ukraine, which also have longstanding, documented issues regarding the inclusion and equal treatment of the Romani communities living there. The ERRC has been monitoring the human rights situation of Romani people in these countries since before the outbreak of war, and after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 our human rights monitors focussed efforts on recording rights abuses and documenting discrimination against Romani refugees in particular. One year after the invasion began, the ERRC issued its first report⁶ on human rights abuses perpetrated against Romani refugees from Ukraine in Europe. We documented cases of segregation, violent attacks, ethnic profiling, and discrimination against Romani refugees.

Since then, another year has passed and the receiving countries have had more time to address the needs of refugees and to facilitate their access to employment, housing, education, and other public services. This research aimed to reveal what, if anything, has changed for Romani refugees in that time in the target countries and identify potential human rights violations and discriminatory laws, policies, and incidents. With this information, the goal is to eventually ensure the rights of Romani refugees are respected and that they receive equal and non-discriminatory treatment in all areas of life.

The ERRC undertook research related to the situation of Romani refugees in five countries:

Moldova, Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. This involved carrying out thorough desk research, as well as talking to local activists and refugees themselves in order to gather as much information as possible regarding their situation in various areas of life.

From the very beginning, Romani refugees from Ukraine were often treated differently compared to non-Romani refugees. Their status as 'legitimate' refugees was questioned and they were accused of merely pursuing their own economic interests; they were refused transportation; were made to queue in different lines for services; were given separate accommodation and more.

This research has found that, even two years on, discrimination against Romani refugees persists. Romani refugees are less likely to be offered a private rental apartment and if they find one, it may be under worse conditions just because of their ethnicity. They are more likely to have to live in group forms of accommodation; they often end up working without a contract in precarious working conditions; and they face more barriers in accessing education and effective healthcare than non-Romani refugees. Moreover, as several of the activists interviewed for this research suggested, the majority population in recipient countries is slowly getting 'tired' of the war and the related issues and, in general, public attitudes are becoming less welcoming, exacerbating underlying issues.



“We know that in times of crisis, vulnerable groups are hit particularly hard.”

6 ERRC, Roma Rights Under Siege: Monitoring Reports from One Year of War in Ukraine, February 2023. Available [here](#).

This report is based on desk research and interviews conducted by the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) between May 2023 and March 2024. Geographically, this report focuses on the situation of Romani refugees from Ukraine in five countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia.

DESK RESEARCH

Desk research was undertaken between May and September 2023 in order to understand the situation in the relevant target countries. Due to the dynamic nature of states' actions in response to the refugee crisis, updates were also carried out to account for any changes or developments. The data in the report is up to date as of 1 March 2024.

The desk research is based on published official statistical data, as well as unofficial data gathered by interviewed experts, publications, analyses, media reports, and other relevant resources. The aim was to gather information about laws, policies, and practices adopted and implemented by governments on the national level as well as any human rights violations that were reported, especially those whose victims were Ukrainian Romani refugees. Subsequently, the focus of the research was narrowed down to certain areas which were further examined during interviews.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews were carried out between July 2023 and February 2024, with 50 interviews being undertaken overall. Since there is a lack of official disaggregated data, interviews with experts and refugees themselves were crucial in helping to better understand the actual situation of Romani refugees in these countries.

The first group interviewed were people working for NGOs, media, and human rights institutions as well as individual activists based in the respective target countries. The ERRC interviewed 29 respondents over the course of the research; five from Moldova, five from Romania, seven from the Czech Republic, five from Slovakia, and eight from Hungary. These interviews were mostly carried out online.

The second group of interviewees were Romani refugees from Ukraine who were interviewed between August 2023 and October 2023. Overall, 21 Romani refugees were interviewed; eight of them are based in Moldova, seven in Romania, and six in the Czech Republic. Interviews with refugees were carried out in person. The interviews focused on their personal experiences regarding how they had been treated by authorities, whether they had access to general services, what conditions they were living in, etc. The ERRC found the interviewees through domestic civil society partners in the respective countries, consultants, and referrals from previous respondents.

All refugee respondents from the Czech Republic were women. Five of them are from Zakarpattia (Transcarpathia) Oblast while one is from Poltava Oblast. The youngest was 18 years old at the time of the interview. The oldest was 53.

The refugee respondents from Romania were six women (aged 23-50) and one man (aged 29). Four are from Mykolaiv Oblast and three from Odessa Oblast.

Five out of the eight Romani refugees interviewed in Moldova were women, and three were men. The women were aged between 27 and 62 while the men were between 31 and 50 years of age. Five refugees were from Odessa Oblast, one was from Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, one from Mykolaiv Oblast, and one from Khmelnytskyi Oblast.

In order to protect the personal data, identity, and privacy of the respondents, all respondents are anonymised in this report. In cases where a name is mentioned, it is a fictional one.

LIMITATIONS

The main limitations encountered were; the lack of official disaggregated data available which seriously hampers accurate figures, making it difficult to identify Romani refugees in order to properly assess their situation; unwillingness of the refugees to talk due to their fear of potential repercussions from the authorities; the migration of some groups of Romani refugees which resulted in practical difficulties in finding any Romani refugee respondents in Slovakia.

IN THIS REPORT

The report is divided in five main chapters. Each of them focusses on the situation of Romani refugees from Ukraine in one of the following countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia.

Each chapter starts with the general overview of the situation in the above-mentioned countries, including numbers of Ukrainian refugees living in them as well as the attitudes of the domestic population towards refugees and a description of the relevant temporary protection scheme. What follows is the general overview of the situation of Romani refugees in the countries in question and then a focus on fundamental services such as housing, education, employment, and healthcare. These are areas where the local Romani communities also face human rights abuses and discrimination, and so desk research focused on these in particular.

TEMPORARY PROTECTION STATUS

‘Temporary protection’ and ‘temporary protection status’ are phrases which occur in this report frequently as it is a crucial part of the refugee experience.

In 2001, the Council of the European Union adopted the *Council Directive 2001/55/EC on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof* (Temporary Protection Directive) with the aim of establishing a framework for temporary protection in cases of a mass influx of displaced persons from third countries who are not in a position to return to their country of origin. It was adopted in the aftermath of armed conflicts in the Western Balkans.

Temporary protection was defined in Article 3 of the Temporary Protection Directive as: “a procedure of exceptional character to provide, in the event of a mass influx or imminent mass influx of displaced persons from third countries who are unable to return to their country of origin, immediate and temporary protection to such persons, in particular if there is also a risk that the asylum system will be unable to process this influx without adverse effects for its efficient operation, in the interests of the persons concerned and other persons requesting protection”.

The directive allows displaced people who receive temporary protection status to access rights such as: residence permits for the duration of temporary protection; access to suitable accommodation or means to obtain housing; access to employment; access to medical care (at least emergency care and essential treatment of illnesses); and access to education for minors.

On 2 March 2022, the European Commission proposed to activate the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time due to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. On 4 March 2022, the Council of the European Union adopted the *Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection*.

The temporary protection provided by the Temporary Protection Directive has been extended by the Council of the European Union until at least 4 March 2025.⁷

The Temporary Protection Directive applies on the territories of the EU Member States. However, since the directive sets forth the framework and general harmonised rules for temporary protection, the details of

⁷ Council of the European Union, Ukrainian refugees: EU member states agree to extend temporary protection, 28 September 2023. Available [here](#).

the temporary protection regimes, related rights, and benefits may vary in the respective Member States.⁸ It is important to note that the Member States are also bound by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the rights included in it when implementing the directive.⁹

Even though Moldova is not an EU Member State, it nevertheless adopted its own temporary protection regime which is very similar to the one adopted by the EU. It is described in more detail in the chapter devoted to Moldova.

Based on the desk research for the purposes of this report and the subsequent interviews, the ERRRC identified the following specific barriers faced by Romani refugees when accessing temporary protection and related rights and services:

- limited access to information and the related lack of awareness;
- language barrier;
- digital gap;
- denial of services free of charge despite the entitlement;
- difficulties for undocumented Roma to obtain temporary protection status (especially in Moldova);
- refugees with double Hungarian-Ukrainian citizenship are not eligible to obtain temporary protection status because Hungary is an EU Member State.

8 For further details regarding temporary protection schemes and related rights and benefits in countries examined in this report, please see: acaps: Ukraine: Regional social protection overview, 21 November 2023. Available [here](#).

9 Article 51 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.



Romani woman, Telmana St. Uzhhorod, Ukraine.

Q GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Czech Republic remains one of the countries with the highest number of refugees from Ukraine per capita. As of 31 January 2024, there were about 381,000 Ukrainian refugees recorded in the Czech Republic with temporary protection status. Since the beginning of the war, almost 590,000 have been granted temporary protection in the Czech Republic.¹⁰ Most of them, more than 90,000, now live in the capital city, Prague.¹¹

Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic come mainly from Kharkivska oblast (17%), Zakarpatska/Transcarpathian oblast (11%), Donetsk oblast (10%) and the city of Kyiv (10%). However, a further four regions (oblasts) have 9% representation each.¹²

According to the Eurobarometer survey 'the EU's response to the war in Ukraine'¹³, published in December 2023, 63% of respondents from the Czech Republic agree with welcoming people fleeing the war into the EU. This is a drop of 10%

compared to May 2023. According to another 2023 Eurobarometer survey 'Discrimination in the European Union', 57% of the survey respondents believe that discrimination of Roma is widespread in the Czech Republic. The same number of respondents stated that they would not like if their child had a partner of Romani origin.¹⁴

According to the UNHCR survey conducted between October and December 2023, 85% of the respondents, who were Ukrainian refugees currently staying in the Czech Republic, have at least one urgent need. Overall, 31% of those named employment as their urgent need, 27% named accommodation, 21% healthcare and 20% education.¹⁵

The PAQ Research company has conducted several research projects into how temporarily protected Ukrainians are being integrated. From their research conducted on the second anniversary of the beginning of the war¹⁶, the situation was as follows:

- Overall, 58% of the Ukrainian refugees currently staying in the Czech Republic would like to stay there for at least two more years.
- There was a significant increase in children attending schools. However, there is still room for improvement in relation to the attendance in pre-school facilities and especially secondary schools.
- The number of refugee children studying Czech language at school decreased from 61% in June 2023 to 40% in November 2023.
- Approximately half of the Ukrainian refugees are able to communicate in Czech in ordinary situations and understand written text in Czech.
- Overall, 70% of the refugees live in private rental housing while 16% live in hotels or hostels. However, only a small number of those who did not live in apartments at the end of 2022 managed to move to an apartment in the subsequent months.
- Seven out of ten economically active refugees are employed in the Czech Republic. However, two thirds of them work below their qualification and more than half of them have precarious working conditions.
- Almost 60% of the Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic live below the poverty line compared to 10% of Czechs.

10 UNHCR, Ukraine Refugee Situation/Czech Republic. Available [here](#).

11 UNHCR, Czech republic: Temporary Protection Dashboard. Available [here](#).

12 Ukraine Situation - Czechia: Protection Profiling and Monitoring Factsheet, December 2023. Available [here](#).

13 Eurobarometer: the EU's response to the war in Ukraine, December 2023. Available [here](#).

14 Eurobarometer: Discrimination in the European Union, December 2023. Available [here](#).

15 Ukraine Situation - Czechia: Protection Profiling and Monitoring Factsheet, December 2023. Available [here](#).

16 PAQ Research, Dva roky války na Ukrajině. V Česku zůstává přes 300 tisíc uprchlíků. Integrace musí pokračovat, 13 February 2024. Available [here](#).

TEMPORARY PROTECTION STATUS

The Czech legislations regulating temporary protection for Ukrainians fleeing the war and the related issues are called *Lex Ukrajina*. They are the following:

- Act no. 65/2022 Coll. on Certain Measures in Relation to Armed Conflict on the Territory of Ukraine Inflicted by Invasion of the Army of Russian Federation;
- Act no. 66/2022 Coll. on Measures in the Field of Employment and the Field of Social Security in Relation to Armed Conflict on the Territory of Ukraine Inflicted by Invasion of the Army of Russian Federation;
- Act no. 67/2022 Coll. on Measures in the Field of Education in Relation to Armed Conflict on the Territory of Ukraine Inflicted by Invasion of the Army of Russian Federation.

At the time of publishing of this report, they have been amended five times.

Lex Ukrajina V became effective on 1 July 2023 and introduced many changes in relation to temporary protection and related matters. The most important were the following:

1. The value of the monthly monetary humanitarian aid was reduced to correspond to the subsistence minimum for 150 days from the date of the granting of temporary protection, after which it will either be reduced or stopped altogether, depending on whether the person is considered particularly vulnerable. The humanitarian benefit was reduced from CZK 4860 (approx. €193) per month to CZK 3130 (approx. €124) per month, except for vulnerable persons.
2. To calculate this aid, the temporarily protected person's housing costs and income is taken into account.
3. The temporarily protected persons need to document where they are residing to the authorities to prove their housing costs.
4. If the state is covering the cost of such persons' accommodation, it will only do so for 150 days from the date on which temporary protection was granted.
5. The only exception to the above is if the temporarily protected persons are granted the status of particularly vulnerable persons.
6. The state no longer pays a benefit to Czech households housing temporarily protected persons (the solidarity benefit).

The following persons qualify as vulnerable:

- Persons under 18
- Persons 65 and older
- Adults caring for a child up to the age of 6
- Certified disabled persons or invalids and their caregivers
- Persons studying in the Czech Republic up to the age of 26
- Pregnant women.

Notably, ethnicity is not a criterion for vulnerability, nor is low literacy or illiteracy.

The Ombudsman Stanislav Křeček criticized the *Lex Ukrajina V* amendments, saying: *"I am concerned that the measures about to take effect will have unfortunate repercussions for tens of thousands of people who are already in quite serious social situations. Many of those arriving here are doing their best but are unable to earn enough to cover their basic necessities. There should be a support system here for them, just as there is for Czech citizens, to aid them with making it through this adverse time in their lives."*¹⁷

Currently, *Lex Ukrajina VI* is in force which became valid as of 1 January 2024. It extended the temporary protection until **31 March 2025**.

However, such an extension it is not automatic; it has to be applied for. Those extending also have to book an appointment to visit the relevant office of the Interior Ministry in person and appear there no later than 30

¹⁷ Romea.cz, Czech ombudsman: Rule changes for temporarily protected Ukrainians leave tens of thousands in precarity, unable to cover their basic needs, 28 June 2023. Available [here](#).

September 2024 to receive a new visa sticker. The applicant must submit a valid travel document (if possible) and proof of accommodation (unless accommodated within the state emergency accommodation system).¹⁸ The process is highly dependent on literacy, IT skills, access to a digital interface, and a stable internet connection and so is disproportionately accessible.

According to the survey conducted between June and July 2023, 96% of refugee respondents have successfully joined the temporary protection scheme. Out of those, 76% extended their temporary protection status by participating in the verification process implemented by the government in 2023.

However, an overall 28% of respondents mentioned challenges in accessing information on temporary protection.¹⁹

Lex Ukrajina VI increased the housing benefit from 3,000 CZK (€119) to 6,000 CZK (€238) for registered housing and from 2,400 CZK (€95) to 4,800 CZK (€190) for unregistered housing. It also changed the maximum length of free emergency accommodation to 90 days, as of 1 September 2024.



THE SITUATION OF ROMANI REFUGEES

*“The first thing which comes to my mind regarding the situation of Romani refugees from Ukraine in the Czech Republic is unpreparedness, unwillingness, confirmation of discrimination...”*²⁰

Since data on the ethnicity of arriving refugees is not collected by the Czech authorities, there are no official statistics about the number of Ukrainian Roma who came to the Czech Republic or the number who are still there.

However, there are some unofficial estimates and data mainly collated by NGOs and activists working with Romani refugees. Two of the activists interviewed for this research stated that, at the beginning of the war, there were about 5,000 Romani refugees from Ukraine in the Czech Republic. One year on from the beginning of the war, Czech NGOs estimated the number of Romani refugees to be about 300, a huge drop.²¹ In July 2023, the NGO Romodrom estimated the number of Romani refugees in the Czech Republic to be around 900. Although these numbers differ, the NGOs do agree that most of the refugees are women

and children with adult men making up only about 4%, due to the requirement of men between 18 and 60 to stay in Ukraine and support military efforts.²²

At this time, most of the Romani refugees have eventually either returned home to Ukraine or moved on to countries in Western Europe. According to NGOs and activists, the discriminatory treatment they suffered, especially in relation to obtaining temporary protection and accessing emergency housing, played a large role in them moving elsewhere.²³ One activist corroborated a drop in numbers, mentioning that in the city where he lives only around 10% of the Romani refugees stayed. This works out at around 2% of the refugee population in the city.

Another stated that: *“I would say at least 90% of the Romani refugees left if not more. The reasons were sometimes economic, sometimes discrimination or some bad experience. They took what they had and left. Some people left for Germany, Ireland, Romania, anywhere basically. Some of the people just could not handle it here and went back home.”*

18 Official web portal for foreigners who live or would like to live in Czech Republic: frs.gov.cz. Available [here](#).

19 Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation: Czech Republic – multi-sector needs assessment, Final report – December 2023. Available [here](#).

20 Interview with NGO worker.

21 Romea.cz, Romani Ukrainians sought a better life in the Czech Republic, but discrimination and hostile conditions deterred them. Just a few hundred remain today, 24 February 2023. Available [here](#).

22 Romodrom, Průběžný monitoring situace romských uprchlíků z Ukrajiny, 06-07/2023.

23 Romea.cz, Romani Ukrainians sought a better life in the Czech Republic, but discrimination and hostile conditions deterred them. Just a few hundred remain today, 24 February 2023. Available [here](#).

DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT

According to various reports, some workers and volunteers at refugee reception centres in the Czech Republic repeatedly accused Romani refugees of lying about being Ukrainian in order to receive humanitarian aid intended for 'real' refugees.²⁴ One activist interviewed for this research stated that Romani Ukrainians arriving to the Czech Republic were automatically segregated away from other Ukrainians from the very start.

The only substantial research on Romani refugees from Ukraine who came to the Czech Republic was carried out in June 2022 by the PAQ Research company on the basis of a survey.²⁵ The results showed that for 61% of Romani households Ukrainian is the first language used at their homes

while a little under 20% use Romanes or Hungarian, respectively. It also revealed that Romani refugees moved to the Czech Republic mainly from the Zakarpathia, Kyiv, and Lviv regions, which are located in the west of Ukraine. Only a minority of Romani refugees came from eastern Ukraine. Overall, 30% of the respondents claimed that they experience hate in the Czech Republic while 14% experienced discrimination from authorities, banks, or at other places. In the majority of households (55%), all adult members were literate and in 80% of households at least some members were able to write and read, however there were also a significant portion (20% of households) without a single literate adult. Additionally, 33% of Romani refugees reported that they were in a material need.

The treatment of Romani refugees from Ukraine was markedly different to that of non-Romani Ukrainians.

OBSTACLES TO TEMPORARY PROTECTION

A key issue faced by Romani refugees was securing temporary protection status. One activist interviewed for this research recalled problems they experienced when trying to help Ukrainian Roma apply for temporary protection. Specifically, there appeared to be issue when a refugee held dual citizenship (Ukrainian and Hungarian), as if they held EU citizenship they were not eligible for temporary protection. Notably, Roma were specifically asked if they held another identity document or another citizenship while non-Roma were not asked this. The activist believed this was part of a 'search for obstacles' to prevent these Romani refugees from gaining temporary protection status, based on whether they held citizenship to another EU country. A related issue concerned Romani refugees without identity documents and who could not read or write, as they did not understand the process of obtaining temporary protection.

These experiences were corroborated by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council

of Europe, Dunja Mijatovic, in a statement issued in February 2023 following her five-day visit to the Czech Republic in which she discussed the treatment of Romani Ukrainians seeking temporary protection. She noted that the treatment of Romani refugees from Ukraine was markedly different to that of non-Romani Ukrainians, indicating the impact of the deeply-rooted prejudices against Roma in Czech society. She also acknowledged the persistent "fragmentation of responsibilities" between the central government level and the level of the local, regional, and nationwide state administrations which creates significant barriers to equal treatment.²⁶

The specific situation of Romani Ukrainians was also covered by the Office of the Public Defender of Rights (the Ombudsman) in its 2022 Annual Report²⁷ issued in March 2023, confirming that municipalities and regional authorities refuse to accommodate Romani Ukrainians seeking temporary protection in particular. The office issued a recommendation about

24 Commission on Security and Cooperation, Ukrainian Roma refugees face discrimination throughout Europe. Available [here](#).

25 PAQ Research, Ukrajínští Romové v České republice, July 2022. Available [here](#).

26 See: Report following the visit of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Dunja Mijatović, to the Czech Republic from 20 to 24 February 2023. Available [here](#).

27 Veřejný ochránce práv: Výroční zpráva 2022. Available [here](#).

this issue at the time.²⁸ The report also confirmed that a differential approach was taken toward Romani refugees at some regional registration centres, about which the office had also issued a recommendation.

The Ombudsperson also found that in Prague, Romani Ukrainians' opportunities to apply for temporary protection were conditioned on their already having accommodation, unlike non-Romani Ukrainians. Romani Ukrainians also had to be accompanied by a non-profit staffer or police officer to even enter the Prague regional registration centre, which meant many ended up waiting outside in inclement weather without

access to the children's play area, the area for nursing mothers, the waiting room, or the restrooms (access to portable toilets was available). In the case of the Romani Ukrainians, reception staff did not investigate whether any of them were especially vulnerable, despite the high numbers of young children among them.²⁹

After the Czech Parliament adopted changes to the *Lex Ukrajina V* set of laws, Czech Roma NGOs warned that those changes would disproportionately affect Romani refugees and that there is a danger that many will decide to return to their homeland despite safety risks.³⁰

HOUSING

As of February 2024, almost half of the Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic (46%) lived in a rented apartment, 16% were hosted by relatives, 12% lived in group forms of accommodation, 7% were hosted by 'others', 7% stayed in a hotel provided by the Government, and 7% in accommodation provided by the employer.³¹ According to the PAQ research company, 70% of refugees live in private rental housing while 16% live in hotels or hostels.³²

As regards specifically Romani refugees from Ukraine, during the first few months of the war they lived most often in residential hostels (40%) and in refugee centres, including tent cities (34%) provided by the state, particularly the Ministry of Interior. Approximately half of the households did not have a stove, refrigerator, or kitchen utensils, and 15% of them did not even have access to hot water.³³

Data presented by Czech NGO *Romodrom* in July 2023, showed that, even one year after the beginning of the full scale invasion, Romani refugees from Ukraine were still most frequently living in emergency housing or accommodation. This was followed by solidarity accommodation, mostly in the Hradec Králové region, where refugees were accommodated in the household

of an employer who employed them for seasonal work. Only a minority of Romani people lived in rental housing, and then more or less only in Prague. In most cases, those had a one-year lease contract.³⁴ There is an obvious difference between Romani refugees and the general refugee population from Ukraine who most often tend to live in private accommodation and only 12% live in group forms of housing.

The PAQ Research survey published in December 2023 shows that free housing was provided to 7% of refugees, while in June 2023 it had been provided to a much larger number of 32% of refugees from Ukraine. At that time, about 16% were staying in hostels and other accommodation facilities.³⁵

For this research, six Romani refugees were interviewed about their experiences accessing housing. Five of them were currently living in residential hotels while the sixth rented an apartment, however most of them had also lived in other types of accommodation since their arrival to the Czech Republic, including refugee centres or tent camps. One of the refugees, a 27-year-old woman from Mukachevo, reported that she had to stay in an empty train carriage upon arriving to the Czech Republic.

28 See: <https://eso.ochrance.cz/Nalezene/Edit/10526>.

29 The report from the Ombudsperson's investigation can be found [here](#).

30 Romea.cz: Czech ombudsman: Rule changes for temporarily protected Ukrainians leave tens of thousands in precarity, unable to cover their basic needs, 28 June 2023. Available [here](#).

31 Ukraine Situation - Czechia: Protection Profiling and Monitoring Factsheet, December 2023. Available [here](#).

32 PAQ Research, Dva roky války na Ukrajině. V Česku zůstává přes 300 tisíc uprchlíků. Integrace musí pokračovat, 13 February 2024. Available [here](#).

33 PAQ Research, Ukrajínští Romové v České republice, July 2022. Available [here](#).

34 Romodrom, Průběžný monitoring situace romských uprchlíků z Ukrajiny, 06-07/2023.

35 PAQ Research, Integrace uprchlíků na trhu práce a v bydlení, December 2023. Available [here](#).

She described how, when she first arrived at the main railway station in Prague in April 2022, accompanied by her six children, she encountered police who told her to go back to Ukraine and witnessed Romani refugees being treated poorly, compared to non-Romani refugees. She spent the night at the train station in one of the empty train carriages, which had been designated for that purpose, but had to vacate at

4am the next morning. She then went to the regional processing centre for Prague the next day, where she and the other Romani refugees were instructed to wait outdoors in a tent without food or water. She and her children slept there on a cot with no blankets in sub-zero temperatures at night. She described the staff of the centre as treating them “like dogs” or “like terrorists” and shouting racist abuse at them.

“ABSOLUTELY UNSUITABLE” EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

Upon arrival to the Czech Republic, many Roma were placed in emergency accommodation facilities in Vyšné Lhoty and Bělá-Jezová. The office of the Ombudsman visited the temporary emergency accommodation in Vyšné Lhoty and found it **absolutely unsuitable for families with children**.³⁶ At the time of the visit there were 250 people there, 65-70 of whom were children. Some had been there for more than a month and it was not clear what the outlook was for them. Adaptations were recommended for converting the facility into longer-term housing for families with children, namely removing the barbed wire and the bars on the windows and adding leisure facilities and spaces where families could cook their own meals. However, due to the facility’s capacity and location on the outskirts of a small village, any steps to integrate its residents into Czech society would have only a limited effect. With such a large number of people, it is difficult to effectively carry out individual social work (for example, to evaluate the situation of each family separately and support them in securing independent housing) or to support the children in their education and development. In other words, yet another segregated and excluded locality was being created in the Vyšné Lhoty facility.

On the anniversary of the invasion, *RomanoNet*, a consortium of 15 pro-Roma and Romani-led organisations, issued a statement criticising the triumphant claims of the Czech Government, including by its Human Rights Commissioner, that Czech society and the authorities had successfully handled the influx of Ukrainians fleeing the war. On the subject of housing they stated that: “*Instead of being given access to adequate housing, Romani Ukrainians seeking temporary protection were sent in droves to detention facilities which felt like prisons in many instances. Outdoor tents were also pitched, and the asylum-seekers living in them were*

predominantly Romani. In some regional cities, local representatives proved incapable of arranging for dignified conditions even in those camps. Both local and regional politicians were against housing Romani asylum-seekers in their cities and regions, expressing concern that they would not be able to deal with more ‘inadaptables’.”³⁷

One of the Romani activists interviewed for this research described how some of her own experiences with discrimination were reflected back at her while trying to help Romani refugees who arrived in the early months of the war: “*Us – Roma who live here - we have quite often problems with finding accommodation and for them it was even more difficult. Noone wanted to accommodate them. Thus, they were put in former barracks, detention centres, forest, outside the civilisation. When those arriving saw barb-wired fences they ran away. Some even did not want to leave the bus as they thought they are entering a prison. I have very bad experience from that environment. When I first visited the refugee centre, it was evening. There were about 10 men armed with weapons. They took us inside one by one. They were not among the friendliest people. The refugees were taken inside to two rooms family by family. In one of the rooms, their belongings were searched, probably this was some sort of system. In the other room, they were doing personal search of their clothes and bodies if they do not carry something, probably guns or smuggle something, perhaps. I did not understand that. When I asked about it, I was banned from re-entering.*”

Activists also recalled instances of awful, racist treatment of Romani families, including one family being referred to as “five black heads” and another case from a dormitory where the manager tied a child to a radiator while his family went out shopping.

36 The Ombudsperson informed the Minister of Interior about the situation in Vyšné Lhoty in a letter, available [here](#).

37 Romea.c, RomanoNet: The Czech Government failed to aid Romani Ukrainians seeking temporary protection, we witnessed the double standard, 24 February 2023. Available [here](#).

“Instead of being given access to adequate housing, Romani Ukrainians seeking temporary protection were sent in droves to detention facilities which felt like prisons in many instances.”

SEGREGATION AND INADEQUATE LIVING CONDITIONS

Testimonies from activists and NGOs confirm that Romani refugees were most often segregated when it comes to housing. The refugee centres were either Roma only or, if there was a mixed population, Roma were put in one block or building. Segregating Roma is not a new concept in the Czech Republic, with Czech Roma facing discrimination in the private rental market and a lack of provision of specific housing programmes to bridge the gap:³⁸

*“If you ask me about housing, the answer is easy. **All of them live in segregated types of housing.** You can find them in accommodation facilities which was changed thanks to generous support of the state into emergency housing and whether it is a coincidence or not but these crisis or emergency housing forms are provided predominantly or exclusively to Roma. This is another development of another segregated housing. Now we have Czech Roma in segregated housing and Ukrainian Roma in segregated housing.”*

Additionally, these segregated housing options were often of inadequate and subpar quality when compared to those available for non-Roma; an NGO worker remarked that the “dormitories set aside for Roma most often were the worst ones.”

One of the Romani refugee interviewees complained of bedbugs in the residential hotel she lived in previously as well as belongings being stolen. Another stated that the reduction of the amount of money given to those with temporary protection status meant she is finding it hard to afford her rented housing. There were also complaints regarding the fact that each member of the family had to pay the same amount of money for accommodation including minors. One of the respondents was pregnant at the time of the interview and she revealed her concern that once her baby is born, the rent will be increased

again. Refugees also voiced concerns that landlords were extorting them, and charging for ‘extras’, such as access to washing machines.

An NGO worker and activist shared her experience: *“I visited one of the refugee centres which was about 2-3 kilometres from the town. There were about three mothers with smaller children and one older man who complained that there are far away from civilisation, there is a lack of food – only one cooked meal per day plus some crackers or something like that for children. They had a feeling that their children do not have enough food and need more. However, if they wanted to buy something, the town was very far. They openly said that they are waiting for the payment of the first benefit and they will leave to Hungary.”*

This isolation and difficulty in accessing employment or education led to some families leaving to return to Ukraine, despite the risk to their safety: *“I recall a group of families of 30 people living in a hostel in a forest, 3km from the main road and a shop or a doctor. Altogether, they had 6 cups, 4 plates and were cooking on a single-plate cooking table. They had only two pots. Children had nowhere to play. They wanted to move elsewhere. Mothers wanted to work. However, due to their isolation, it was difficult. They moved back to Ukraine and they never returned.”*

In a situation that succinctly demonstrates the challenges faced by Romani refugees, one activist describes how municipal authorities shouted at Roma living in a tent camp, accusing them of allowing their children to live in unsuitable conditions and that they should leave. Instead of improving the inadequate living conditions that Romani refugees had no choice but to live in, the authorities blamed those fleeing war for their own situation.

“Now we have Czech Roma in segregated housing and Ukrainian Roma in segregated housing.”

38 ERRC News, ‘EU calls for action on housing segregation, while many Roma live from ‘expulsion to expulsion’’, 18 October 2023. Available [here](#).

ANASTASIA'S STORY

Anastasia is a Romani refugee from Zacarpathia. She has four children: her oldest child is 10 years old and her youngest is 8 months old. They arrived by bus to Prague in March 2022, just after the beginning of the war, and were first housed in a refugee centre where they spent two weeks. Later the family was moved around to several residential hotels, including one that was more than 100km from Prague to a place where there was no bus service and no work to be had. They were forced to leave for a variety of reasons, all of which were no fault of the family. Next they were moved to another residential hotel close to a ski centre, where it got extremely cold in the winter. Anastasia remembers how her children were treated badly there; the adults running the facility would often grab them by the ears and sometimes the other inhabitants would beat them. In that facility people lived in groups of 10 in a 3mx3m room and the owner would barge in on them at all times of the day or night. Anastasia describes the conditions as more for animals than people. They stayed there for a month and then made it to another Czech town, where the accommodation was in real apartments but again they were forced to move on, without knowing why. Despite all this, Anastasia wants to stay in the Czech Republic and for her children to finally start going to school.



EDUCATION

Figures from UNICEF, taken at the beginning of the 2023/24 academic year, show that there were approximately 80,000 Ukrainian refugee children of school age residing in the Czech Republic, of which 51,000 were enrolled in Czech schools.³⁹ When this is taken with the results of a PAQ research survey carried out in November 2023, where 97% of eligible children who arrived to the Czech Republic in 2022 were attending elementary school there, figures suggest that overall the attendance rate is 88-96% compared to the lower estimates of the Ministry of Education (approximately 72%). According to further estimates, 68-83% of eligible refugee children attend pre-school education.⁴⁰

These figures are high, however according to an earlier PAQ Research survey carried out in June 2022, 78% of Romani refugee children from Ukraine were not participating in any form of primary education, compared to 13% of the general population of Ukrainian refugees.⁴¹ While numbers may have risen since that survey was taken, the disparity between Romani and non-Romani attendance seems unlikely to have disappeared completely.

Indeed, despite of the official high numbers of refugee children enrolled in schools in the Czech Republic, the reality seems to be that many Romani children do not physically go to school. This was mentioned by two interviewed NGO workers, with one of them stating that many parents enrolled their children in schools in order to avoid repercussion from social-protection authorities but that actual attendance was low. Of the four Romani refugees interviewed for this research who had school age children, only one stated that her children regularly attend school in the Czech Republic. The other three intend to enrol their children in the education system in the near future.

Activists mentioned several reasons for why parents were not sending children to school. The main one was the language barrier, as even though there were so-called 'adaptation groups' created which focused mainly on learning the Czech language, there was a lack of them and they could not fulfil the demand. One activist also expressed his opinion that teachers were not prepared to have pupils whom they did not understand.

Many Romani children do not physically go to school.

39 Expats.cz, Changes to Ukrainian refugee status in The Czech Republic: Here's what you need to know, 14 September 2023. Available [here](#).

40 PAQ Research, Vzdělávání a učení dětí ukrajinských uprchlíků v Česku, November 2023. Available [here](#).

41 PAQ Research, Ukrajínští Romové v České republice, July 2022. Available [here](#).

An 18-year old Romani refugee interviewed for this research described how none of the children in her family have been able to officially enrol in school yet, but that they are visited by a teacher who holds 'adaptation classes', mostly in Czech language, at the residential hotel where they live Monday through Friday during school hours and that they intend to enrol them in school in the near future. She also expressed how she had herself been a student in Ukraine, but that she has not continued her education in the Czech Republic as she has nobody to accompany her to enrol and she does not believe she would succeed if she tried alone.

Refugee children could also be enrolled in the education system through online learning, attending classes online from home. This was also possible for many Romani refugee children however, as many respondents confirmed, Romani families often did not have access to the electronic equipment and

stable internet connections necessary for children to effectively participate in online learning.

An additional problem is the lack of space in educational facilities, a structural issue which existed in the Czech Republic before the beginning of the war. There were already not enough pre-school or school facilities for the native Czech population, and so the influx of refugees needing to access the education system has brought additional strain. One activist described how some school directors have refused to enrol children from Ukraine due to these capacity reasons.

To help strengthen the provision of education and increase enrolment of refugee children, UNICEF, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Czech NGO *Romodrom* carried out formal and non-formal education programmes. By April 2023 nearly 60,500 children and adolescents had been supported in their learning through these initiatives. Of those, 369 were Romani refugee children.⁴²

EMPLOYMENT

According to reports from June 2023, only approximately 55% of refugees were employed by that point. The language barrier and issues in recognising Ukrainian degrees and qualifications were identified as the main obstacles to finding employment for refugees; two-thirds of refugees are not able to fully apply their qualifications, leading to experts often working in low-skilled jobs despite their specialised skillsets.⁴³ According to the Czech Minister of Labour, Marian Jurečka, refugees from Ukraine employed in the Czech Republic contribute up to 15 billion CZK (€592,755,000) in taxes to the economy per year.⁴⁴

A survey by PAQ Research, carried out in cooperation with Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and published in December 2023, shows that the employment rate of refugees from Ukraine is steadily growing. Overall, about 72% of economically active people already have a job in the Czech Republic. However, the majority continue to work below their qualifications and very often in precarious conditions, contributing to the fact

that 57% of arrivals remain below the poverty line. According to the survey, changes in state support also play a role with the number of recipients of humanitarian benefits and the share of refugees living free of charge significantly decreasing over the previous six months. As of December 2023, only 36% of households received the humanitarian benefit, a decrease of 20% compared to June 2023.⁴⁵

According to the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) survey which was conducted between June and July 2023 with more than 1,200 refugees from Ukraine who arrived in the Czech Republic, 17% of respondents face unemployment while 27% are outside the labour force, meaning that they are not able to work or not looking for work. Overall, 16% of respondents work without any formal contract, meaning that their jobs are uncertain and they are exposed to exploitation.⁴⁶

It is important to note that when the temporary protection ends, so does any employment relationship, as follows:

42 UNICEF, UNICEF Refugee Response in the Czech Republic: Results and Priorities, May 2023. Available [here](#).

43 Bezpečí a domov campaign website, available [here](#).

44 Expats.cz, Changes to Ukrainian refugee status in The Czech Republic: Here's what you need to know, 14 September 2023. Available [here](#).

45 PAQ Research, Integrace uprchlíků na trhu práce a v bydlení, December 2023. Available [here](#).

46 Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation: Czech Republic – multi-sector needs assessment, Final report – December 2023. Available [here](#).

- a) as of the day on which their stay in the territory of the Czech Republic is to end according to an enforceable decision on cancellation of their residence permit;
 - b) as of the date on which the judgment imposing the penalty of expulsion from the territory of the Czech Republic on these persons becomes final;
 - c) upon expiry of the period for which a work permit, employee card, or long-term residence permit was issued for the purpose of performing a job requiring high qualifications.
- If a temporarily protected employee does not submit an approved extension of temporary protection to his employer, his employment must end.⁴⁷

“When the potential employer heard they were Roma he refused to hire them.”

One NGO worker interviewed for this research highlighted that for Romani refugees, alongside the difficulties presented by language barriers and illiteracy, a significant barrier was that the refugees were mainly mothers with children without husbands present, and conditions for them to be able to work were not provided for. Often they did not have a place to leave their children, since the kindergartens were oversubscribed or they were unable to access available help due to a lack of knowledge of the system. He also pointed to the fact that lower qualified jobs, which Roma often carry out due to systemic discrimination, had earlier working hours which also created a practical obstacle:

“Look, the higher education level people have, the later the working hours begin. For those with lower qualifications, the work often starts at 6. It means that they would have to take their children somewhere at 5 let’s say. Show me a kindergarten which opens at 5. These people also have to work long working hours, e.g. 12 hours a day.”

Of the six Romani refugees interviewed for this research, only one was employed. She worked at an outdoor produce stand but had in the past also worked as a cleaner at a restaurant, bartering cleaning services for money. She was also working with an NGO, helping Romani refugees from Ukraine. Two of the others cited childcare as the reason they were not looking for work; one woman was caring of a child younger than 1 year of age, while the other was in the 8th month of her pregnancy. Another was unable to work due to a serious health condition, while the others were actively looking for work.

As well as the practical and systemic obstacles to employment faced by Roma, discriminatory attitudes also play a part. One NGO worker recalled how she and her colleagues tried to help a group of Romani refugee women find a job in the Czech Republic. They were almost successful and the women were supposed to plant trees, however when the potential employer heard they were Roma he refused to hire them.

⁴⁷ Podnikatel.cz, ‘Neprodloužením dočasné ochrany pracovní poměr cizince končí’, 14 March 2023. Available [here](#).



Romani man, Telmana St. Uzhhorod, Ukraine.

Q GENERAL OVERVIEW

As of 31 December 2023, there were just over 65,000 refugees from Ukraine recorded in Hungary, and approximately 41,000 refugees had been granted temporary protection.⁴⁸ Almost 26,000 Ukrainians have applied for a work permit in Hungary while new applications for temporary protection have stabilised, averaging about 650 applications per month.

Overall, 72% of refugees from Ukraine are women and children⁴⁹ and approximately 40% of the families are led by a single adult, mainly women due to the requirement for men aged between 18 and 60 to remain in Ukraine to support military efforts. In addition, every third household has a member with a chronic illness and about 10% of the refugee households include someone with a disability.⁵⁰

The International Organisation for Migration's (IOM) 2023 report, based on a survey of refugees from Ukraine reached, among others, the following conclusions:

- 60% of those arriving from Ukraine do not know where to turn for information.
- 77% of the refugees arriving to Hungary are women.
- Upon arrival, the refugees claimed they needed help mainly with transportation/travel, accommodation, and financial support.

- Upon arrival, 43% of the survey respondents had no intention of traveling further from Hungary until the situation at home was settled. Overall, 36% of the respondents said they would soon leave for another country.
- The biggest challenges affecting integration in Hungary were: language barriers, financial difficulties, as well as the lack of information, the lack of housing options, and the lack of available services.⁵¹

A survey published by the UNHCR in October 2023 on Protection Risks and Needs of Refugees from Ukraine in Hungary is based on 342 interviews conducted between April and September 2023. When asked about their most urgent needs (while allowing multiple responses) 61% of the respondents stated material assistance, 42% accommodation, 41% healthcare, 33% food, 32% education, and 27% employment.⁵²

According to the 2023 Eurobarometer survey 'the EU's response to the war in Ukraine'⁵³, overall 76% of Hungarian respondents agree with welcoming people fleeing the war into the EU. This is a drop of 5% when compared to May 2023.

TEMPORARY PROTECTION VS. DUAL CITIZENSHIP

The EU Temporary Protection Directive was transposed into the Hungarian legal order in 2004. Currently, the Act LXXX of 2007 on Asylum is governing the issue.

On 7 March 2022, Government Decree No. 86/2022. (III. 7.) was adopted. It introduced temporary

protection for refugees coming from Ukraine to Hungary. The Hungarian government initially prolonged the duration of the temporary protection status until March 2024⁵⁴, and then again until March 2025 in accordance with EU-wide measures.⁵⁵

48 UNHCR: Ukraine Refugee Situation/Hungary. Available [here](#).

49 UNHCR: Hungary: Inter-Agency Operational Update (July-December 2023). Available [here](#).

50 UNHCR: Ukraine Situation: Regional Refugee Response Plan - January-December 2023, p. 77. Available [here](#).

51 IOM: Hungary - Surveys with Refugees from Ukraine: Needs, Intentions, and Integration Challenges, January-March 2023. Available [here](#).

52 UNHCR: Hungary: Protection Profiling & Monitoring Factsheet - October 2023. Available [here](#).

53 Eurobarometer: the EU's response to the war in Ukraine, December 2023. Available [here](#).

54 UNHCR: Ukraine Situation: Regional Refugee Response Plan - January-December 2023, p. 77. Available [here](#).

55 See: <https://help.unhcr.org/hungary/temporary-protection/>.

In Hungary, temporary protection status can be granted to the following persons:

- Ukrainian citizens residing in Ukraine before 24 February 2022;
- Stateless persons or non-Ukrainian third country nationals, who have been granted international protection or equivalent national protection in Ukraine before 24 February 2022;
- Family members of the above-mentioned categories of persons.⁵⁶

Temporary protection grants residency in Hungary and entitles those who receive it to services such as accommodation, healthcare, and education. The procedure of obtaining temporary protection in Hungary is lengthy, taking up to 55 days in some cases. Administrative and capacity obstacles hinder access of refugees to temporary protection and related benefits.⁵⁷

It is important to note that a significant number of people fleeing Ukraine and coming to Hungary hold Hungarian (i.e. EU) citizenship as well as Ukrainian, despite Ukraine not allowing dual citizenship. In 2010, the Hungarian Parliament amended the 1993 Act LV

on Hungarian citizenship, introducing a simplified naturalisation process. The essence of the simplified naturalisation process is that ethnic Hungarians living outside of Hungary do not need to settle in Hungary to obtain Hungarian citizenship, and they do not need to take a citizenship exam. They have to show that they have ancestors from Hungary or serve a reason to believe their origin is from Hungary, as well as prove knowledge of the Hungarian language.⁵⁸ For this reason, the border region of Zakarpattya - also known as Transcarpathia - in particular has a population which hold dual citizenship.

Refugees holding dual citizenship are not eligible to obtain temporary protection status. However, under the law, Ukrainian-Hungarian dual citizens fleeing war have the right to the same benefits as people with the temporary protection status unless they receive more favorable treatment due to their Hungarian citizenship.⁵⁹ Additionally, both those refugees who benefit from the temporary protection status and also those with dual (Ukrainian-Hungarian) citizenship who fled Ukraine because of the war are entitled to a monthly subsistence allowance of 22,800 HUF/month (approx. €57.71) for adults and 13,700 HUF/month (approx. €34.68) for minors.⁶⁰

NEGATIVE PORTRAYALS OF REFUGEES AND ROMA

According to the ECRI report, which covers the situation in the country until 30 June 2022, political and other public discourse in Hungary has become “increasingly xenophobic” and has taken on “highly divisive and antagonistic overtones” in recent years, mainly targeting refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants, Muslims, and LGBTIQ persons.⁶¹ Negative rhetoric towards refugees has increased since the 2015 migrant crisis and goes hand-in-hand with increased xenophobic attitudes within Hungarian society.⁶²

A common refrain is connecting refugees and Roma, suggesting that both are a burden on resources. In 2015, László Trócsányi, Hungary’s then Minister of Justice, connected the issue of migration with Romani communities in Hungary stating that Hungary cannot accept any economic migrants because it needs to

tend to the integration of 800,000 Roma.⁶³ Similarly, János Lázár, the Minister overseeing the office of the Prime Minister, said that Hungarians would not be able to coexist with refugees and migrants because, as he put it: *“We have been living with the Gypsies for 600 years, and to this day, we have not been able to integrate them.”*⁶⁴

In 2018, the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán likened refugees to Hungarian Roma, although, they were considered as being even worse because they came from abroad: *“I don’t want to talk about this at length because I don’t have to talk about this much in Miskolc, where people know what immigration is. There was a time in Miskolc when masses came into the city from outside the city. They witnessed what happened. The people of Miskolc experienced*

56 Safe in Hungary: Recognition as beneficiary of temporary protection (information). Available [here](#).

57 ACAPS: UKRAINE Regional social protection overview, p. 10, 21 November 2023. Available [here](#).

58 Honorary consulate of Hungary in Canada, see: <https://hungarianconsulate.com/simplified-hungarian-naturalization-en/>.

59 Safe in Hungary: Legal status of Ukrainian-Hungarian dual nationals. Available [here](#).

60 Safe in Hungary: Subsistence allowance. Available [here](#).

61 ECRI: Az ECRI jelentése Magyarországról (Hatodik ellenőrzési ciklus), p. 5. Available [here](#).

62 For more information see Article 19: Hungary: Responding to ‘hate speech’, 2018. Available [here](#).

63 Hungarian Free Press: Hungarian justice minister says no to immigrants, because Gypsies already pose huge burden, 22 May 2015. Available [here](#).

64 The Budapest Beacon, “We’ve been living together with gypsies for 600 years and we haven’t been able to solve their problems”, 19 September 2016. Available [here](#).

what happened then. And the people who came to Miskolc came from inside the territory of Hungary. Now just imagine when a people with a completely different culture, habits and a view of life come here from outside our borders. And the people of Miskolc should know that migrants always go to the big cities — that's where the ghettos will be established, the no-go zones, parallel societies.”⁶⁵

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the Hungarian Government has overemphasised the wave of refugees affecting Hungary, calling it: “*the largest humanitarian action in Hungary's history*” and suggesting that Hungary has accepted hundreds of thousands, even, according to some statements, more than a million refugees.⁶⁶ Additionally, there have been several cases of

exaggerated and sensational statements made in the public media regarding refugees, such as; “*Hungary's population increased by one and a half times with the incoming Ukrainian refugees*”. In fact, anyone crossing the Hungarian border from the East has been classed as a refugee or people seeking safety from the war, meaning commuter workers, Transcarpathians visiting relatives, and people coming to shop are all entered in the register as refugees, despite returning to Ukraine on the same day.⁶⁷ These inflated numbers are not supported by data from international organisations, some of which suggest that Hungary actually hosts less than one percent of the refugees fleeing Ukraine, however this exaggeration is beneficial to the Government's messaging, particularly Hungary's pro-Russian stance.⁶⁸ Anti-refugee sentiment is inevitably stoked further by this propaganda.



THE SITUATION OF ROMANI REFUGEES

The Eurobarometer survey from 2023 ‘Discrimination in the European Union’ revealed that 74% of respondents from Hungary believe that discrimination of Roma is widespread in their country. Overall, 37% stated that they would not like if their child had a romantic relationship with someone of Romani origin.⁶⁹ According to the FRA 2021 survey on the situation of Romani communities in ten European countries, 18% of survey respondents faced discrimination in the past year due to being Roma in core areas of life.⁷⁰ According to a 2022 survey, 8-9% of Hungarians would not allow Ukrainian Romani refugees to enter their country.⁷¹ These figures underscore a situation which the ERRC has been monitoring for years, whereby widespread anti-Roma sentiment leads to discrimination against Romani people in all areas. When the EU ruled that Hungary was no longer a ‘full democracy’ in 2022,

concerns over the treatment of Roma and their inability to exercise their fundamental rights were among the main issues raised.⁷²

As is the case in the other countries, there is no disaggregated data based on ethnicity regarding the number of Romani refugees from Ukraine in Hungary. However, the figures are not negligible and most Romani refugees come from the Transcarpathia region. As previously mentioned, despite the fact that double citizenship is not permitted in Ukraine, many people - including Roma - from Transcarpathia also hold Hungarian citizenship. As Hungarian citizens, they are not eligible for temporary protection status.⁷³

Some of the people fleeing war only travel through Hungary, or stay there temporarily before going on to settle permanently in other countries.⁷⁴

65 The Budapest Beacon: ‘Orbán says migrants are like gypsies, but migrants are worse because they come from outside Hungary’, 2 March 2018. Available [here](#).

66 About Hungary: FM: Hungary is implementing largest humanitarian action in its history, 22 September 2022. Available [here](#).

67 Átlátszó: If police and state media reports were true, there would already be over 5 million Ukrainian refugees in Hungary, 09 June 2023. Available [here](#).

68 *Ibid.*

69 Eurobarometer: Discrimination in the European Union, December 2023. Available [here](#).

70 FRA: Roma survey 2021, data. Available [here](#).

71 Ildikó Zakariás, et al.: Solidarity with the displaced people from Ukraine: Attitudes and practices examined through a population survey, Summary of the research (2022). Available [here](#).

72 ERRC News, ‘Hungary no longer a full democracy’: European Parliament cites Roma rights among its main concerns’, 16 September 2022. Available [here](#).

73 Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty: In Hungary, Ukraine's Roma Find Refuge From War But Not From Poverty, 03 June 2023. Available [here](#).

74 For more information see e.g. Mérce, ‘Ki marad és ki tér vissza? Ukrán háborús menekültek az EU-ban’, 18 January 2023. Available [here](#) (in Hungarian).

However, Hungarian-speaking Romani families from Transcarpathia typically do not have the opportunity or network of connections to travel further. Additionally, most of them are bound to Hungary because the men had already begun working there before the war started. As a result, Transcarpathian Romani families' current situation and future depend primarily on the Hungarian state welfare bodies and aid organisations. As usual, the vulnerability of Romani refugees in this situation is further increased by prevalent discrimination and prejudice against Romani communities.⁷⁵

One interviewed activist, when asked what words first come to mind when thinking about Romani refugees, said 'vulnerability' and 'hindered access to the conditions necessary for everyday life'. She went on to add that: *"The refugees have been here in Hungary for a year and a half now, and the situation is still not better, somewhat even worse. ... The Hungarian government does not want them here or does not want to provide them with any support in any field."*

"The Hungarian government does not want them here."

DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT

Romani refugees from Ukraine experience exclusion and marginalisation in Hungary and are in a disadvantaged position when accessing services such as healthcare, education, and employment when compared to non-Romani refugees.⁷⁶ Transcarpathian Romani refugees in Hungary are often dealt with by untrained, prejudiced, and overburdened volunteer and NGO aid workers, meaning the advice and aid they receive is lower quality or non-existent. The complex background of Roma who fled Transcarpathia is often difficult for the volunteers helping the refugees and the workers of civil organisations to work with. Ukrainian Romani refugees are also often spectacularly segregated, such as placed on separate floors or one side of a room designated for refugee accommodation.⁷⁷

Ukrainian Romani refugees usually arrive to Hungary with fewer resources than most ethnic Ukrainian refugees. In spite of that, many of them are sent to remote rural areas without access to adequate housing, employment, or state assistance. Often, as in the other countries in this report, Ukrainian Roma are not considered as 'real' refugees but rather economic migrants who came to take advantage of the system, which makes their access to benefits more difficult in practice.⁷⁸ According to one activist, many Hungarians even ask the refugees why they come to Hungary when they are from Transcarpathia and there is no active fighting there.

Ukrainian Romani refugees faced discrimination from officials, charity workers, and volunteers at reception points, aid distribution centres, and accommodation shelters. According to an NGO worker, while the majority of volunteers were of good will, some harboured anti-Roma prejudices. At the beginning of the war, they heard some volunteers at the railway stations make disparaging remarks about Roma (e.g. *'here come the ethnicum'*) and even refuse them sandwiches. Some volunteers were offhand and rude to Roma at emergency aid distribution points, and even abusive: *"On a couple of occasions I had to intervene when a Ukrainian volunteer was shouting at the Roma that they were imposters, Hungarian 'Gypsies' who spoke neither Ukrainian nor Russian. Even when they produced their Ukrainian passports, it wasn't enough, she shouted that these were fake documents, and that it was not fair that they were stealing precious aid from Ukrainians."*

Many Romani refugees are unwilling, and some actively afraid, to complain about living conditions or make any claims or requests about health issues for fear of worsening their situation. They are also very aware of public and official hostility towards Roma. The activist recounted how; *"When they came to us and were made welcome, they told us how much the kindness of people meant to them. They had had no access to essential information, and told us that they received no help from officials about how*

75 Romaversitas: The situation of Transcarpathian Romani families fleeing from Ukraine to Hungary, p. 29, 2022. Available [here](#).

76 UNHCR, Romaversitas: Recommendations on Roma inclusion in the Ukraine refugee response/ Hungary, May 2023. Available [here](#).

77 Átlátszó: Roma refugees from Transcarpathia face segregation and humiliation in Hungary, 16 November 2022. Available [here](#).

78 VOICE, HIAS: Ukraine Assessment Report - Waiting for the Sky to Close: The Unprecedented Crisis Facing Women and Girls Fleeing Ukraine, 26 May 2022, p. 30. Available [here](#).

to navigate very complicated procedures. We made sure that all of our volunteers, many of whom were themselves refugees, received a special briefing

about the situation of Roma. While I have my own experiences of racism, I was shocked by the level of hatred against Roma in society.”

“While I have my own experiences of racism, I was shocked by the level of hatred against Roma in society.”

Even though refugees from Ukraine are entitled to state benefits and have access to services, either through the temporary protection scheme or due to their dual citizenship, they face problems in accessing them. Lack of information is one of the main reasons, as the immigration authorities responsible for providing information have often been absent at the borders. Furthermore, there have been cases reported of misinformation from authorities. Higher levels of illiteracy among Ukrainian Romani refugees also limits their access to information,⁷⁹ and even if they are not illiterate, some who speak Hungarian cannot read and write in Hungarian and so cannot engage with written sources of information.⁸⁰

According to another activist, those refugees with double citizenship face specific problems related to the fact that they do not officially appear in the protection system, because they cannot register for temporary protection status. This raises concerns about their ability to access the rights that other refugees in Hungary have, as the activist put it: “*In theory, they*

have access to refugees’ rights. However, in practice it appears that this does not happen.”

The interviewed NGO worker believes the actions of the Hungarian Government are hypocritical: “*These people got dual citizenship when there was an interest in it, and now, when they come here and are entitled to many things, they are worse off than asylum seekers.*” Donations from various organisations provide an encouragement of hope for Romani refugees. However, a troubling trend shows that these refugees often find themselves being patronised and dependent, despite the goodwill behind the assistance. Romani refugees are grateful while treated as charity cases rather than individuals with agency. This creates a paradox where, despite losing trust and recognising such behaviours, many remain silent due to their dependence on the aid workers and their vital donations. The challenge is to create a supportive environment that empowers Romani refugees, acknowledges their dignity, and allows their voices to be heard without fear of repercussions.

HOUSING

During the first weeks and months of the war, most Romani refugees (unlike most non-Romani Ukrainians) stayed close to the Hungarian-Ukrainian borders with the hope of the war ending quickly, enabling them to return to Ukraine. They lived in temporary shelters which were unsuitable for long-term stay, and as the war continued and families eventually decided to stay, many of them continued to be housed in collective shelters.⁸¹ As the war drags on, refugees have been regularly searching for long-

term housing solutions. However, a combination of high demand and lack of affordable properties, especially in bigger cities, makes it difficult to find suitable housing. Moreover, there is a general reluctance of owners to rent their properties to families with children or for a short period of time, even before they find out they are Roma.⁸² During the early period of the war, one of the worst discriminatory incidents marked by antigypsyism took place in Záhony. The local mayor ordered the municipality to close the

79 Hungarian Helsinki Committee: The Situation of Romani Refugees Fleeing Ukraine Experiences gathered in the framework of the Ukraine refugee crisis response of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 20 April 2023. Available [here](#).

80 Interview with NGO worker 5.

81 Hungarian Helsinki Committee: The Situation of Romani Refugees Fleeing Ukraine Experiences gathered in the framework of the Ukraine refugee crisis response of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 20 April 2023. Available [here](#).

82 UNHCR: Ukraine Situation: Regional Refugee Response Plan - January-December 2023, p. 79. Available [here](#).

municipal and other charity tents when he found out that a train carrying about 300 Romani refugees had arrived at the town station.⁸³

According to the available data from the October 2023 survey carried out by the UNICEF in cooperation with

local Hungarian partners, 43% of Ukrainian refugees live in rented accommodation, 31% on collective sites, while fewer than 10%, respectively, either lived in a property provided by an employer, or in a hotel provided by the Government, or were hosted by relatives/friends, or had 'other' forms of accommodation.⁸⁴

REFUGEE SHELTERS

Romani refugees from Ukraine face the same barriers in effectively accessing the private housing market as non-Romani refugees, including prohibitive rents and high demand for rental properties⁸⁵, however they also face discrimination based on ethnicity. They often end up living in institutional settings such as shelters for homeless people, temporary family shelters, or dormitories that are not suitable for long-term accommodation due to being overcrowded and lacking essential facilities.⁸⁶ These refugee shelters are located in civil, church, or municipal institutions, and in some shelters there are inadequate facilities and a real lack of privacy⁸⁷; only 1 or 2 toilets and showers available for several families. Several generations of a family were forced to live in the same room in bunk beds.⁸⁸ Social work is either of a limited nature or non-existent.⁸⁹

Despite the unsuitability of these accommodations for long term stays, Romani refugees seem unable to find a way out. As one Romani activist put it: *"They have lived there for a year and a half and cannot leave these shelters. And they will not because they do not have a way out from these shelters, especially for Romani refugees."*

Additionally, it became apparent through interviews that some shelters did not accommodate Roma, and that ethnic Ukrainian refugees objected to sharing space with Roma. One NGO worker expressed his initial surprise at seeing no Romani people in shelters he visited following the outbreak of war: *"I knew there were many Romani refugees but couldn't find them in the shelters – it was not openly said, but very clear that they had not been made welcome – so we did outreach to find where they were. Many were living in remote locations without adequate facilities,*

overcrowded, not enough water, not enough toilets, not enough to eat. Others had been sheltered by very poor Hungarian Roma communities who shared the little they had with the refugees. So we began to bring supplies to wherever we could locate the Roma refugees outside Budapest."

This compounds concerns raised by NGOs regarding a lack of information on Romani refugee families in group shelters, after cases of denial of access to those shelters. One of the respondents in this research recalled that she tried to enter facilities under the responsibility of the defence committees, but she was refused access. They referred her to the head of the county who had to approve the entry. According to her, even people from the UN bodies were not allowed to enter. Without direct access, it is difficult to verify how many people live in shelters and in what conditions.

The Hungarian NGO *Romaversitas* conducted a survey between June and September 2022 interviewing 161 Romani refugees from Ukraine. Overall, only 49 were accommodated in private housing (either paying rent or on solidarity basis) while 110 refugees were placed with their families in refugee shelters. Romani refugees placed in apartments typically found housing through the housing programs of civil organisations. Usually, NGO workers helped to place the refugee families in solidarity accommodation type apartments, and/or acting as a housing agency they concluded apartment rental contracts with the apartment owners hosting the refugee tenants. They also provided housing rental support to families through financing from larger donors.⁹⁰ However, even those Romani families staying in accommodation provided

83 ERRC, Roma rights under siege – Monitoring reports from one year of war in Ukraine, 2023, p. 15. Available [here](#).

84 UNHCR: Hungary: Protection Profiling & Monitoring Factsheet - October 2023. Available [here](#).

85 UNHCR, Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation Inter-operational Update: Hungary, March 2023.

86 UNHCR, Romaversitas: Recommendations on Roma inclusion in the Ukraine refugee response/ Hungary, May 2023. Available [here](#).

87 ERGO Network: Monitoring of the Situation of Ukrainian Roma Refugees in Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Romania, Moldova and Slovakia, Final report, 2024, p. 18. Available [here](#).

88 Romaversitas: The situation of Transcarpathian Romani families fleeing from Ukraine to Hungary, 2022, p. 33. Available [here](#).

89 Interview with NGP worker/activist 4.

90 Romaversitas: Romani refugees' specific vulnerabilities in Hungary, p. 7-8. Available [here](#).

by private individuals often live inadequate housing conditions and overcrowded settings not dissimilar to

collective shelters. Many of those flats are located in the 8th or 10th District in Budapest.⁹¹

“I knew there were many Romani refugees but couldn’t find them in the shelters – it was not openly said, but very clear that they had not been made welcome.”

LEGISLATIVE CHANGES TO THE STATE HOUSING AID

It is important to note that as of 15 September 2023 only persons belonging to the following vulnerable groups have an unlimited right to stay at the accommodation facilities under the amended Government’s Decree No. 104/2022:

- a parent raising minor(s);
- minors;
- persons above 65 years of age;
- pregnant women;
- disabled persons.

As regards the rest of the refugees, according to the amended Decree, the employers of refugees with temporary protection status or those with double citizenship fleeing the war will be able to request a housing allowance (of 80,000 or 120,000 HUF - approx. €202,86 or €304,29 - depending on where

the accommodation is located). The employers then transfer it to those providing accommodation to the employees. However, the fact that only one parent providing care for children can be categorised as belonging to the vulnerable group can cause practical problems and can lead to separation of families, as a Romani activist explained:

“So, if there are, say, two parents with three children, only the mother can stay with the children, and if he doesn’t work, the man can’t stay, he has to go. This is concerning, because most men work for informally, or they don’t even get informal positions. So now this is actually a specific attack on Romani refugees.”

Those refugees excluded from the scope of support (unemployed, not belonging to the above-mentioned groups) have the possibility of being allocated “central accommodation” in group facilities.

“So now this is actually a specific attack on Romani refugees.”

Under the amended Government Decree No. 104/2022, any person coming from Ukraine is entitled to be accommodated in housing facilities for a month. If they apply for temporary protection status, they have the right to stay there until the end of the month following the month in which the decision regarding their application is made.⁹²

In order to receive support from the state, property owners must conclude an agreement with the ministry or the county and metropolitan defence committees concluded. Those voluntarily providing accommodation, are not entitled to support. In the case of employed refugees, in order to receive the support, the accommodation provider and

the employer have to sign a contract regarding accommodation. When it comes to employee – refugees with children who are of a primary school age (below 16 years of age), they must fulfil another condition; they have to prove that their child attends school.⁹³

According to NGO workers interviewed for this research, many Romani refugee families were forced to leave their accommodations after the amendment to the Decree entered into force. In some instances, people were given extremely short notice to leave, 3-4 days in some cases, which is not enough time to find and secure suitable alternative housing. In most cases these families are forced to move into

91 Romaversitas: The situation of Transcarpathian Romani families fleeing from Ukraine to Hungary, p. 32. Available [here](#).

92 Safe in Hungary: Longer term accommodation opportunities. Available [here](#).

93 Hungarian Helsinki Committee: Információ az Ukrajnából menekülők elszállásolása után kapható támogatásról. Available [here](#).

housing of a lower standard, and children have to be moved from the schools and kindergartens they had been attending, therefore interrupting the integration

process they had begun. According to an NGO worker, several families left Hungary completely and moved on to other countries.

EDUCATION

Ukrainian refugee children residing in Hungary become subject to compulsory education as soon as the application for temporary protection status is submitted. Children with dual citizenship are entitled to participate in education under the same formal conditions as Hungarian nationals.⁹⁴

According to the official data presented by the Hungarian Government, overall 5,014 Ukrainian refugee children were enrolled for the 2023/24 academic year across 1,525 schools in Hungary. Out of those, 19% attend kindergartens, 75% attend elementary schools, and 6% attend secondary schools.⁹⁵ This shows a slight increase as compared to the previous academic year.

However, not all children from refugee families attend school in Hungary. For some, the reason is the language barrier, related high costs of schooling, or their expectation of returning to Ukraine. Others prefer online education. Additionally, capacity limits of schools and the related shortage of teachers, as well as cases of bullying, also contribute to decreasing numbers of enrolled children and/or drop-out figures.⁹⁶ According to the 2023 UNHCR survey⁹⁷, 67% of the Ukrainian refugee households in Hungary included children between the age of 5 and 17. Overall, 32% of households with school-aged children reported at least one child as not registered for education in Hungary. According to parents, the two main reasons for not enrolling their children were; that they prefer online education (64%) and that there is a language barrier (29%). Other reasons included a lack of necessary documentation, and lack of available spaces.

Research carried out by the Hungarian NGO *Romaversitas* published in 2023 focused specifically on Romani refugee children and showed a significant improvement in enrolment rates of Romani children

in schools in Hungary. In 2022, 59% respondents had at least one child of a compulsory school age not enrolled in any school, while in 2023, this had dropped to 28%. However, roughly 47% of pre-school age children were still not enrolled in pre-school facilities. This research cited the main reasons for not enrolling children as: attending online education instead, education being provided directly in shelters, no assistance with enrolment, and an inability to travel to school. Additionally, the financial aspect presents a barrier for Romani refugee families living in precarious economic situations. Money is needed for travelling to school, meals, textbooks, school equipment, clothes, shoes, and so on. For families with several children of school age, the costs are multiplied.

Notably, only 7% of the respondents' children attended segregated schools.⁹⁸ However, other forms of direct discrimination do occur. A social worker interviewed for this research revealed that in the town where he works, Romani refugee children are not allowed to attend the daycare and they have to leave the school before noon. Allegedly, there are no teachers who could supervise them. While non-Romani children do attend this school, the social worker mentioned cases of Romani children not being accepted to schools allegedly due to the language barrier although, officially, schools are not allowed to reject children based on these grounds.

A Romani activist interviewed for this research believes that Romani children often end up being marginalised, even without being segregated into separate schools: *"They just put them in the local school, and they don't know how to deal with them, and then, just like all Roma children, they sit in the back row, and no one asks them how they feel."* She believes that some schools are overburdened and do not want to take on another 'burden'.

94 Safe in Hungary: Education. Available [here](#).

95 UNHCR: Hungary: Inter-Agency Operational Update (July-December 2023), p. 4. Available [here](#).

96 UNHCR: Ukraine Situation: Regional Refugee Response Plan - January-December 2024, p. 78. Available [here](#).

97 UNHCR: Hungary: Protection Profiling & Monitoring Factsheet - October 2023. Available [here](#).

98 Romaversitas: The Educational Circumstances of Romani Refugee Children in Hungary - Summary of the Questionnaire survey, p. 16-17. Available [here](#).

“They just put them in the local school, and they don't know how to deal with them, and then, just like all Roma children, they sit in the back row, and no one asks them how they feel.”

As has already been mentioned, lack of knowledge and information also plays a role in accessing education. Moreover, the procedure of enrolment is a bureaucratic one. Enrolment is preceded by several administrative steps - such as securing a registered address, a TAJ (i.e. health insurance) number, and a NEK (i.e. Hungarian Unified Card System) datasheet - which are challenging to navigate without local knowledge and help, especially for the Transcarpathian refugee Romani families, a large proportion of whom did not receive adequate information about their status and benefits.

Another interviewed activist suggested that Romani parents are sometimes afraid of letting their children attend schools since they did not have good experiences at school themselves. Some were afraid that if their children did not attend school regularly, they would be punished. The activist believes that social workers should ideally help mediate the process between schools and parents to allay these fears where possible.

Transcarpathian Romani children's pre-existing educational disadvantages further worsen their chances of entering public education elsewhere. Those who are 16 years-old had often already dropped out of schools in Ukraine; “*They do not even attend school there because the education offers no perspective*” relates an activist. Since the compulsory education age in Hungary is 16, these young Roma are no longer included in the system. If they can, they start working to help their families. In addition, teenage Romani girls risk dropping out of school due to domestic duties at home, early marriage, and childbearing. These intergenerational structural problems result in high rates of early school leaving, dropout, and illiteracy among the Transcarpathian Romani population. As a result, Romani refugee children are often placed in lower level classes in Hungarian schools and/or struggle with educational difficulties due to their existing disadvantages. Since Romani refugee parents are also usually illiterate or uneducated, they cannot help their children learn.⁹⁹



EMPLOYMENT

The overall employment rate of Ukrainian refugees in Hungary is quite high, reaching 71% of refugees of working age (16-64). Of the rest, approximately 20% are not in a position to look for work (not able to work, not looking for an employment) or are still enrolled in education. The unemployment rate among all Ukrainian refugees of working age is about 9%.¹⁰⁰ According to another source, from October 2023, 31% of refugees in Hungary were homemakers, 27% were employed in the host country, 18% were unemployed, 12% were retired, and 9% worked remotely. Language barrier and lack of job opportunities were quoted as the main reasons for unemployment.¹⁰¹

Approximately 11% of refugees work without an official employment contract. The average wages

earned by Ukrainian refugees are about 15% less than the average income of Hungarians. Every fifth family has lower purchasing ability compared to their situation back in Ukraine. Their situation forces them to reduce their spendings, spend some of their savings, reduce healthcare-related expenses, or carry out illegal or risky jobs.¹⁰²

With the new changes made to the legislation governing state housing aid provided to refugees, it is obvious that the Hungarian Government is pushing all refugees to the labour market. However, not all of them have equal access to employment. For example, those living in rural areas have fewer job opportunities compared to those who were sent to live in Budapest by the defense committee.¹⁰³

99 Romaversitas: The situation of Transcarpathian Romani families fleeing from Ukraine to Hungary, p. 32. Available [here](#).

100 UNHCR: Ukraine Situation: Regional Refugee Response Plan - January-December 2023, p. 78. Available [here](#).

101 UNHCR: Hungary: Protection Profiling & Monitoring Factsheet - October 2023. Available [here](#).

102 UNHCR: Hungary: Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (December 2023), p. 6-7. Available [here](#).

103 MÉRCE: Munkára kényszerítik az ukrainai menekülteket, még ha ezért szét is szakadnak a családok, 29 September 2023. Available [here](#).

Even though Romani refugees can, in theory, enter and stay on the labour market under the same conditions as Hungarians and native Ukrainian refugees, in practice they face many challenges which results in an economic uncertainty for them

and their families. They are often refused from jobs and, if they get one, the job is unofficial, temporary, uncertain, or poorly paid.¹⁰⁴ This is compounded by many Romani adults not having even a primary level education.

“It's tricky with no schooling or education and living in a foreign country.”

The social worker interviewed for this research mentioned an example of a Romani refugee woman who worked 12 hours a day and received 8,000 HUF (about €20) per day. She had to feed three children with that money.

In fact, many Romani women arrive to Hungary with small children and have to stay at home with them. Those who are not homemakers have difficulties finding a job and often end up working on a temporary basis or seasonally, as a Romani activist interviewed for this research explains;

“The thing with women is that it is more difficult for them to find a job because they have small children, and they can't combine it with their household duties and raising children. It's tricky with no schooling or education and living in a foreign country. Some people can find part-time jobs, usually cleaning

places or in the kitchen, and occasional or seasonal jobs. There are some seasonal jobs in the summer, but not so good in the winter.”

Results of a survey carried out on a sample of 108 Romani refugees (89% of which were women) in Hungary show that 72% of the respondents were either homemakers or unemployed. However, only 8 respondents stated that no one from their family works.¹⁰⁵ Romani men often work as construction workers or in factories. The social worker explained that; *“There are very few job opportunities, and many are informal; they (employers) exploit Romani men because they don't register them, and sometimes they don't even pay them.”* According to an NGO worker interviewed for this research, some of the Romani refugee men moved abroad (for example to Canada) where they work and send money to their spouses and children who remained in Hungary.

HEALTHCARE

In Hungary, refugees coming from Ukraine who applied for or were granted temporary protection status and those with dual Ukrainian-Hungarian citizenship have the right to a number of healthcare services free of charge.¹⁰⁶ Those include general practitioner care, urgent care, inpatient care and treatment prescribed by a doctor, pregnancy and maternity care (incl. free of charge childbirth services), as well as emergency dental care provided that the treatment belongs to the lowest reimbursement category.¹⁰⁷

However, Ukrainian refugees in Hungary and especially those of Romani origin face several barriers preventing them from fully and effectively benefitting from the Hungarian healthcare system. The UNHCR survey published in October 2023 found that about 42% of respondents who found themselves in need of healthcare in Hungary experienced some difficulties. The difficulties were related to the following issues: language barrier (61%), long waiting times (40%), denied access to healthcare (34%), unavailability of healthcare (26%),

104 UNHCR, Romaversitas: Recommendations on Roma inclusion in the Ukraine refugee response/ Hungary, May 2023. Available [here](#).

105 Romaversitas: The Educational Circumstances of Romani Refugee Children in Hungary - Summary of the Questionnaire survey, p. 16-17. Available [here](#).

106 Safe in Hungary: Health care. Available [here](#).

107 For the full list of medical services see e.g. IOM: Rights of Ukrainian Refugees to Hungarian Health Care, 01 July 2023. Available [here](#).

and unaffordability (23%). Overall, 27% of those who temporarily visited Ukraine at least once since their departure declared access to healthcare as the main reason for the visit.¹⁰⁸

There is a lack of data regarding the access of Romani refugees specifically to healthcare in Hungary. However, interviews carried out with activists for the purposes of this research show that there are several obstacles. According to the activists working with Romani refugees, a primary issue is a lack of information regarding how the Hungarian healthcare system functions and the cost.

Additionally, there is a lack of knowledge when it comes to healthcare providers in Hungary. There have been cases when Romani refugees are denied free healthcare, despite being entitled to it. As an example,

the interviewed social worker mentioned the case of a Romani refugee woman who suffered a miscarriage. She was refused treatment unless she paid for it, eventually being billed 500,000 HUF as a hospital fee despite being entitled to free maternity services.

According to an NGO worker, sometimes refugees are required to show a health insurance card even though they are not required to have one under the law. If they do not show it they are sent away, despite being entitled to be examined and treated. Another activist added that: *“This is the case when bureaucratic difficulties related to dual citizenship come into play. This war has been going on for almost two years, but this dual citizenship is still extremely complicated and a big obstacle for doctors. It happens regularly, for example, that they want to be paid for examinations the refugees are entitled to.”*

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTHCARE

As the majority of refugees are women, sexual and reproductive healthcare is a key issue, and for Romani women and girls in particular access to this healthcare is often difficult or marred by racism and discrimination. The EMMA Association in Hungary focussed on the urgent need for refugee women and girls to have assistance accessing dignified sexual and reproductive healthcare in Hungary¹⁰⁹ and described how women and girls from the Romani community *“ended up being the most intersectionally marginalised.”* The problems faced by Romani women and children are particularly severe as the most vulnerable group of refugees:

“With the intersectional discrimination and vulnerability that stems from not only being part of the Roma community, but now refugees, Roma women and girls are highly vulnerable to obstetric violence in maternity and gynaecological wards.”

The situation is especially difficult for Romani women refugees who have come from completely closed, segregated areas in Ukraine and many do not speak Ukrainian. EMMA found additional difficulties include the fact that many were not acquainted with common medical or physiological terms in the Ukrainian or Hungarian language, or lacked knowledge about their own reproductive functions. Without support and access to relevant and understandable information, such difficulties present a huge barrier to accessing healthcare.¹¹⁰

EMMA stated that when it comes to the abuse and harm done, racism is compounded by a combination of outdated and harmful birth practices, lack of soft skills and trauma-informed attitudes, and the lack of transparency and accountability within maternity care. In the Hungarian maternity care system, which is deemed unsafe for middle-class, well-resourced women, and where the disadvantaged struggle to get any care at all, the situation for refugee Romani women and girls can prove perilous. A crucial way in which EMMA continues to provide protection from obstetric violence is to accompany Romani women to their doctors' appointments, as their guardians and advocates. The state that they regularly encounter *“a total lack of empathy and understanding when accompanying teenage mothers to medical appointments.”*¹¹¹

One of the interviewees for this research, an activist, assists Romani refugees who require medical care. She corroborated EMMA's account, mentioning that women are often approached by doctors *“in a racist way”*. She said that she experienced several cases when pregnant Romani women faced unpleasant behaviour by medical staff; she recalled a case when one of the women was *“asked why she had so many children and why they had sex during the war.”* Another woman was visited by her family after a complicated delivery, however her family were sent away and forced to wait outside the building. The activist also

108 UNHCR: Hungary: Protection Profiling & Monitoring Factsheet - October 2023. Available [here](#).

109 The EMMA Association is a national women's rights organisation which pays special attention to gender-based oppression and obstetric violence in Hungary. Their website can be found [here](#).

110 Center for Reproductive Rights et al., Care in Crisis: Failures to Guarantee the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Refugees from Ukraine in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, 2023, p.35. Available [here](#).

111 IPPF, *Featured Perspectives: You've heard of physical, mental, and emotional violence. But have you heard of obstetric violence?* Available [here](#).

pointed out that pregnant Romani refugee women often have notes in their files that they have not been receiving prenatal care, even if this is not correct. The underlying racism suggests that the Romani woman is an ‘unfit’ parent, even before she has delivered her baby. These situations also might result in maternity benefits not being paid to mothers.

As an inevitable consequence of all the above-mentioned issues, there is a reported lack of trust among Romani refugees towards doctors and healthcare providers in general. Many Ukrainian

Roma even return to Ukraine to access healthcare¹¹², as a Hungarian Romani activist explained;

“For example, we have heard of many cases when Romani refugees returned to their doctors in the Transcarpathian region for health care. For example, a twenty-year-old woman expecting twins, regularly returned for prenatal care. From this case, it is clear that there is no trust in the Hungarian system, nor do they have much information; they do not know where to go, and no one accompanies them. Many did not even know they were entitled to free health care.”

**Women and girls from the Romani community
“ended up being the most intersectionally marginalised.”**

¹¹² Center for Reproductive Rights, *Care in Crisis: Failures to Guarantee the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Refugees from Ukraine in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia*, 2023, p 10. Available [here](#).



Q GENERAL OVERVIEW

As of 11 February 2024, there were almost 117,000 refugees from Ukraine recorded on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Almost half of them were minors, and 58% of the refugees were women and girls.¹¹³ Moldova has received more Ukrainian refugees per capita than any other country.¹¹⁴ Most of the refugees come from Odesska oblast, Vinnytska oblast, Kyiv, and Mykolaivska oblast.¹¹⁵

The proximity of Moldova to Ukraine and the fact that some family members were already present in the country were among the main reasons why refugees from Ukraine chose to go there. Even though most of the refugees plan to return to Ukraine once the war ends, on the whole there was less urgency expressed about doing so.¹¹⁶

In fact, as regards immediate intentions, the IOM survey from June 2023 showed that 49% of refugees were settled or were planning to settle in Moldova, 45% were transiting to another country (mainly to Romania, Germany, or Canada), and only 4% intended to move back to Ukraine at that point.¹¹⁷

However, when asked about long-term plans, 69% of refugees planned to return to Ukraine in the future and only 13% did not wish to return.¹¹⁸

As of 8 March 2024, 92% of refugees in Moldova reported having at least one urgent need. When asked about the particular need, 69% answered material assistance, 41% food, 36% healthcare, 19% employment, 14% accommodation, and 7% education.¹¹⁹

According to a national survey initiated by the National Democratic Institute in March 2023, the majority of Moldovans - 65% of the adult population - have positive attitudes towards refugees from Ukraine and only 7% have a negative attitude. However, about 20% of Moldovan respondents are categorical in that refugees must return to Ukraine and are against them staying in Moldova long-term.¹²⁰ According to a survey carried out by the OHCHR, 15% of refugees from Ukraine reported that they have experienced negative reactions in Moldova because of their refugee status.¹²¹

Moldova has received more Ukrainian refugees per capita than any other country.

THE TRANSNISTRIA REGION

Transnistria is an internationally unrecognised separatist region, between the Dniester river and the Ukrainian border. It is politically, economically,

and militarily supported by Russia and maintains its demands for independence from Moldova.¹²²

113 UNHCR, Daily population trends – Republic of Moldova. Available [here](#).

114 UNHCR, Moldova Fact Sheet, September 2023. Available [here](#).

115 IOM, Republic of Moldova — Surveys with Refugees from Ukraine: Needs, Intentions, and Integration Challenges, April – June 2023, p. 4. Available [here](#).

116 UNHCR, Ukraine Situation - Moldova: Moldova Participatory Assessment Report 2023, p. 5. Available [here](#).

117 IOM, Republic of Moldova — Surveys with Refugees from Ukraine: Needs, Intentions, and Integration Challenges, April – June 2023, p. 4. Available [here](#).

118 OHCHR, Moldova - Monitoring factsheet, September 2023. Available [here](#). <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/104509>

119 UNHCR, Regional protection profiling & monitoring, Protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine, data as of 08 March 2024. Available [here](#).

120 NDI Moldova, Percepții față de persoanele refugiate din Ucraina, March 2023. Available [here](#) (in Moldovan)

121 OHCHR, Moldova - Monitoring factsheet, September 2023. Available [here](#).

122 See: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18284837>.

Unsurprisingly, there is less available information regarding the situation of refugees from Ukraine in the Transnistria region. None of the activists or refugees interviewed for the purposes of this report live or work in this region. An interviewed NGO worker noted that it is almost impossible to obtain information about Romani refugees in the Transnistria region, as the information comes only from a small number of NGOs and their credibility is questionable. Another NGO worker added that even those few NGOs are limited mainly to Tiraspol, the capital, and the immediate surrounding area.

According to rough estimates, there are 5,000 - 10,000 refugees from Ukraine currently living in Transnistria.¹²³ The UNHCR reported, based on feedback from focus groups discussions, that refugees

staying in Transnistria mostly complained about the lack of information regarding access to services and assistance. They also highlighted that there are not enough employment opportunities and those that are available are not paid well. The region stands out positively in terms of access of refugee children to education, however there is a lack of trust towards the healthcare system provided in Transnistria.¹²⁴

According to the OHCHR, less than 30% of Ukrainian refugees staying in Transnistria have secured temporary protection status. An interviewed NGO worker explained the situation as follows:¹²⁵

“If you do not apply for temporary protection here on our side¹²⁶, you will remain as an undocumented person in Transnistria.”

TEMPORARY PROTECTION STATUS

As a non-EU state, Moldova did not apply the temporary protection regime to refugees from Ukraine during the first year of the war and the related refugee crisis. However, on 24 February 2022 the Moldovan Parliament issued a decision declaring a state of emergency.¹²⁷ For the duration of the state of emergency, those fleeing Ukraine were granted special entry rights, the legal right to stay, and access to education, employment, and healthcare.¹²⁸

As of 18 January 2023, Moldova introduced the Government’s decision no. 21, granting temporary protection to refugees from Ukraine, as well as certain other third-party nationals.¹²⁹ This decision became effective as of 1 March 2023. The beneficiaries of the temporary protection have the right to stay in Moldova for a limited period of time (originally until 1 March 2024), be employed without a work permit, to receive primary and emergency healthcare, to be

accommodated in temporary centres for persons in need, to receive education, and to access social assistance services.¹³⁰ In Moldova, the temporary protection regime also applies to those citizens of Ukraine who left before the war and cannot return home due to the ongoing conflict.¹³¹

As of 22 January 2024, more than 31,000 individuals had been granted temporary protection status in Moldova. In addition to that, about 7,000 people obtained residency permits.¹³² However, as of 31 December 2023, about 45% of the refugee population staying in Moldova for over 90 days was still without legal status.¹³³ The temporary protection regime valid for one year was extended until 1 March 2025.¹³⁴

In order to apply for temporary protection the individual has to be in Moldova, to have a Moldovan phone number, and to present the following documents:

123 Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS), From War Zone to Conflict Region: Ukrainian Refugees in Transnistria, 24 January 2024. Available [here](#).

124 UNHCR, Ukraine Situation - Moldova: Moldova Participatory Assessment Report 2023, p. 8. Available [here](#).

125 OHCHR, Moldova - Monitoring factsheet, September 2023. Available [here](#).

126 Clarification: by ‘here’ the interviewee means the side of the river Dniester opposite to Transnistria.

127 See: <https://rm.coe.int/1680a5b609>.

128 REACH, Temporary Protection Assessment Balti, Cahul, Chisinau, ATU Gagauzia, Moldova, December 2023. Available [here](#).

129 See: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=135260&lang=ru.

130 UNHCR, Temporary Protection in Moldova. Available [here](#).

131 International Centre for Migration Policy Development, Temporary protection for Ukrainians in Moldova: Achievements and challenges, 4 July 2023. Available [here](#).

132 UNHCR, Ukraine Situation - Moldova: Moldova Participatory Assessment Report 2023, p. 4. Available [here](#).

133 UNHCR, Ukraine Situation - Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Ukraine Situation - Final Report 2023, February 2024. Available [here](#).

134 Visit Ukraine, Moldova extends temporary protection for Ukrainian refugees: updated terms, 28 February 2024. Available [here](#).

- an identity document issued by the Ukrainian authorities – i.e. ID or passport;
- proof of having a residency in Moldova;
- if needed, civil status documents – i.e. if any of the family members do not have the documents above, the applicant has to provide a proof of relationship, such as a marriage certificate or birth certificate.

In terms of cases when the temporary protection ceases to exist, some of them are obvious; for example when the holder leaves the country

permanently or when the protection expires. However, temporary protection is also lost if the holder travels outside of the territory of Moldova for more than 45 days, cumulatively.¹³⁵

While having a temporary protection status reduces some obstacles, especially in accessing medical care, barriers in accessing employment and education persist as many of them are unrelated to having the status, such as knowledge of the language or a lack of information. There have also been cases reported when those with temporary protection status were asked to pay for services which are officially free of charge.¹³⁶



THE SITUATION OF ROMANI REFUGEES

As is the case for all the countries in this report, Moldova does not collect disaggregated data on the ethnicity of refugees from Ukraine. As a result, there are only estimates of numbers usually made by NGOs or international organisations.

According to the mapping of the situation of Romani refugees in Moldova carried out by the Roma Task Force in June and July 2023, more than 1,500 Romani refugees from Ukraine were identified in Moldova. Approximately one-third of them live in the Transnistria Region. However, the real numbers could be higher due to increased rates of mobility amongst some Romani refugees. Overall, 54% of the identified Romani refugees were women and 46% were men. Most of the Romani refugees in Moldova live in urban areas, with just 28% living in rural areas. These numbers are slightly higher when compared to the overall refugee population, of which 20% live in rural settings.¹³⁷

When asked about the main reasons for choosing Moldova, all the Romani refugee respondents interviewed for this report cited its proximity to Ukraine as the main reason. Similarly, when asked whether they want to stay in Moldova after the war or whether they would prefer to return to Ukraine, all respondents replied they would prefer to return to Ukraine. One respondent explained that, while she would like to return to Ukraine, her house had been destroyed and so currently she has nowhere to return to. Some Romani refugees also have family in Moldova, and chose to stay with them.

While most Romani refugees who stayed in Moldova wished to remain until they were able safely return home to Ukraine, a small number intended to move on to other countries. This was mainly due to possible family reunification. According to activists interviewed for this research, most of the refugees who were able to leave Moldova have left to countries such as Germany or Romania. However, moving to EU countries requires the relevant documentation, as well as finances to support the move, which Romani refugees tend to lack. One activist, when asked about those who stayed, replied that they were the “*most vulnerable who do not have the means to move.*”

An expert and human rights activist interviewed for this report described how the social situation of Romani refugees in Moldova is worsening over time. Many of them were living on savings, which are now running out. For some of them, a lack of money is becoming a key reason to return to Ukraine. Romani refugees reported imminent urgent needs including financial assistance, basic material needs (clothes, shoes, hygiene products), and access to medical care and education.¹³⁸

In theory, Romani refugees have access to the same rights as other refugees in Moldova. However, the actual situation shows barriers exist which prevent Romani refugees from effectively exercising their rights. One of the main issues, which became evident from the research as well as from the interviews with activists and refugees, is the lack of information Romani refugees have access to regarding their rights.

135 UNHCR, Temporary Protection in Moldova. Available [here](#).

136 REACH, Temporary Protection Assessment Balti, Cahul, Chisinau, ATU Gagauzia, Moldova, December 2023. Available [here](#).

137 UNHCR, Ukraine situation: Moldova: Roma Task Force - Roma Refugees Briefing Note, December 2023. Available [here](#).

138 *Ibid*.

As the survey carried out by the Roma Task Force showed refugees belonging to Romani communities often expressed their concerns regarding a lack of information about access to health care for those with the temporary protection status.¹³⁹

One of the problems related to the limited access to information is the language barrier; not all Romani refugees speak Romanian, Ukrainian, or Russian which are the languages in which the authorities

communicate with them. Furthermore, Romani refugees have higher illiteracy levels compared to the other refugees from Ukraine leading to issues engaging with written communications.¹⁴⁰ In fact, the communication channels used most frequently by Romani refugees for sharing and receiving information are face-to-face communications, mainly through key Roma focal points, such as mediators or Roma organisations where the language barrier is not an issue.¹⁴¹

DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT

When asked how Moldovans perceive Romani refugees, some of the activists interviewed for this report noticed that the public perception regarding refugees and specifically Romani refugees in Moldova is worse than before, and that the population of Moldova is getting tired of information about war and refugees. One human rights activist and expert in refugees has noticed an increase in hate speech and an NGO worker put it as follows: *“Not all people from Moldova accept Roma people as people or as friends.”*

According to a survey arrived out by the UN OHCHR in June 2023, 42% of Romani refugee respondents claimed that they faced negative attitudes because of their refugee status compared to non-Roma refugees (28%). Overall, 37% of the interviewed Romani refugees stated that they experienced negative attitudes due to their ethnicity, and there were some who reported that they were denied humanitarian assistance due to their ethnicity.¹⁴²

Racism against Romani people is not uncommon in Moldova, with the resident Romani population facing marginalisation including structural discrimination and negative public sentiment. According to the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index survey carried out in 2022, only 26% of Moldovans would accept personal interaction with people from Romani communities.¹⁴³ This existing context compounds the problems faced by incoming Romani refugees; while they did not want to generalise, some of the Romani refugees interviewed for this report described negative experiences they had with public attitudes. One Romani refugee stated that people have become aggressive towards them saying: *“You gypsies, go away from here”*, while another recounted how sometimes when she enters a shop, people start hiding their bags as if she was a thief. One Romani interviewee, when talking about her neighbours, put it succinctly; *“they don’t like us because we are Romani people.”*

“Not all people from Moldova accept Roma people as people or as friends.”

OBSTACLES TO TEMPORARY PROTECTION

A high number of Romani refugees are undocumented or have outdated documents from the time of the USSR. Due to this, it is difficult for them to prove their citizenship and they are at risk

of statelessness. According to some estimates, up to 40% of Romani refugees arriving to Moldova are undocumented compared to just 10% of the arriving non-Romani refugees.¹⁴⁴ In cases where

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Internews and International Rescue Committee, Understanding the information ecosystem: Roma refugees in Moldova, September 2022. Available [here](#).

¹⁴¹ Oxfam, Seeking Safety: Roma Refugees in Moldova – Challenges and humanitarian needs, October 2022, p. 16. Available [here](#).

¹⁴² OHCHR, Moldova - Monitoring factsheet, August 202. Available [here](#).

¹⁴³ Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development, Strengthening the bonds: Fostering social harmony in Moldova, 2022. Available [here](#).

¹⁴⁴ Oxfam, Seeking Safety: Roma Refugees in Moldova – Challenges and humanitarian needs, October 2022, p. 17. Available [here](#).

the refugees wish to obtain new documents, they have to either travel back to Ukraine or to try to get them in Moldova. In both cases, the process can be time consuming and expensive.

Of the Romani refugees interviewed for the report, only one family out of the seven who responded to the question arrived without documents. The family were a Romani mother and her children, who managed to secure passports after arriving in Moldova at the Ukrainian consulate. To secure other required documents they returned to Ukraine.

Presenting an identity document is one of the conditions for obtaining temporary protection status in Moldova. In this way, the absence of documents leaves refugees unable to apply for temporary protection and effectively prevents them from moving to other countries while also unable to access a number of services in Moldova.

Another interviewee, a Romani man, stated that although he arrived to Moldova with documents he has since lost them. He has received temporary documents from the consulate which he regularly renews so that he can confirm his identity. However, he cannot use them to apply for temporary protection as the temporary documents do not qualify. His wife arrived to Moldova without a passport but, due to her mother being of Moldovan origin, she eventually obtained Moldovan citizenship and a passport. She is also therefore not entitled to temporary protection.

Additionally, the lack of documentation, such as birth certificates, makes it difficult for undocumented Roma to prove familial connections, often resulting in unsuccessful temporary protection status applications. One Romani refugee woman interviewed who arrived with her identity documents said that only three or four people out of the 23 who live with her have received temporary protection due to problems with identity documents.

There are other statutory conditions required for receiving temporary protection status, including proof of residency. Not all Romani refugees are able to obtain proof of their residency, as they are often accommodated unofficially and the owners of the properties are not willing to issue any such document; *“The main issue with the temporary protection is that a proof of residency is required. Here is an informal economy in that sense. You can find a rented apartment but the contract is not always legally registered. In that case you cannot prove legally where you live and you cannot get the temporary protection status.”* (NGO worker)

An expert activist noted that limited literacy, the digital gap, and lack of information are further important factors limiting Romani refugees' access to temporary status. As regards the lack of information he pointed out that many Romani refugees, especially those that get their information from informal sources, believe incorrectly that getting the status would mean that they have to give up their Ukrainian passports, or that if they leave Moldova they would be sanctioned or sent back to Ukraine.

HOUSING

As of 8 March 2024, 31% of refugees from Ukraine rented their accommodation, 43% were hosted by relatives, 17% were hosted by others, and 7% lived in

group accommodation. Overall, 28% of those renting accommodation do not have a rental contract, while 4% preferred not to answer.¹⁴⁵

REFUGEE ACCOMMODATION CENTRES

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Moldovan Government reacted to the related refugee crisis by creating Refugee Accommodation Centres (hereinafter referred to as “RACs”). Altogether, 136 RACs were opened in

Moldova. Gradually, they are being closed down: at the beginning of 2023 there were 67 RACs still open, while at the end of the same year only 44 RACs remained active with a total capacity of about 2,900 places and an occupancy rate of 82%.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ UNHCR, Regional protection profiling & monitoring, Protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine, data as of 08 March 2024. Available [here](#).

¹⁴⁶ Govt. of Moldova, REACH, UNHCR, Moldova Refugee Accommodation Centres (RACs) Monthly Needs Monitoring, Update as of 31.12.2023, 2 February 2024. Available [here](#).

As regards specifically Romani refugees, according to the mapping of the Roma Task Force 51% lived in private accommodation, 44% lived in RACs, and about 5% were hosted by families. Around 60% of those living in RACs reported that they stayed there for more than a year.¹⁴⁷

It is clear from the available statistics that the proportion of Romani refugees living in RACs is far higher than of the Ukrainian refugee population in general. Among others, the ERRC¹⁴⁸ and the Human Rights Watch¹⁴⁹ have reported on segregation practices whereby Romani refugees from Ukraine were separated from the other refugees into Roma-only RACs. Two years on, there are still three RACs (located in Chisinau, Costesti, and Glodeni) where the vast majority of inhabitants are Roma.¹⁵⁰

During the first year after the invasion, the ERRC collected several complaints regarding the inadequate living conditions in the RACs where Romani refugees lived. Complaints were made regarding a number of basic rights, including the absence of hot water and washing facilities, limited access to clean drinking water, and a lack of medical care.¹⁵¹ Now, two years on since the outbreak of full-scale war, problems with living conditions still persist. One of the interviewed activists mentioned overcrowding and problems with heating as the most frequent issues he comes across. An NGO worker describes how the hygienic conditions at some of the RACs are poor and that some of the Romani refugee families left the centres because of that.

Three out of the eight Romani refugees interviewed in Moldova lived in an RAC at the time of interview. The RAC was not segregated; both Romani and non-Romani refugees live there. When asked about the living conditions, their main complaints were related to problems with utilities, equipment, and lack of space. One Romani refugee described it as follows:

“The conditions are problematic: the hot water is turned on at 3pm and turned off at 8:30pm every day. However, we work until late, and can come back home at 11 pm. We need to take a shower, and the hot water is gone. There is also only one kettle for all 80 people who live on this floor. This is a problem, of course.”

According to another Romani refugee living there, sometimes there is no water at all for a whole day. As regards the heating, at the end of October it had not yet been turned on. According to the interviewees, during the previous winter the heating had been very moderate and they were forced to borrow additional heaters. One of the interviewees also complained about the unstable internet connection at the centre.

When it comes to space, the first interviewee shares a room with four other family members, the second shares two rooms between six family members, and the third interviewee and seven other family members share two rooms between them. This obviously creates issues related to privacy and personal space. When asked why they don't rent a flat instead of staying in an RAC, all three mentioned that renting a flat would be too expensive for them.

As mentioned above, the RACs are gradually being shut down and, according to an NGO worker, the plan is for only 15 RACs to be open at the end of 2024. However, this will likely cause problems for the poorest refugees, disproportionately affecting Roma. An interviewed NGO worker believes the state should do more to prepare to help them: *“We are not sure how these people will find housing because not all of them have work and money. We have alternative centres – church or private centres, maybe it would be one of the options for accommodation of people who do not have money, who do not have work. I do not know any special program to help for these people who will be leaving the centres. There is no systemic solution and that is a problem.”*

PRIVATE ACCOMMODATION

As well as facing discrimination and segregation in the RACs, Romani refugees from Ukraine also encounter problems in accessing the private rental housing market. Some property owners do not want to rent their properties to any refugees, and a number of Romani refugees reportedly faced further discrimination due to their ethnicity.¹⁵² One NGO worker believes stereotypes

and prejudice towards Roma play a significant role: *“In practice, it would be hard for them to find a flat. Not because of money, even though we have a lot of Romani families who are poor, but because of stereotypes related to Roma – having a large family, noisy, you will steal. Refugees from Armenia, India, and Bangladesh are in a similar situation in that sense.”*

147 Roma Task Force, Mapping of Roma Refugees in the Republic of Moldova, 3 October 2023. Available [here](#).

148 ERRC, Roma Rights under Siege: Monitoring reports from one year of war in Ukraine, February 2023. Available [here](#).

149 Human Rights Watch, Moldova, ‘Romani Refugees from Ukraine Face Segregation’, 25 May 2022. Available [here](#).

150 Interview with NGO worker 1.

151 ERRC, ‘Segregation and sub-standard living conditions: Romani families stuck in limbo in Moldova’, 25 April 2022. Available [here](#).

152 REACH, Moldova – Rental Market Assessment, January 2024. Available [here](#).

According to the expert activist interviewed for this report, rental prices have increased rapidly in recent months. This disproportionately affects Romani families, which tend to be larger requiring more space, and on top of this landlords often ask for higher rent when they see that Roma are interested in renting their properties: *“When Romani refugees want to rent an apartment, the prices are way higher for them than other refugees because the owners are reluctant to rent them their apartments. ... Some of the owners openly say that they will not rent their apartments to Romani*

refugees and any refugee with dark skin colour.” (NGO worker) One interviewed Romani refugee mentioned that when her family tried to rent a flat, the owner raised the price when he discovered they were Roma.

Five of the eight Romani refugees interviewed for this report live in a private rented property. Three of them live in houses while the other two live in apartments. Two live in an area where the majority population are Roma, and all live either in or near to Chisinau, the capital.

“Some of the owners openly say that they will not rent their apartments to Romani refugees.”

One of the refugees, a Romani man, lives with another nine family members in a house with three rooms in a village close to Chisinau. He recalls it was not easy to find private accommodation; *“It was pretty difficult to find accommodation. When we contacted the landlord by phone, he was hesitant. However, when we arrived and he saw our car, he saw our family, ... he agreed to rent us the house.”* Another refugee, a Romani woman who lives with her four children in a flat with two rooms in good condition, said that she sent someone else to view the apartment so that the owner did not realise they were Roma:

“Other people would come and watch the apartment instead of us. Usually, when they saw that it were Roma who are trying to rent an apartment, they refused to rent it out. This time, we were lucky

with this apartment because the realtor did not tell the landlord that the tenants are Romani. After we signed a contract, when we met with the landlord, he was surprised that we are Romani. He was not too satisfied that he rented the apartment to Romani people. But then because he saw that we are good people he did not make problems.”

The other refugees live in privately rented accommodation too small for the number of people living there. Two of them, both women, live in the same overcrowded house with 21 other people. They both complained of being cold at the time of interview, in October, and said that the house smells damp inside and there is a problem with rats. One of the women added that she can smell gas, believing there to be a leak. They found this accommodation through the church, but the conditions are evidently substandard.



EDUCATION

The number of refugee children from Ukraine enrolled in the Moldovan education system remains very low. According to data published by the UNHCR in January 2024 only about 2,300 children were enrolled in schools in Moldova, which constitutes roughly 4% of school-aged refugee children.¹⁵³ Parents gave the following reasons for not enrolling their children in Moldovan schools: 83% prefer online education, 3%

cited the language barrier, and 3% said that they do not intend to stay in Moldova.¹⁵⁴

On 4 September 2023, the Moldovan Ministry of Education and Research issued the Decree no. 1109¹⁵⁵ governing the enrolment and registration of Ukrainian children. According to the decree, enrolment in Moldovan schools is not obligatory and children

153 UNHCR, Ukraine Situation - Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Ukraine Situation - Final Report 2023, February 2024, p. 126. Available [here](#).

154 UNHCR, Regional protection profiling & monitoring, Protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine, data as of 8 March 2024. Available [here](#).

155 See: https://mec.gov.md/sites/default/files/05092023131733_3719.pdf.

may study online. Schools should facilitate access to online education for those wishing to pursue Ukrainian education, but in a school-based setting.¹⁵⁶

While the number remains low, there has been a slight increase in the number of refugee children attending Moldovan schools this academic year compared to the previous one. Most of the respondents of the Participator Assessment conducted by the UNHCR in October 2023 reported mainly positive experiences in relation to Moldovan schools. However, there were occasional incidents such as a cold reception from co-students or school staff, or even bullying due to political views.¹⁵⁷

There is no data on the number of enrolled Romani refugee children in Moldovan schools or participating in online education, however anecdotal evidence from interviews suggests numbers are even lower. The main reason preventing Romani children from in-person education in Moldovan schools, according to four out of five interviewed activists working with Romani refugees, is the language barrier. According to an NGO worker, that there are only four Ukrainian language schools in Moldova. The majority of schools are Russian-speaking, however according to another NGO

worker Romani parents “do not want to send their children there due to political reasons.”

Furthermore, many Romani refugee children require specialised assistance in accessing education. Some Romani refugee adults, especially women, are illiterate, which makes the enrolment process even more difficult. Some refugee children have never been to school, and would need catch-up education first. Some of the children had attended school, but their attendance was interrupted and they have not been to school since the war started. All of the above-mentioned issues, alongside the general stigma faced by Roma in local communities, can create barriers to in-person education.¹⁵⁸

In an interview with an NGO worker, he mentioned two further obstacles in relation to in-person education. The first one was fear of discrimination, while the other was that some parents were afraid that if their children attended Moldovan school, their attendance would not be accepted in Ukraine once they return there. For those refugee children who attend Ukrainian online education, there are two main obstacles of a technical nature, as seen across the countries in this report; absence or shortage of devices and problems with access to the internet.

Many Romani refugee children require specialised assistance in accessing education.

Five out of the eight Romani refugees interviewed for this report living in Moldova have at least one child of a school age, while one interviewee has two children who are of a pre-school age.

One interviewee has three children enrolled in a Moldovan primary school where the study language is Russian. She had tried unsuccessfully to enrol her children to another primary school, despite ensuring she had secured all required documents by returning to Ukraine to acquire them. She believes discrimination played role in the refusal as there was no lawful reason for it:

“The deputy director told me that I need to provide personal files of my children from the Ukrainian school. I went to Ukraine, brought their personal files. However, he was trying to find pretext to deny

my children study in their school. I think he did not like me because I am of a different nationality. He invented new challenges for me: for example, he said that I should go to the Ministry of Education and get an approval there. I went there, and at the Ministry they told me that I have to get the documents from the school confirming that it is ready to enrol my children. When I came back to the school, the deputy director told me he would not give me the necessary documents.”

Three Romani interviewees had their children attending Ukrainian online education. One said their children did not have any problems accessing online education. Another, who has three children of school age, explained that her children study online because the family did not have enough money to buy backpacks and all the other things necessary

156 NRC; Plan International; Save the Children; World Vision, Prioritizing school enrolments for Ukraine refugee children in Moldova, Poland and Romania, September 2023. Available [here](#).

157 UNHCR, Ukraine Situation - Moldova: Moldova Participatory Assessment Report 2023, p. 7. Available [here](#).

158 UNHCR, Ukraine situation: Moldova: Roma Task Force - Roma Refugees Briefing Note, December 2023. Available [here](#).

for school attendance. She said that they only have mobile phones which do not work well, and also that the internet connection is not stable as they use top-up cards to have internet. This unsurprisingly affects the quality of the education being received. The third interviewee has two children attending online education who also use mobile phones to access the resources. He also complained about weak internet connection from top-up cards. He expressed his intention to enrol his children into in-person school in Moldova.

One interviewee has two young children, whom she wanted to enrol in a kindergarten in Chisinau. When she went to one of the kindergartens to talk to the

director, she was told to register online. When she explained that she did not know how to do that and had no one to show her, the director replied she was not able to help her and that she should find someone else to help. Eventually, she managed to send the online application however at the time of the interview, she was still waiting for the response.

The last interviewee has four children of school age. They used to go to school in Ukraine, however after the war started and they moved to Moldova they stopped attending school altogether. She explained how she was afraid to enrol her children in a school in Moldova due to fears of bullying. However, she intends to enrol them in a Ukrainian school.

EMPLOYMENT

Refugees with temporary protection status have the right to be employed in Moldova without any additional work permit. Overall, 16% of refugees from Ukraine who live in Moldova are employed there and a further 4% are employed remotely. Since most men between 18 and 60 are required to remain in Ukraine to assist with military efforts, 29% of Ukrainian refugees are retired, 27% have family responsibilities, and 20% are unemployed. Overall, 23% of those employed do not have an employment contract. Those who are unemployed gave the following reasons preventing them from finding employment: 26% could not find opportunities, 19% stated the language barrier prevented them from being employed, 9% do not plan to stay in Moldova, and 6% lacked necessary information.¹⁵⁹

Single mothers, Romani communities, people with disabilities, and the elderly are vulnerable groups within the refugee population from Ukraine who most often face difficulties in accessing the labour market in Moldova.¹⁶⁰ Again, there is no data available as regards the specific employment rate of Romani refugees in Moldova.

Based on the answers of refugees and activists interviewed for this report, the main issues faced by Romani refugees when it comes to employment in Moldova seem to be the following: lack of skills or qualification for a particular job, illiteracy, discrimination, and informal jobs.

“It is a vicious circle. Some jobs require experience, but we cannot get it because everyone denies employing us.”

Three out of eight interviewed Romani refugees were employed at the time of interview, three were unemployed, and two had a health condition which prevented them from working. One of the male Romani interviewees is a volunteer. He works in Ukraine aiding military efforts and refugees.

One interviewee works at a vegetable warehouse where she works between 7am and 6pm for about €20 a day. She said it was difficult for her to find a job, and eventually the former director of the accommodation centre where she lives helped her to find a job.

¹⁵⁹ UNHCR, Regional protection profiling & monitoring, Protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine, data as of 8 March 2024. Available [here](#).

¹⁶⁰ UNHCR, Ukraine Situation - Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Ukraine Situation - Final Report 2023, February 2024. Available [here](#).

Another interviewee works in a kitchen where she is not officially employed. This precarious employment means when she got injured at work by cutting her finger, she was not able to take paid sick leave. She works from 8am - 11pm and at the time of the interview, was pregnant. She admitted difficulties finding a job: *“It was pretty hard to find a job. On the phone, everything seems fine. When we come to the*

job interview wearing our clothes, and not trousers, they immediately say: “You are not really our fit. We will call you. We have no available vacancies now.” And they never call back. Some employers are asking: “Why aren’t you working?”, and others are saying “We cannot take you”. It is a vicious circle: some jobs require experience, but we cannot get it because everyone denies employing us.”

HEALTHCARE

Refugees fleeing Ukraine have had access to the Moldovan healthcare system since May 2022. Access to emergency and primary healthcare services was provided free of charge under emergency laws. Additional costs, for example those related to pregnancy, children’s medical assistance, or oncological medications, were covered by international organisations.¹⁶¹ Even though the temporary protection introduced in 2023 improved access to healthcare for Ukrainian refugees, it still remains a major challenge. Lack of availability and quality of care, as well as the high cost of medical care services are continuing problems.¹⁶² For 36% of refugees from Ukraine in Moldova, access to healthcare is the most urgent need they have.¹⁶³

Those refugees who have obtained temporary protection status should have access to pre-hospital emergency care, primary healthcare, emergency hospital care, outpatient dialysis, and emergency dental care free of charge. Furthermore, they are eligible to register with a family doctor. For those without temporary protection status, free access to healthcare is limited to emergency situations. However, all refugee children, notwithstanding their status, can still access primary healthcare, emergency pre-hospital, and emergency hospital care free of charge.¹⁶⁴

Despite the available provisions, around 16% of Ukrainian refugees are not aware of their entitlement to healthcare services in Moldova, with the rate even higher in rural localities.¹⁶⁵ This lack of knowledge is also a key issue for refugee Romani

communities. In his interview the activist and expert on refugees said that, according to his experience, Romani refugees are not well informed about the medical services they are eligible for in Moldova. Due to this, they sometimes self-medicate which might be harmful for them. Moreover, some of the medications available in Moldova are different to those in Ukraine, potentially creating further problems. In some cases, Romani refugees were even afraid to call an ambulance due to concerns about paying for the treatment. The activist went on to explain that many Romani refugees were not aware that securing temporary protection status is an important requirement for accessing free healthcare. Additionally, as seen when accessing education or employment, the language barrier plays a significant role in preventing Romani refugees accessing adequate healthcare in Moldova.

According to an NGO worker, and the expert activist, full access to healthcare services is secured only if the individual is employed or self-employed and the insurance payments are paid, usually by the employer. However, those who do not have official employment contracts do not benefit from employer-paid medical insurance. The other option is for an individual to pay for their own insurance. However, according to another NGO worker, insurance costs about €700 per year, which is too expensive for the vast majority of Romani refugees.

As regards Romani refugees in particular, discriminatory attitudes from medical staff also play a part, according to an NGO worker. The experience of

161 REACH, Temporary Protection Assessment Balti, Cahul, Chisinau, ATU Gagauzia, Moldova, December 2023. Available [here](#).

162 UNHCR, Ukraine Situation - Moldova: Moldova Participatory Assessment Report 2023, p. 6. Available [here](#).

163 UNHCR, Regional protection profiling & monitoring, Protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine, data as of 08 March 2024. Available [here](#).

164 REACH, Temporary Protection Assessment Balti, Cahul, Chisinau, ATU Gagauzia, Moldova, December 2023. Available [here](#).

165 REACH; UNHCR; UNICEF, Moldova: Moldova: Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) - Health – Key sectoral findings presentation, December 2023. Available [here](#).

the interviewed refugees differ; one Romani refugee had a positive experiences during his recent surgery and another when her children were ill. However,

experiences were mixed: *“The doctors do not always treat us well. When they see Romani people, they start getting irritated.”*

“The doctors don’t like us; they do not want to deal with us.”

One of the Romani interviewees suffers from diabetes, hypertension, and asthma. He ran out of inhalers and hypertension medication after a volunteer programme providing medication finished. When he went to see a doctor he ended up waiting in line for about 5 hours. He said that, although the doctor let Moldovan patients in, when it was his turn she told him that he should return the next day. Following that, he had another negative experience when he visited the doctor for an infected cut in his finger. He asked the doctor to be careful when treating his finger, as wounds heal more slowly due to his diabetes. Despite this, the doctor cut his finger several times and, when he objected, swore at him and sent him home. Seven months later, his finger was still not fully healed.

The attitude of medical staff, the language barrier, and the lack of awareness regarding the availability of healthcare often results in a lack of trust towards the Moldovan healthcare system from Romani refugees. An NGO worker claimed that in his experience many Romani refugees prefer to travel back to Ukraine to get medical treatment.

As of September 2023, according to the OHCHR monitoring, about half of the refugees from Ukraine staying in Moldova were registered with a family doctor.¹⁶⁶ When asked, none of the Romani refugees

interviewed for this report were registered with the family doctor. One respondent said that one of her children is registered with a family doctor, however the doctor refused to register her other child. She had problems registering herself, despite being pregnant: *“The doctors don’t like us; they do not want to deal with us”* she said.

Another Romani refugee said that although she does not have a family doctor, sometimes medical staff come to the centre where her family lives and they are able to at least get some prescriptions. Two other Romani refugees related how they have not needed medical care themselves, but relatives needed an ultrasound which they were asked to pay for. According to them, the relative in question chose not to have the procedure, saying she felt better even though she did not, as she could not pay for it.

It is important to note that access to healthcare is even more limited for those Romani refugees who live in rural areas without the presence of a doctor. They have fewer options and they have to travel to receive medical care or prescriptions, which poses logistical problems for single mothers who provide care for several children. Moreover, the cost of transportation might also influence their decision whether to see a doctor or not.

¹⁶⁶ OHCHR, Moldova - Monitoring factsheet, September 2023. Available [here](#).



Nikolai, FRISPA Refugee Centre, Chisinau, Moldova.

Q GENERAL OVERVIEW

As of 5 February 2024, more than 78,000 refugees from Ukraine were living in Romania. This is a decrease of about 7,000 refugees since the end of 2023. Over 152,000 refugees were granted temporary status in Romania,¹⁶⁷ with approximately one third of applications being granted in the capital, Bucharest.¹⁶⁸

According to the Eurobarometer survey 'the EU's response to the war in Ukraine',¹⁶⁹ published in December 2023, 71% of Romanian respondents agreed with welcoming people fleeing the war in Ukraine into the EU. This is 4% more than in May 2023, suggesting that the influx of people has not caused a drop in public sentiment towards refugees, as seen elsewhere.

According to the 'Survey with Refugees from Ukraine: Needs, Intentions, and Integration challenges' conducted between January and March 2023, half of the 2,475 respondents declared that

they planned to settle in Romania, while 32% had already settled. Only 3% were transiting Romania while 4% remained undecided.¹⁷⁰

The UNHCR reported that some of the most vulnerable refugees left Romania (either moving back to Ukraine or to other European countries) as they were not able to pay rent and other expenses without financial housing support, which has been delayed over the past months. The UNHCR also noted decreasing support by humanitarian organisations for refugees.¹⁷¹

In fact, the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (IGSU) announced in April 2024 that no financial aid has been allocated to Ukrainian refugees so far in 2024 from the Romanian authorities. Some payments were processed in February, but these were outstanding from 2023.¹⁷²

TEMPORARY PROTECTION STATUS

The EU Temporary Protection Directive has been transposed into the Romanian legal system by the Act no. 122/2006 on asylum in Romania.¹⁷³ On 18 March 2022, the Romanian Government adopted the Government Decision no. 367/2022 on establishment of conditions for ensuring temporary protection as well as for the amendments of some normative acts in the field of foreigners.¹⁷⁴

The above-mentioned Government Decision No. 367/2022 made the following categories of persons eligible for temporary protection:

a. Ukrainian citizens, as well as their family members, without prejudice to when they arrive to Romania;

- b. non-Ukrainian third country nationals or stateless persons who benefited from international protection or national protection in Ukraine before 24 February 2022, as well as their family members, regardless of when they arrive to Romania;
- c. non-Ukrainian third-country nationals or stateless persons who left Ukraine on or after 24 February 2022 and who can prove legal residence in Ukraine on the basis of a permanent residence permit and who cannot return safely to their country or region of origin, as well as their family members.¹⁷⁵

The Temporary Protection procedure was initiated in March 2022 by an Emergency Ordinance and granted to Ukrainian refugees for up to one year with the

167 UNHCR: Ukrainian Refugee Situation Update, 05 February 2024. Available [here](#).

168 UNHCR: Ukraine Situation: Romania, Overview of the Temporary Protection Directive. Available [here](#).

169 Eurobarometer: the EU's response to the war in Ukraine, December 2023. Available [here](#).

170 IOM: UKRAINE CRISIS RESPONSE, ROMANIA Survey with Refugees from Ukraine: Needs, Intentions, and Integration challenges, p. 8,. Available [here](#).

171 UNHCR: Ukrainian Refugee Situation Update, 5 February 2024. Available [here](#).

172 Euractive.ro, 'Romania has not allocated funds for Ukrainian refugees in 2024', 1 April 2023. Available [here](#).

173 Available at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/252056>.

174 Available at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/252745>.

175 EU Agency for Asylum: Temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine. Available [here](#).

possibility of extension. Temporary Protection status grants Ukrainian refugees free access to housing, health-care, social services, and transportation.¹⁷⁶ It

has since been prolonged until 4 March 2025, with any already issued permits being extended automatically until this date, without the need for a request.¹⁷⁷



THE SITUATION OF ROMANI REFUGEES

Romania has a relatively high number of Romani people; Council of Europe estimates suggest 1.85 million Roma live there, around 8% of the overall population¹⁷⁸, and the majority live below the poverty threshold, with one in three Roma living without access to running water.¹⁷⁹ According to the 2023 Eurobarometer survey - Discrimination in the European Union, 53% of the survey respondents from Romania believe that discrimination against people from Romani communities is widespread in their country.¹⁸⁰ Romani refugees from Ukraine are therefore entering a country with an existing context of discrimination and inequality against Roma.

When it comes to Romani refugees from Ukraine, as is the case in the other countries covered by this report, there is no official data on the numbers currently living in Romania. This poses problems for monitoring, however NGOs and activists in Romania working with Romani refugees have been able to keep abreast of the situation as far as possible.

One of the major problems faced by many Romani refugees was the absence of documentation; mainly personal identity documents. The lack of such documents was not only problematic in relation to travelling, but also formed a barrier when accessing social services, employment, banking, and other services.¹⁸¹

According to research conducted by the Romanian NGO Aresel, carried out in April and May 2023, most Romani refugees from Ukraine interviewed did not see Romania as either the starting point or the destination when leaving Ukraine. Once there, many of them decided to return to Ukraine due to their struggle in securing essential services, including healthcare and documentation. The decision to

return to a country under siege reveals the difficulties faced by Romani refugees.¹⁸²

Two Romani activists from Romania confirmed that in their experience most Romani refugees would like to move back to Ukraine at some point, although those whose houses were destroyed due to the conflict would prefer to stay. According to the activists many Romani refugees from Ukraine had already left Romania, and repeated delays in state help and discrimination played a significant role in that. Another activist explained how many of the Romani refugees used Romania as a transit country on the way to other countries, such as the Czech Republic, Spain, Germany, or Italy. Many of those who stay either do not have enough money or do not have passports or ID cards to enable them to travel elsewhere. The same activist also mentioned that some people left Romania due to the strict conditions for receiving state aid.

The research by Aresel also pointed to the marginalisation of Romani refugees, which manifests in various ways. One major concern was the limited access to information for Romani refugees, especially as regards humanitarian assistance; many Romani refugees do not speak Romanian, or are illiterate, and so struggle to access information. Additionally, the so-called 'statistical invisibility', whereby the specific struggles of Romani refugees are not considered in Romanian public discourse and humanitarian aid policy due to a lack of disaggregated data, plays a large part. An activist interviewed for this research highlighted the fact that Romani civil society, despite being limited by financial and personal capacities, shouldered the main burden of the support to Romani refugees. These Romani organisations were not included by the state authorities in the official coordination and consultation mechanisms, further muddying the available data.

176 Cancelaria Prim-Ministrului: Romania's response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, 13 January 2023. Available [here](#).

177 See: <https://help.unhcr.org/romania/information-for-people-from-ukraine/temporary-protection/#:~:text=How%20long%20does%20temporary%20protection,a%20request%20in%20this%20regard>.

178 See: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-eu/roma-equality-inclusion-and-participation-eu-country/romania_en.

179 See: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/d6eacde7-c02e-4ec5-88e8-e35727b1032a_en?filename=1_1_romania_national_roma_strategic_framework_2022_2027.pdf.

180 Eurobarometer: Discrimination in the European Union, December 2023. Available [here](#).

181 Interview with NGO worker 5.

182 Aresel, Equal aid, unequal outcomes Ukrainian Roma Refugees in Romania, June 2023, p. 4.

DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT

Several instances of anti-Roma discrimination and racism were reported by the media and NGOs, especially during the first months of the war amidst the initial influx of refugees. CNN brought a story about a large group of Romani refugees who complained about being denied humanitarian meals at a help point in Bucharest. Nicu Dumitru, a Romanian Romani activist, said that: *“They were kicked out because they were ‘too many’ and ‘too loud’ and people would say, ‘You’re not Ukrainian, you’re Roma, go away.’”*¹⁸³

The Romanian website Libertatea reported the case of an elderly poor Romani woman, who was part of a group of Romani refugees from Ukraine, who were waiting to board the train to Budapest, Hungary. She was in the Gara de Nord train station where two policemen grabbed her by the arm and aggressively took her out because they believed that she was a Romanian Roma. The article also mentions a case of a Romani man who almost fell from his wheelchair and was not helped by anyone. Instead of assisting refugees, the gendarmes present commented that

*“Gypsies are still gypsies, no matter what nation they are from.”*¹⁸⁴ Additionally, Romani refugees were often separated from other refugees. Isaura Dhrima, a young Romani activist from Ukraine currently living in Romania, recalls that at Bucharest North train station, Romani refugees were segregated in separate waiting rooms.¹⁸⁵

In a report focusing on Romani communities displaced by the conflict, Oxfam concluded that Romani refugees in Romania have faced racial discrimination from not only authorities and officials, but also from volunteers and fellow Ukrainian refugees.¹⁸⁶ When asked about the first thing which comes to her mind in relation to Romani refugees, one interviewed activist replied: *“Racism and discrimination from Romanian workers and Ukrainians who did the translation. Not only from authorities but also NGOs who work on this subject. I saw from the experience from Roma who came in contact with us that there is a lot of bad experience with other NGOs who do not give resources and support to Roma or they give just small support in comparison to Ukrainian people.”*

“Gypsies are still gypsies, no matter what nation they are from.”

Romani refugees interviewed for this research shared the discriminatory treatment they experienced from Romanian humanitarian workers, who expressed doubts about their Ukrainian/refugee status and treated them as if they were from Romanian Romani communities.¹⁸⁷ This was echoed by other NGO and activist respondents:

“At the beginning there was a lot of empathy. Now there is a lot of hate that Ukrainian refugees receive a lot of money. Roma refugees face the same and they also face racism from the Romanian population. Some people do not believe that some of the Roma people are from Ukraine and they claim that they are Romanian Roma.”

One Romani refugee interviewee who currently resides in Romania corroborated this, revealing the

abuse she received from some Romanians: *“[They say] that we’re getting money, that we’ve ruined their country. That the Romanian state doesn’t help them, it only helps us. They would say, ‘go to your Ukraine, where did you come from’.”*

Another Romani refugee mentioned problems faced by her children; her son’s phone and wallet were stolen on a bus and someone tried to hurt her daughter. She said: *“Children are afraid to go home on their own. They go together to the shop, or with us to the park. ... We are afraid to let our girl out on the street at all, because the girl is afraid. It’s very scary.”* One of the activist respondents revealed that some of the Romani women living in a refugee centre were asked by workers from the refugee centre to provide various sexual activities if they wanted to receive different kinds of support.

183 CNN: “‘You are not a refugee.’ Roma refugees fleeing war in Ukraine say they are suffering discrimination and prejudice”, 7 August 2022. Available [here](#).

184 Libertatea, REPORTAJ, ‘Ce au pățit niște romi săraci din Ucraina când au fost confundați, în Gara de Nord, cu romi de la noi’, 9 March 2022. Available [here](#) (in Romanian).

185 FEANTSA magazine, INTERVIEW WITH ISAURA DHRIMA: DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ROMA IN TIMES OF WAR, 2022. Available [here](#).

186 Oxfam, FURTHER INTO THE MARGINS: A regional report on Roma communities displaced by the Ukraine crisis, September 2023, p. 5. Available [here](#).

187 *Ibid.* p. 8.

Similar stories of Ukrainian refugees struggling to find affordable housing being offered places to stay in exchange for sexual favours, have been reported in the media.¹⁸⁸ These kinds of experiences are

particularly concerning, as the majority of Romani refugees from Ukraine are women and children who are especially vulnerable to specific types of intersectional discrimination.

HOUSING

Access to adequate housing for Romani refugees from Ukraine is a complex issue. Limited finances, large families, and cultural elements such as clothing all contribute to many Romani families ending up in refugee centres, with discrimination also playing a significant part in whether they are able to rent private accommodation. A Romani human rights activist described the situation as; *“Roma with dark skin, most of them live in centres or dormitories. Those with not so dark skin, they live in private apartments. They were able to rent something.”* This was confirmed by another activist interviewed for the research who said

that, *“For those wearing traditional Roma clothes, I think it was impossible to find a flat.”*

Segregation of Romani refugees was a key issue during the first months of the war, whereby they were either segregated into houses where only Roma lived or in refugee centres in which the majority population were Roma. Some lived in former classrooms in high schools which were adapted for this purpose over a short period of time. In many instances there were no beds, and people were forced to sleep on the floor.¹⁸⁹

‘50/20 PROGRAMME’

In order to facilitate the provision of accommodation to refugees from Ukraine, the Romanian Government established a state programme called the ‘50/20 programme’. The programme was adopted by the Emergency Ordinance No. 15 of 27 February 2022. Under this programme, people hosting refugees from Ukraine received monthly cash payments for housing: 50 lei per person/day (approx. €10) and food: 20 lei per person/day (approx. €3.40).¹⁹⁰

The major criticism of the ‘50/20 programme’ was its vulnerability to exploitation and fraud. Cases were reported of landlords who falsely claimed to be providing housing to refugee tenants in order to unlawfully profit from the financial assistance. In such cases, the landlords cooperated with tenants to create fictitious contracts. In online forums, Romani refugee tenants were blamed for such practices. The programme also created a strong dependence of refugees on state assistance. When significant delays of payments were reported in the first months of 2023, it increased uncertainty and panic among the refugees who were afraid of having their

accommodation withdrawn as payments were not being made.¹⁹¹ Some landlords provided poor quality accommodation to Romani refugees purely as a means to receive money from the state.¹⁹²

On 1 May 2023, the support program dedicated to Ukrainians living in Romania changed. The financial aid is provided as follows:

During the first 4 consecutive months:

- 2000 lei (€344) per month for a family for accommodation expenses;
- 750 lei (€129) per month for a single person for accommodation expenses;
- 600 lei (€103,50) per person per month for food expenses.

Starting from the fifth month:

- 2000 lei (€344) per month for a family for accommodation expenses;

188 Europa Libera Romania, ‘Reportaj | Prinși în haosul programelor guvernamentale, refugiații ucraineni din România se întorc acasă, printre bombe’, 12 May 2023. Available [here](#).

189 Interview with NGO worker 3.

190 Cancelaria Prim-Ministrului: Romania’s response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, 13 January 2023. Available [here](#).

191 Oxfam, FURTHER INTO THE MARGINS: A regional report on Roma communities displaced by the Ukraine crisis, September 2023, p. 19-20. Available [here](#).

192 Interview with NGO worker 3.

- 750 lei (€129) per month for a single person for accommodation.¹⁹³

Under the new scheme, the benefits are paid directly to the refugees and not to the families hosting them, as was the case before.¹⁹⁴

One of the interviewees, an NGO worker, believes that certain eligibility criteria might be discriminatory in relation to Romani refugees. For example, the requirement to have a bank account for the money to be paid into can be problematic, as opening a bank account is difficult without identity documents which is

common among Romani refugees. Roma who have problems either finding a job or work in grey economy without a contract also cannot then provide their employment contract or proof of income. These issues disproportionately affect Romani refugees, potentially making the new criteria indirectly discriminatory.

Since the eligibility criteria for receiving housing benefits became stricter, and in many cases the benefits paid do not cover the rent amount, a number of refugees have decided to return to Ukraine. They claimed they were unable to continue to pay for accommodation.¹⁹⁵

THE 'UN ACOPERIS' PLATFORM

In an attempt to address the issues faced by refugees in securing suitable accommodation, a digital platform was developed by the Code for Romania association in partnership with the Romanian Government and other organisations. Called 'Un Acoperiş' (a roof), it is a digital platform with the aim of identifying available accommodation spaces for refugees who arrive in Romania and need immediate help. Legal and individual persons who are able to provide free of charge rooms or real estate for people living in the

shelters provided by the Romanian authorities can register with the platform. The platform then receives requests for help from refugees or organisations that offer refugee support, identifying available verified accommodation spaces in the territory in an attempt to reduce the risks faced by vulnerable people. However, since the platform is digital, there are reasonable concerns that Romani refugees without electronic devices would have difficulties accessing and effectively using it.¹⁹⁶

REFUGEE CENTRES

Many Romani refugee families are forced to stay in refugee centres, as they are unable to secure private accommodation. The responsibility for managing these refugee centres and providing assistance to refugees is shared among various institutions. The primary governmental agencies responsible are the Ministry of Internal Affairs, specifically the General Inspectorate for Immigration, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Municipalities and local governments are also involved in providing support to refugees, with collaboration from NGOs and international organisations where necessary.

The refugee centres are most often crowded with several people squeezed into small rooms. There are cases when six to twelve people live in a room intended for two or three people, meaning there is little or no privacy at all. Common aspects of the centres also include a lack of natural light, narrow corridors, and shared sanitary facilities. They are often poorly

equipped, although the quality varies hugely.¹⁹⁷ Generally, the poorest people live in them.¹⁹⁸

Of the seven Romani refugees interviewed for this report, four currently live in refugee centres, although all seven lived in them immediately after arriving to Romania. Although grateful for the accommodation provided, they all agreed that the living conditions were better when they arrived and have deteriorated in the time since. They mentioned that sometimes there is no provision of hot water and that this can last months. Two interviewees reported problems with cockroaches, while another described problems they had with leaking ceilings. Several interviewees (refugees and activists) mentioned the low quality of food, that sometimes the food was spoiled when provided, and the lack of refrigerators to safely store food.

Overcrowding and limited hygiene facilities were reported to be a major problem, especially during the

193 See: <https://dopomoha.ro/en/the-5020-program>.

194 Radio Romani International, 'New rules for Ukrainian refugees in Romania', 27 April 2023. Available [here](#).

195 Europa Libera Romania, 'Reportaj | Prinşi în haosul programelor guvernamentale, refugiaţii ucraineni din România se întorc acasă, printre bombe', 12 May 2023. Available [here](#).

196 Interview with NGO worker 5.

197 Aresel, Equal aid, unequal outcomes Ukrainian Roma Refugees in Romania, June 2023, p. 5.

198 Interviews with a human rights activist and NGO worker 4.

first year after the war started. One Romani refugee recalled how, in the refugee centre where they lived previously, five people including a 3 month-old baby had to stay in one small room. Another Romani refugee lived in a room with another six people. An NGO worker described one refugee centre where there were just three bathrooms for 40+ people, likening the conditions to that of the army. Limited access to bathrooms was also mentioned by one of the Romani refugees, who recalled staying in a centre which had one shower for roughly 35 people.

On top of poor conditions, Romani refugees living in refugee centres experience discrimination. One Romani refugee describes how non-Romani refugees are provided with more resources, and this claim is supported by a story from one of the centres shared by an NGO worker; *“A Romani woman who was pregnant went to the kitchen to ask for some yoghurt for her children. The worker of the centre refused to give her saying that they do not have anymore. At the same time, another refugee who is not a Roma went to ask for a yoghurt and she received two or three.”*

NGOs had to intervene and persuade landlords to rent their accommodations to Romani refugees.

The interviewed Romani refugees who still live in refugee centres cannot afford to rent a flat due to their difficult financial situation, despite wanting to leave the centres due to the sub-standard living conditions; *“I’d like to rent [a flat], but I don’t have the ability to pay because it’s so expensive. These are extremely high prices ... I really wanted to have separate space, because for a big family it is more comfortable. But I can’t afford it. I don’t even have half that money.”*

One refugee described how tiring living in such conditions becomes: *“Everything is obsolete and gets broken often. People don’t flush after themselves in the toilet. There are lice, cockroaches. There are a lot of viruses, like rotavirus infection, COVID-19 etc. I get tired of it all but I know I have nowhere else to go because the apartments are expensive...”*

PRIVATE ACCOMMODATION

Recently, more and more Romani refugees have gradually been moving into privately rented apartments using the state aid programme.¹⁹⁹ However, it is no surprise that the private rental market is tainted by discrimination. Some owners refuse to rent their accommodation to Roma; Facebook groups established to help Ukrainian refugees find accommodation now contain posts notifying users that they will not rent their apartments to ‘Gypsies’. In some cases, NGOs had to intervene and persuade landlords to rent their accommodations to Romani refugees, as well as non-Roma.²⁰⁰

One NGO worker recalled the story of a family who were refused the rental of an apartment after the landlord found out they were Roma. The landlord did not claim this was the reason, but alleged that he had promised to rent it to someone else. In a similar situation, another owner stated that he had decided to sell and not rent the apartment once he

found out the prospective tenants were Romani. The activist added that some families were refused after the prospective landlord learned how many children they had, assuming them to be Roma as they were a large family.

Three of the Romani refugee interviewed for this research live in privately rented apartments and they all agreed that they prefer living in apartments to living in the refugee centres. They all use the state housing aid to pay for the rent, although they agree that rent is higher than the aid provided:

“We moved to an apartment, and life became easier. Not so many people anymore, not so much movement, more calm. Now we live in a four-room apartment, which is quite good. We now receive benefits from a new program. But there is not enough money under this program. Because we have to pay a lot for an apartment.”

199 Interview with NGO worker 3.

200 Aresel, Equal aid, unequal outcomes Ukrainian Roma Refugees in Romania, June 2023, p. 6.

EDUCATION

By the end of the 2021/22 academic year, only around 2,500 Ukrainian refugee children were enrolled in schools in Romania. As of March 2023, that number had increased to about 4,000. Due to Government ordinance no.15/2022, which made enrolment in schools a prerequisite to gaining access to government humanitarian assistance, this figure further jumped to almost 24,000 in the following months. By November 2023, there were almost 34,000 refugee children enrolled in Romanian schools.²⁰¹

Despite this, available data shows that only up to one-third of all refugee children registered as students have attended school on a regular basis since the start of 2023/2024 academic year. Many attend school irregularly, instead participating in education hubs, online learning, and language courses in parallel until they can improve their knowledge of the Romanian language. However, opportunities to access Romanian language courses are scarce and adequate learning support materials are missing, hindering children's effective participation at school.²⁰²

The Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science created the 'Ukrainian Online School' project to help refugee students continue remote blended learning. The Ukrainian Online School offers every student and teacher in Ukraine free access to education. The platform includes video tutorials, quizzes, and self-study materials for core subjects.²⁰³ Access to electronic devices and an internet connection is necessary to effectively engage with the platform. Another project, 'Ukrainian schools in Romania'²⁰⁴, aims at establishing Ukrainian schools on the territory of Romania which would provide quality education in the Ukrainian language. Currently, approximately 20 schools or classes are open in different cities across Romania.

Even though school attendance is one of the prerequisites to receive state aid, activists are aware of a number of challenges for refugee children in the Romanian education system. Two interviewed

activists described practical and structural difficulties, including how Romanians are not experienced in integrating foreigners and that the Romanian education system is not prepared to receive that many new children.

They also see a problem with refugee children's lack of knowledge of the Romanian language, with one activist recounting how; *"There were some children who already went to school last academic year. They did not feel that good. They did not understand Romanian language, the other kids were not playing with them, some were making fun of them."* An NGO worker shared the same concern; *"There is a problem with language. Some children were bullied for not speaking correctly."*

Overall, six out of the seven interviewed Romani refugees have children of a school age. None of them attend Romanian school, but all take part in online education. One of the respondents said that her children have been registered for education in Romania but, at the time of the interview, they are waiting to be allocated to a particular school. Another Romani respondent said that they plan to send their children to a Romanian school in the near future. One stated that although they officially registered their children to a Romanian school due to the prerequisite for state aid, they are still attending Ukrainian online classes instead.

According to the activists interviewed, some parents do not send their children to Romanian schools because they are afraid of discrimination and bullying. Parents do not have the money to buy their children clothes, shoes, and necessary equipment like pens, books, etc. One of the Romani refugees expressed her concerns about her children facing these sorts of problems, saying that her children *"would be sitting at the last desk because they do not understand the language; they will be bullied by Romanian pupils as they would come to school in old clothes like disadvantaged people, and other children would be wearing normal clothes."*

201 UNICEF, UNICEF Romania refugee response – facts and figures, Factsheet no. 8, October 2023. Available [here](#).

202 Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation: Inter-agency operational update, Romania, December 2023. Available [here](#).

203 See: <https://lms.e-school.net.ua/guide>.

204 See: https://ukrscola.ro/index_en.html.

Parents do not send their children to Romanian schools because they are afraid of discrimination and bullying.

In addition, there have been cases of refusal to enrol Romani children. According to one activist: *“I have met a Roma woman who went to three or four different school to enrol her children. She was refused in all of them.”*

As most of the activists interviewed confirmed, although many Romani children attended online classes, they faced practical obstacles which significantly limited their access to education. Most of the families only have one or two devices, which

are primarily used by the parents for practical matters such as contacting family, and dealing with the authorities. This effectively prevents Romani refugee children from participating in education. All of the Romani refugee respondents with school-aged children acknowledged that access to electronic devices was a problem. One said that a Romanian Roma NGO provided them with two laptops to try and assuage the problem, while others mentioned problems with internet connection making online participation difficult.

EMPLOYMENT

Refugees from Ukraine have the right to access the labour market without a work permit, under the same conditions as Romanian citizens. They can also be beneficiaries of measures to stimulate employment and are entitled to protection within the unemployment insurance system once they register with the Romanian employment agency.²⁰⁵

According to data from October 2023, almost 20,000 Ukrainians have been registered and have benefitted from National Agency for Employment (ANOFM) services, including 2,238 who found jobs through the agency. Legislative changes adopted allow companies to employ Ukrainian citizens directly, without involvement from the ANOFM.²⁰⁶

In Romania, most of the jobs offered on the labour market are for unskilled work, such as in the assembling or garment industry, manual packing, kitchen work, waiting tables, handling goods, and housekeeping.²⁰⁷

The two main barriers for refugees in accessing employment in Romania are limited childcare and language.²⁰⁸ For Romani refugees specifically,

obstacles include; a lack of formal work experience, limited formal education, and limited language skills. Illiteracy rates are higher amongst Roma, leading to extremely limited employment opportunities as well as difficulty gaining new skills or undergoing trainings. These compounded obstacles often result in Romani workers earning lower salaries. Many Romani employees in Romania reported that despite being employed their earnings fell below the poverty line, making them unable to afford basic needs such as housing, food, or healthcare. Romani refugee women, who are often the sole wage earner in their families, were in an especially vulnerable position in this sense.²⁰⁹ A Romani human rights activist interviewed for this research explained the specific problems faced by Romani women refugees: *“Most of the Roma women who came here have children so they have to stay at home and care about them. Some of them are uneducated and it is difficult to employ them. Some do an informal work. Racism also plays a role.”*

Activists from Romania who were interviewed for this research agreed that racism is also a factor when it comes to employing Romani refugees. An

205 EU Agency for Asylum: Temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine. Available [here](#).

206 European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training: Romania: labour market opportunities for Ukrainian refugees, 21 November 2023. Available [here](#).

207 FRA, Fleeing Ukraine – Implementing temporary protection at local levels, 12 December 2023, p. 39. Available [here](#).

208 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

209 Aresel, Equal aid, unequal outcomes Ukrainian Roma Refugees in Romania, June 2023, p. 6.

interviewed NGO worker believes that the public opinion of Roma is the same, regardless of whether they come from Ukraine or Romania: *“It is not easy to find a job even for Roma from Romania because of the colour of their skin and stereotypes related to Roma - e.g. they are not serious, they will steal, won’t come to work every day etc.”*

A human rights activist added: *“I believe that it is harder for Roma refugees to find an apartment or a job (compared to non-Roma). Sometimes it is hard to look for a job because they are mothers with a lot of kids or kids with some disabilities and they cannot leave the centre and work.”*

“It is not easy to find a job even for Roma from Romania because of the colour of their skin and stereotypes related to Roma.”

This was corroborated in the stories of the interviewed refugees, with two of them remaining unemployed as they stayed home with young children. Another Romani woman was unable to work due to long-term illness, although she would like to take on a part time job once her health improves.

According to the same human rights activist, only a small number of Romani refugees find jobs. As regards the type of work, most of them do low-level work, such as working in bakeries, in kitchens, or as cleaners, which is harder and more physical. One of the Romani interviewees explained that he had recently left a job in a bakery due to the working conditions; *“I decided to leave [...] because it was hard to work, I always came home late and the salary was small. At the moment I am looking for a normal, well-paid job.”* Another described how she works for minimum wage:

“I have to work 14 hours a day. I come home half dead. ... And that money is not enough. You don’t know where to go, how to feed and what to feed (to children), because it’s all meagre. The salary is small, it’s not enough for such a family. As I’m here now, I don’t even have enough money to buy a bottle of water.”

While all the Romani refugees who were working at the time of interview (two out of seven) were employed on official contracts, activists highlighted that often Roma work informally in the grey economy. This means employers avoid paying taxes, but also means those employees are not entitled to state benefits related to employment. Roma are more likely to rely on this type of employment due to their lack of skills, illiteracy, and sometimes lack of official documents, increasing the precariousness of their situation.

+ HEALTHCARE

Persons arriving to Romania from the armed conflict zone in Ukraine can use the same health services, sanitary materials, medications, and health care products as Romanian insured persons without paying a health insurance contribution. Medical services in specialised ambulatory medical assistance are granted without the need to present the doctor’s referral ticket.²¹⁰

Ukrainian refugees who have been granted temporary protection status in Romania are included in national public health programmes focusing on prevention, surveillance, and control of communicable diseases in situations of epidemiological risk. The Romanian

Government, in cooperation with its partners, provides medical services, medical supplies, medications, and medical devices under the social health insurance system with the aim of fully integrating Ukrainian refugees into the health system.²¹¹

Refugees from Ukraine who request a medical service for the first time are registered in an internet application developed by the National Health Insurance House, in order to be assigned an identification number in the health insurance system. After successful registration, the displayed data is printed from the application and handed over to the patient. The document can be used later by

210 See: <https://dopomoha.ro/ro/sanatate-1>.

211 Cancelaria Prim-Ministrului, Romania’s response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, 13 January 2023. Available [here](#).

patients anywhere in Romania without the need for subsequent generation of an identification number.²¹²

Although the system seems inclusive, in practice refugees' access to healthcare is restricted due to problems including a lack of family doctors, communication (language) barriers, and issues related to the health-care information system. Some pharmacies have refused to give medications to refugees, despite their having proper prescriptions. There is also a general lack of knowledge among refugees; confusion regarding health entitlements, problems engaging with the Romanian health-care system, and finding doctors to provide them with medical services. These issues significantly limit the access of refugees to proper healthcare.²¹³

As mentioned above, the lack of family doctors who accept refugees is a considerable problem. Only a few family doctors are listed by authorities in each county as accepting patients from Ukraine. One reason for this is bureaucracy; consultations with a person from Ukraine usually takes longer than with Romanian patients because of administrative requirements. Doctors also receive less financial compensation from the state for non-Romanians compared to Romanian patients. In certain cases, patients from Ukraine were refused by doctors as their temporary protection documents did not include a registered address, either because they moved frequently or were in group accommodation. These issues led to refugees often using emergency health-care services for non-emergency situations, as they were unable to see a family doctor.²¹⁴

"I feel discriminated against because [non-Roma] Ukrainian refugees receive everything, and I just get promises and no real help."

Romani refugee families, especially those coming to Romania with higher numbers of children, inevitably need to engage with the Romanian health-care system. The problems registering with a family doctor are exacerbated when the family is larger. Further complaints made by Romani refugees were related to long waiting times and perceived low quality of treatment received.²¹⁵ Additionally, information regarding the health services is often only available online which prevents those without electronic devices accessing that information, an issue which disproportionately affects Roma. One activist said: *"Most Roma are not registered with family doctors. They are not even aware of how to do it."*

The interviewed activists all agreed that Romani families face more difficulties related to finding a family doctor when compared to non-Roma Ukrainians. According to NGO workers, they sometimes go back to Ukraine for treatment or medications, or they consult with Ukrainian doctors on the phone. One added that often they just stay at home or use a pharmacist instead of a doctor.

One of the Romani refugees interviewed for this research suffers from a heart condition which makes her unable to work. For her disability to be accepted so she can receive disability payments, she needed an official

translation of the documents she received in Ukraine. However, the translations were too expensive for her to afford. Eventually, she received the confirmation of her diagnosis from a Romanian doctor, however she complained of the very slow process in this regard as compared to a non-Roma she knows who received the confirmation of disability in a day. Currently, she takes medication she got in Ukraine.

Another interviewed Romani refugee is the mother of six children, three of whom are with her in Romania. All three children have significant medical conditions, with one needing to be recently hospitalised in Ukraine. Their mother has little understanding about how to access health-care in Romania and complained that she has not received any assistance in this regard. She also believes there is a disparity between how Roma and non-Roma are treated:

"I do not receive any help. They promised they would help with the family doctor and confirming the disability of a child to receive social payments. I still have not received any help in that regard. The children still do not have a family doctor. I keep reminding them about it. Why are [non-Roma] Ukrainian women receiving all necessary help and assistance, get to the doctors, get their disability confirmed here and receive the benefits? I feel discriminated against because [non-Roma]

212 Dompomoha.ro, 'Accesul la medicină în România. Medic de familie pentru refugiații din Ucraina'. Available [here](#) (in Romanian).

213 Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation: Inter-agency operational update, Romania, December 2023. Available [here](#).

214 FRA, Fleeing Ukraine – Implementing temporary protection at local levels, 12 December 2023, p. 50. Available [here](#).

215 Aresel, Equal aid, unequal outcomes Ukrainian Roma Refugees in Romania, June 2023, p. 31.

Ukrainian refugees receive everything, and I just get promises and no real help. My sisters could not get disability confirmed, neither could my children.”

When it comes to sexual and reproductive rights of Romani refugees, nine international and Romanian civil society organisations, including the Association of Independent Midwives, have documented the alarming impact of the obstacles faced by refugees from Ukraine in four countries, including Romania, regarding access to quality sexual and reproductive healthcare. As a consequence of these obstacles, some refugees temporarily return to Ukraine to access reproductive health, access assistance

outside of legal channels, or remain without these necessary medical services.²¹⁶

A Romani activist from Romania who has worked with Romani women from Ukraine stated that many of the women she met do not trust the healthcare system in Romania, particularly when it comes to sexual and reproductive rights. In those cases, they often prefer to go to Moldova. Romania has a long history of discriminating against women when they are at their most vulnerable, so the story of one of the interviewed Romani refugees who gave birth in a Romanian hospital and had a positive experience was a welcome change.

216 Moasele.ro: Press Release, ‘Refugee women from Ukraine temporarily return home for reproductive health services they cannot access in parts of the EU’, 16 May 2023. Available [here](#).



Mother and child, Telmana St. Uzhhorod, Ukraine.

Q GENERAL OVERVIEW

Slovakia hosts some of the highest numbers of refugees fleeing Ukraine. As of 28 January 2024, there were more than 115,000 refugees from Ukraine on the territory of Slovakia.²¹⁷ Most of them arrived from Kharkivska, Dnipropetrovska, Donetska, and Kyivska Oblasts.²¹⁸ Overall, approximately 83% of the refugees are women and children. A large percentage of the arriving refugees have received temporary protection status in Slovakia; about 114,000.²¹⁹

Temporary protection (also called temporary refuge or 'dočasné útočisko' in Slovak language) in Slovakia is covered by the Government Resolution No. 185/2022 on the proposal to declare the provision of temporary refuge adopted on 16 March 2022.²²⁰ Temporary protection status entitles those who obtain it to reside in Slovakia and to move freely within the EU, allowing them to access the labour

market, accommodation, healthcare, and education, or to reunite with their families living elsewhere. The process of receiving temporary protection is, in general, very quick. Even those refugees who arrive to Slovakia without identity documents can apply for temporary protection, although, in those cases the procedure took longer.²²¹ The temporary protection scheme in Slovakia has now been prolonged until 4 March 2025.²²²

According to a survey carried out by the UNHCR and its partners in Slovakia between January 2024 and March 2024, 88% of the refugee respondents claimed to have at least one urgent need. When asked to specify the type of need, the respondents gave the following answers: accommodation (41%), healthcare (29%), employment (24%), material assistance (24%), and food (16%).²²³

42% of Slovak respondents agreed the government's support of refugees should cease altogether.

The most pressing need, according to those respondents, is accommodation. When it comes to housing, 48% of Ukrainian refugees live in rented housing, 15% are hosted by others, 10% are hosted by relatives, and 13% live in group forms of accommodation.²²⁴ In many EU countries, the solidarity payments for private landlords offering accommodation have ceased to be paid by states, however these payments are still active in Slovakia.

Owners of apartments and houses receive 5 euros per person per day, while other accommodation facility owners receive 6 euros per person per day.²²⁵

Refugees who were granted temporary protection in Slovakia can access the labour market under the same conditions as Slovak citizens, although they cannot run businesses solely on the basis of temporary protection status. Furthermore, they are

217 UNHCR, Ukraine Refugee Situation – Slovakia. Available [here](#).

218 UNHCR, Ukraine Situation: Slovakia - Protection Profiling and Monitoring Factsheet, November 2023. Available [here](#).

219 UNHCR, Ukraine Situation: Regional Refugee Response Plan, January-December 2024, p. 185. Available [here](#).

220 See: <https://rokovania.gov.sk/RVL/Resolution/19969/1>.

221 European Union Agency for Asylum: Slovakia. Available [here](#).

222 Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny: Useful information for citizens of Ukraine, last updated on 21 February 2024. Available [here](#).

223 UNHCR, Slovakia protection profiling & monitoring, Protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine, data as of 8 March 2024. Available [here](#).

224 *Ibid*.

225 UkraineSlovakia.sk, Accommodation in Slovakia. Contribution for accommodating persons with temporary protection status. Available [here](#).

entitled to almost the same scope of health care as offered by public health insurance including emergency care and medical procedures but also preventive examinations. Refugee children have the right to attend education facilities in Slovakia.²²⁶ At the beginning of the 2023/24 academic year almost 12,000 children from Ukraine attended schools in Slovakia, which is estimated to be about the half of the refugee children of school age in the country.²²⁷

According to the survey carried out by the Slovak Academy of Sciences published in February 2023, almost 19% of Slovak respondents did not agree

with the statement that Ukrainians who come to live in Slovakia should have the same rights as everyone else. A further 31% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.²²⁸ As of November 2023, overall 82% of Slovak respondents of the Eurobarometer survey on the EU's response to the war in Ukraine agreed with welcoming into the EU people fleeing the war. This is a 1% increase as compared to May 2023.²²⁹ However, according to the survey by GLOBSEC, 52% of Slovaks perceived the presence of Ukrainian refugees negatively. Moreover, 42% of Slovak respondents agreed the government's support of refugees should cease altogether.²³⁰



THE SITUATION OF ROMANI REFUGEES

Even before the outbreak of war, Romani people in Slovakia faced racism and prejudice due to their ethnicity. According to the 2023 Eurobarometer survey, which mapped discrimination of vulnerable groups including Romani communities in the EU countries, 55% of the survey respondents from Slovakia believed

that discrimination of Roma is widespread in Slovakia. Overall, 46% respondents stated that they would not like if their child had a partner of Romani origin and only 16% believed that efforts to better include the Romani population (in the areas of housing, education, health and employment) are effective.²³¹

SELECTIVE SOLIDARITY

During the first weeks and months of the Russian invasion, large groups of Romani refugees arrived from Ukraine to Slovakia. According to activists interviewed for this research, most of them considered Slovakia as a transit country and were not intending to stay. Some refugees knew where they were going, while others wanted to travel further but were not decided on their exact destination. The activists also mentioned how some people repeatedly arrived to Slovakia but after a few days returned to Ukraine, likely travelling back and forth for a period of time to visit family who remained in Ukraine or for doctors appointments.

Many discriminatory incidents towards Romani refugees were reported during the first weeks of the war, with the

majority taking place at the borders and immediately afterwards upon arriving in reception centres. An overarching problem for many Romani refugees was that they did not speak Ukrainian or Russian, and so had difficulties communicating at the borders. An activist interviewed for the research confirmed that providing Roma or Hungarian interpreters would have helped but this did not happen. After several incidents had occurred at the borders, the Office of the Government's Plenipotentiary for Romani Communities established so-called Roma contact points at the border crossings between Ukraine and Slovakia in order to provide help to Romani refugees in particular.²³²

Another activist interviewed for this research called the situation "*selective solidarity*", describing how

226 IOM Slovakia, Information and assistance in connection with the war in Ukraine. Last updated on 20 March 2024. Available [here](#).

227 UNHCR, Ukraine Situation: Regional Refugee Response Plan, January-December 2024, p. 187. Available [here](#).

228 Slovak Academy of Sciences, The public support for displaced Ukrainians in Slovakia is slowly decreasing, 24 February 2023. Available [here](#).

229 Eurobarometer, the EU's response to the war in Ukraine, December 2023. Available [here](#).

230 GLOBSEC, Ukrainian refugees in Visegrad countries: Societal Attitudes and Challenges of Accommodating People Fleeing the War, 2023. Available [here](#).

231 Eurobarometer, Discrimination in the European Union, December 2023. Available [here](#).

232 Gypsy Television, VIDEO: Rómskych utečencov si na hraniciach nevšímajú. Pomôc majú zamestnanci úradu splnomocnenca, 11 March 2022. Available [here](#).

Slovak society was welcoming to refugees as long as they were not Roma. This was also supported by some news outlets, with romea.cz reporting at the time that Romani families arriving to Slovakia and asking for help were often rejected, while non-Romani refugees were provided with aid. This attitude can be summed up by the base-commander of a fire station in Humenné stating that Romani refugees cannot be considered refugees and should not be allowed into Slovakia: *“They have abused this situation. ... They are not people who are directly threatened by the war. They are people from near the border, they have abused the opportunity for us to cook them hot food here and to receive humanitarian aid.”*²³³ Later, he claimed that he was misunderstood.

One activist also recalled an incident where one of the refugee reception centres in East Slovakia stopped providing humanitarian aid (food, hygiene products, etc.) because those working there believed that some Romani families from Ukraine had come

to Slovakia to take advantage of the aid, with the intention of taking items back to Ukraine.

Activists also described several incidents of bus and car drivers who provided transportation from the borders refusing to take Romani refugees. This was corroborated by the story of a local priest in Pavlovce nad Úhom, a village with 70% Roma population. The church provided shelter for hundreds of Romani refugees from Ukraine who were transiting through Slovakia, and the local priest confirmed the discriminatory approach of those providing transportation: *“They were supposed to take them to some place, I don’t know where, but they told them that they would also have a teacher there and that it would be good. They didn’t take them on the first bus, because they said they didn’t want to separate them and they wouldn’t get on together. They were supposed to wait for the next two buses to come where everyone would get on. But no one came for them.”* The priests later secured a bus which took some of the Romani refugees on to the Czech Republic.²³⁴

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

For the purposes of this report, five Slovak individual activists as well as employees of state authorities were interviewed. Moreover, several informal interviews were carried out with stakeholders (including members of Slovak Romani communities) working with refugees arriving to Slovakia from Ukraine. All of them, rather surprisingly, stated that they **were not aware of any Romani refugees remaining in Slovakia**. According to research findings by the ERGO Network, as of February 2023 just one Romani family from Ukraine decided to remain in Slovakia for an extended period of time, receiving accommodation support.²³⁵ One of the interviewees for this research, who knows the family, said that even they have since left for Germany.

On the whole, Romani refugees considered Slovakia to be a transit country on their journey to other EU countries (namely the Czech Republic, Belgium, Germany). Those who stayed in Slovakia during the first months of the invasion were often from the Transcarpathian region, the area close to the borders with Slovakia. As that area is relatively safe, with less frequent bombings and little to no direct conflict, many of them chose to return to Ukraine. According to one activist, there were a few cases when Romani refugees were accommodated in private accommodation in the early period of the war. However, they were scattered around the country and as such it was difficult to

remain updated on their situation. Despite concerted efforts by researchers, it has proved impossible to determine exactly why so few Romani refugees chose to stay in Slovakia as compared to the other countries in this report. One activist interviewed for the research revealed that he actively encouraged Roma to move on to other countries, as where they were staying in East Slovakia was ‘as bad as Ukraine’ in terms of potential living conditions. The reasons for their leaving are certainly myriad, and may include moving on to European countries with better employment prospects, or where they speak the language (such as Hungary), or where family have settled.

As Slovakia does not collect ethnic data on arriving refugees, it also proved difficult to collate official statistics on Romani refugees from Ukraine, or to identify any Romani families to interview for the research. As such, much of the information in this section is based on anecdotal evidence from activists working with refugees. It is most likely that there are Romani refugees from Ukraine living in Slovakia, however they seem to have become ‘invisible’ for the activists, social workers, and state authorities working in this area. A possible reason may be because they are either not concentrated in larger numbers or they live in more remote rural areas. In order to find out more information on the matter, further research would have to be carried out.

233 Romea.cz, Roma and other people of color fleeing war in Ukraine face discrimination and racism, Jaroslav Miko tells ROMEA TV that volunteers are refusing to help Romani families, 3 March 2022. Available [here](#).

234 Pravda, V Pavlovciach pomáhajú utečencom, ktorých nikto nechce, 4 March 2022. Available [here](#).

235 ERGO Network, Monitoring of the Situation of Ukrainian Roma Refugees in Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Romania, Moldova and Slovakia, Final report, p. 36. Available [here](#).



Robert and family, FRISPA Refugee Centre, Chisinau, Moldova.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report was to map the situation of Romani refugees in five receiving countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia, two years after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022. Since there is a lack of publicly available data and information specifically in relation to Romani refugees, the aim of the research was primarily to approach and talk to Romani refugees living in the above-mentioned countries, as well as activists working with them, to understand the most urgent needs and challenges they continue to face when engaging with the systems meant to support them. In two of the countries examined, it was not possible to interview any Romani refugees, and so in those cases interviews were held with activists and experts as well as undertaking extensive desk research.

During the first days, weeks, and months following the invasion of Ukraine on 22 February 2022, many European states, especially those close to Ukraine, were facing a sudden, complex situation. The war caught them unprepared for the related refugee influx. Over the following two years, there was sufficient time to 'get things going' and to ensure equitable access of all refugees to employment, housing, education, and other public services. In spite of that, this report shows that the situation of refugees, especially Romani refugees, continues to be far from ideal.

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The number of Romani refugees in the Czech Republic has decreased dramatically compared to the first weeks and months after the invasion in February 2022. Interviews held with Romani refugees from Ukraine living there and Czech activists working with refugees uncovered several issues. Segregation and inadequate living conditions were the main problems reported in the field of housing, as one of the interviewees put it: *"Now we have Czech Roma in segregated housing and Ukrainian Roma in segregated housing."*

Many Romani refugee children are not enrolled in Czech schools. Although official data suggests that the number has increased recently, according to interviewees the reality seems to be that many Romani children are enrolled but do not actually physically go to school. Alongside the difficulties presented by language barriers, illiteracy, and discrimination as seen in the other countries, a significant barrier for Romani refugees in accessing employment identified in Romania was that the refugees are mainly mothers with children without their husbands present, and conditions for them to be able to work were not provided for.

HUNGARY

Romani refugees living in Hungary are in a more specific situation, as many of them have dual Ukrainian-Hungarian citizenship. These individuals are not entitled to temporary protection status and there is concern that they are not able to effectively access their rights and public services. In the last decade, the public attitude in Hungary towards refugees has been, in general, very negative. Statements made by high-profile politicians and negative portrayals of refugees in the media significantly contributed to this. Moreover, Romani refugees are usually not treated as refugees fleeing war but rather economic migrants, making access to benefits more difficult in practice. They face the same problems when searching for housing as the majority of Ukrainian refugees (limited housing opportunities, expensive rents, etc.) but additionally face discrimination. As a result, they tend to live in group shelters with unknown, but likely sub-standard living conditions.

Many Romani refugees from Ukraine who arrived to Hungary ended up in remote rural areas without access to adequate housing, employment, or state assistance. Their access to employment is limited as they are either refused a job or given unofficial, temporary, uncertain, or poorly paid work. The general awareness of Romani refugees regarding entitlement and access to the Hungarian healthcare system remains low. Cases of denial of free healthcare were reported, while some activists described racist and discriminatory treatment by hospital staff. Romani women are in a particularly vulnerable position and face a lack of empathy and understanding when it comes to sexual and reproductive healthcare.

MOLDOVA

In Moldova, undocumented Romani refugees face serious difficulties obtaining temporary protection status. Without identity documents, they are unable to leave and move on to EU countries. Some Romani refugees in Moldova still live in segregated refugee centres where living conditions are inadequate and substandard. Problems accessing water and heating as well as a lack of space and privacy were among the key issues reported.

Access to education in Moldovan schools is limited for Romani children from Ukraine due to the language barrier and other issues, including fear of discrimination. Due to this most refugee children participate in online education, however a lack of necessary electronic equipment creates real barriers for them being able to effectively participate in classes. When it comes to employment, Romani refugees suffer from a lack of skills or qualifications, illiteracy, and discrimination, all of which contributes to them taking up involuntarily informal work. Additionally, Romani refugees lack awareness regarding their rights in accessing the Moldovan healthcare system. Many of them still return to Ukraine to receive treatment or access medication.

ROMANIA

In Romania, Romani refugees face unequal treatment in several areas of life as compared to non-Roma refugees and many have already moved on to other EU countries or returned to Ukraine. While more Romani refugees have gradually been able to find accommodation in private apartments using the state aid programme, for Romani refugees with darker skin or wearing traditional clothes it is almost impossible to find a flat on the rental market. They end up in accommodation centres where overcrowding and limited hygiene facilities are a major problem.

According to interviewees, the general unpreparedness of the Romanian education system for the influx of refugees, the language barrier, and fears of discrimination are the main difficulties for Romani refugee children in accessing education in Romanian schools. Although many Romani children attend online classes, they face practical obstacles (lack of devices, problems with internet connections) which significantly limit their access to education. The two main barriers for refugees in accessing employment in Romania are limited childcare and the language barrier and Romani families also face huge difficulties related to finding a family doctor even compared to non-Roma Ukrainians. Most of them are not registered with a family doctor. Often, there is a lack of trust towards Romanian doctors and Romani refugees go to Moldova or back to Ukraine for treatment.

SLOVAKIA

Based on interviews with activists who have worked with refugees in Slovakia as well as the desk research, Slovakia was mainly considered a transit country by most Romani refugees on their journey to Western European countries. Many others returned back to Ukraine soon after arriving. Research carried out in Slovakia did not identify any concentrations of Romani refugees still living in Slovakia. This is possibly not that surprising, taking into account the treatment many of them faced when they entered Slovakia. One of the activists interviewed described the attitude towards them vis-à-vis the attitude towards other refugees as “x”. Often, they were accused of not being refugees and that they only came to Slovakia to abuse the humanitarian aid offered to ‘real’ refugees.



It is evident then that, even when fleeing a war zone, Romani people are unable to escape the discrimination and inequality that they face in daily life. Displaced Romani people from Ukraine are facing greater humanitarian needs than non-Roma refugees, due to compounded barriers and issues stemming from long-term inequality and discrimination. Romani refugees are more likely to not have required identity documents, to be illiterate, or to lack skills and qualifications which would help them in accessing a job.

Finally, it is important to note that the work of the ERRC in relation to the situation of Romani refugees in receiving countries does not end with this report. On the contrary, the information gathered will support advocacy activities and litigation which will aim to tackle the most serious human rights violations of Romani refugees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The ERRC recommends that the States covered by this report should:

- Collect data on refugees disaggregated on the basis of ethnicity in the following areas: access to temporary protection, housing, education, employment, healthcare while treating this personal data as sensitive in accordance with the GDPR.
- Analyse the data in order to identify specific needs of Romani refugees and subsequently prepare and adopt targeted measures aimed at inclusion of Romani refugees.
- Ensure that laws and policies adopted are neither directly nor indirectly discriminatory towards Romani refugees.
- Take steps to increase awareness of Romani refugees regarding the process of receiving the temporary protection and the related rights and benefits and how to access them.
- Facilitate access of Romani refugees to language courses aimed at learning the local language.
- Ensure that in practice none of the refugees remain uncovered by temporary protection or similar scheme including undocumented Romani refugees or refugees with double citizenship.
- Secure assistance to Romani refugees in accessing administrative procedures and also legal aid, where appropriate.
- Protect the rights of Romani refugees by, among others, making available and ensuring their effective access to complaint mechanisms regarding violations of rights and discrimination of Romani refugees.
- Support national, regional and local Romani NGOs which assist Romani refugees.

HOUSING

- Take steps to prevent and eradicate residential segregation.
- Ensure that Romani refugees have access to accommodation which fulfil the criteria of adequate housing under international human rights law.

EDUCATION

- Ensure effective access of Romani refugee children to education system in respective receiving countries and adopt measures to remove barriers in that respect.
- Respect the wish of parents that their children follow Ukrainian online education and ensure that they have all the necessary equipment to effectively participate in it.

EMPLOYMENT

- Provide trainings and courses to increase skills and qualifications of Romani refugees to improve their chances of finding a job.
- Adopt measures aimed at preventing the exploitation of Romani refugees at work.
- Provide assistance to Romani refugees seeking employment.

HEALTHCARE

- Ensure that Romani refugees have access to affordable healthcare under the same conditions as citizens of respective receiving countries.
- Establish child safeguarding procedures to protect and support Romani refugee children, as well as provide accessible mental health services to support children and families facing intersectional vulnerabilities.
- Ensure Romani refugee women and girls have equitable access to basic reproductive healthcare and support without fear of discrimination or service provision and language barriers.



Lida and Alina,
FRISPA Refugee Centre, Chisinau, Moldova.

