



Risks to Community Cohesion Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities

Romania Report

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Dr Ingrida Kerusauskaite

IFES

Leila Mulloy

Palladium

Ruta Nimkar

Meraki Labs

Maja Wesołowska

Palladium

Additional research and review inputs: Agata Slota (Palladium), James Sparrow (Palladium), Catalin Raiu (IFES), Witold Stupnicki (Palladium), Lisa Reppell (IFES), Lucinda Jones (Palladium), Fernanda Buriel (IFES)



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems



Risks to Community Cohesion Between Ukrainian Refugees and Host Communities in Romania

In Romania, governments, non-governmental organisations, businesses, multilateral organisations, and ordinary citizens have provided substantial support to Ukrainians fleeing Russia's 2022 invasion. However, as the war continues, the generosity shown to date might wane, including due to the challenges that Romanian host communities face. These include a rising cost of living, an overstretched healthcare system, and shortages of affordable housing, as well as disinformation campaigns relating to refugees, including from Russia-aligned stakeholders. This

report aims to help understand the factors that might undermine cohesion between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in Romania in the medium term. It provides programmatic recommendations to local, national, and international stakeholders on what they could do to mitigate those factors. In addition, the report details the characteristics that have increased (or can increase) different Ukrainian refugees' vulnerabilities to exploitation, discrimination, and ability to access necessary services, as well as incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees that have appeared and have the potential to be spread further.

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Table of Contents



Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction.....	9
Objectives	9
Approach, methodology, and structure of the report.....	10
Chapter 1. Country Overview	13
1.1 Country Overview	13
Chapter 2. Vulnerabilities to exploitation and discrimination	15
2.1 Overview	15
2.2 Legal status, welfare, and benefits	16
2.3 Healthcare.....	19
2.4 Housing.....	21
2.5 Education.....	23
2.6 Employment and income	25
2.7 Community, social, and political life	27
Chapter 3. Misleading or incendiary discourses about Ukrainian refugees.....	29
3.1 Overview	29
3.2 Actors spreading misleading or abusive messages.....	30
Modes of dissemination.....	32
Host community reactions (interpreters)	33
Risks.....	34
3.3 Top five discourses	34
Discourse 1: ‘They don’t want to work’	35
Discourse 2: ‘Ukrainians are rich, drive around in fancy cars and spend their time in malls and cafes while locals are working; they’re in the host country on holiday – they don’t need assistance’	37
Discourse 3: ‘Refugees are supported more financially and get better benefits than the local population; help to refugees comes at the cost of the local population; we should help our poor, not the Ukrainians’	38

Discourse 4: ‘Ukrainians and Russians are basically the same’	39
Discourse 5: ‘They treat the host country's minorities in Ukraine badly’	40
Chapter 4. Potential tensions	42
4.1 Overview	42
4.2 Legal status, welfare, and benefits	43
4.3 Healthcare.....	44
4.4 Housing.....	45
4.5 Education	47
4.6 Employment and income	48
4.7 Community, social, and political life	52
Chapter 5. Programmatic approach recommendations	56
5.1 Overview	56
5.2 Cross-cutting programmatic approaches	56
5.3 Legal status, welfare, and benefits	60
5.4 Healthcare.....	61
5.5 Housing.....	62
5.6 Education	63
5.7 Employment and income	64
5.8 Community, social, and political life	67
Annex 1. Acronyms and abbreviations	72
Annex 2. Key statistics	73
Annex 3. Statistics, surveys, and research reports	75

List of Tables



TABLE 1: Characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable in Romania 15
TABLE 2: Misleading or incendiary discourses about refugees in Romania 31
TABLE 3: Potential sources of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in Romania 42

List of Figures



FIGURE 1 The IFES Chain of Harm Framework 29

Executive Summary

Background

The world was shaken by Russia's brutal escalation of hostilities and full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and the ensuing human suffering. By April 2023, European countries recorded more than 8 million people displaced by the violence in Ukraine, with more than 5 million registered for temporary protection (TP) or similar national protection schemes on the continent.¹ Of the 5 million, 123,761 have registered for TP in Romania, as of 3 April 2023.²

Ukrainian refugees have been warmly welcomed by Romanian authorities and citizens. Governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), businesses, multilateral organisations, and ordinary citizens provided whatever support they could to Ukrainians fleeing the invasion. While a quick end to the war is hoped for, it is possible that the conflict will become prolonged, and therefore likely that displaced Ukrainians will continue to reside in neighbouring and other European countries.

Romania also faces significant challenges – rising economic pressures and relentless disinformation efforts, among others. There is a risk that these factors may erode community cohesion in the longer term. In other crises, as time continued, tensions have led to increased polarisation of society and discrimination or hate crimes against minorities. Early signs point to support for refugees beginning to erode in some countries. For instance, GLOBSEC polling from December 2022 indicated that only 42 percent of Slovakia's population view Ukrainian refugees positively.³ In the Czech Republic, in September 2022 energy protestors demanded the government 'enter into direct gas supply contracts' with Russia and 'return Ukrainian refugees to their homes'.⁴ Looking ahead, with the invasion ongoing, the priorities of organisations that currently support Ukrainian refugees might change, resulting in a drop in funding available to support refugees and communities hosting them. Despite these challenges, the disruption to the status quo leads to clear opportunities to improve the situation and general standards of living for both refugees and local communities.

Objectives

Several months into the war's second year, this report aims to help understand the factors that might undermine cohesion between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in Romania in the medium term and provide recommendations to relevant organisations for what they could do to mitigate those factors. We provide recommendations for specific programmes as well as programmatic and service delivery approaches that local, national, and international stakeholders could take to increase community cohesion and reduce the likelihood of these potential tensions occurring.

¹ UNHCR. 2023. [Operational Data Portal](#). Accessed 3 April 2023.

² UNHCR. 2023. [Operational Data Portal](#). Accessed 3 April 2023.

³ GLOBSEC. 2022. [New report shows that the V4 population supports Ukrainian refugees with some reservations](#), Accessed 22 March 2023. Although there has been debate about methodological approaches to polling conducted by GLOBSEC and the [Slovak Academy of Science](#), such as noting the different scales given to participants to respond to questions (1–5 or 1–10) and how responses were collected (online or in-person); even when the question posed is the same. See GLOBSEC. 2002. [New poll: Slovaks want Ukraine to win the war, Not Russia](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

⁴ Chastand, Jean-Baptiste. Le Monde. 2022. [In the Czech Republic, the social crisis has awakened pro-Russian forces](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

Approach and methodology

The research was conducted between November 2022 and March 2023. The team first carried out desk-based research. This was followed by a research workshop in Bucharest on 15 and 16 February with 53 experts from local and national government, multilateral organisations, local and international NGOs, academia, religious leaders, and the private sector. These research activities focused on (1) the characteristics that can make refugees more vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation, and difficulty accessing services; (2) incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees in the country; and (3) tensions that might arise between refugees and host communities in the medium term (by September 2023). The research team followed up with a survey that asked key experts to rate the effectiveness of various programmatic responses for mitigating the five tensions that are most likely to affect community cohesion by September 2023 and to share programmatic lessons learnt that could be useful for others working in this space. The team then supplemented the findings from the workshops and surveys with additional desk-based research.

Structure of the report

The report considers the characteristics that have increased (or can increase) different Ukrainian refugees' vulnerabilities to exploitation, discrimination, and ability to access necessary services (Chapter 2); the incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees that have been noted and have the potential to be spread further (Chapter 3); tensions that might occur between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in the medium term (Chapter 4); and various programmatic responses that could be applicable in the region to mitigate the risks at each stage of the refugees' journey (Chapter 5).

Each chapter covers six stages of Ukrainian refugees' journeys in the country: (1) entry, legal status, and registration for services; (2) healthcare; (3) housing; (4) education; (5) employment and income; and (6) community, social, and political life. This enables the report to bring out more clearly the links between misleading and incendiary discourses, the underlying challenges that such discourses exploit, the increased vulnerabilities of certain groups of Ukrainian refugees, and where tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities might emerge or become more significant, as well as to offer more targeted recommendations.

Key findings

Economic concerns are a key driver of potential tensions

The European Parliament's autumn 2022 perception survey identified the rising cost of living, including increasing food and energy prices, as the issue that Romanians were most concerned about (82 percent), followed closely by the potential spread of the war in Ukraine to other countries (78 percent) and poverty and social exclusion (76 percent).⁵ Inflation in Romania reached 13.4 percent in January 2023,⁶ compared to the European Union (EU) average of 9.5 percent.⁷ Romania continues to suffer from one of the highest income inequality rates in the EU.⁸ At the same time, Romania has the highest rates of home ownership in the world, as 96% of people live in owner-

⁵ Eurobarometer. 2023. [EP Autumn 2022 Survey: Parlemeter](#). Accessed 2 June 2023.

⁶ Statista. 2023. [Harmonised index of consumer prices \(HICP\) inflation rate of European Union in January 2023 by country](#)

⁷ OECD. 2022. [OECD Economic Surveys: Romania](#)

⁸ OECD. 2022. [OECD Economic surveys: Romania 2022](#)

occupied properties; this makes finding adequate rental properties more challenging.⁹ Low social housing stocks and rising rents, especially in Bucharest and the tourist city of Constanta, have contributed to narratives that Romanian citizens have been economically disadvantaged by the arrival of Ukrainians.¹⁰ A range of misleading and incendiary narratives have emerged, for example that Ukrainian refugees have driven up prices.

These factors can provoke tensions, especially where Ukrainian migrants receive state and multilateral sponsored support whilst Romania's population are perceived to struggle. Accordingly, a narrative of 'we should support our own poor, not Ukrainians' has emerged in Romania.¹¹ Some grievances may be based on partial truth. For example, there was a misconception that Ukrainians had been granted unlimited free travel within the country,¹² although in fact the free fare period ran only from March until May 2022.¹³ Workshop participants also noted that some respondents believed that local taxpayers paid for much of the support to refugees that was actually funded by the EU or voluntary charitable donations.

To mitigate potential tensions around economic concerns, this report makes the recommendations below. These and other recommendations are detailed in Chapter 5.

- Ensure and communicate equity in the distribution of resources among the Ukrainian and local populations that are in need, and publicise the additional resources (international funding and voluntary domestic donations) that the country received to support the refugees.
- Implement phasing programmes – that is, change approaches to target support to those who are most vulnerable as the conflict continues.
- Share positive stories on social media, for example about Ukrainian and host community relationships, support and solidarity, and the contributions that Ukrainian refugees make to the country.
- Extend programmes supporting refugees to more vulnerable local communities.
- Engage with businesses and organisations to help them make the most of a more diverse workforce.

Fragmentation in Romanian society can make inter-community understanding and integration more challenging

Romania is a diverse country with a significant ethnic minority population. Since 1990, a reserved seats system has guaranteed seats in the national Parliament to minorities, including ethnic Hungarians, Roma, and Ukrainians.¹⁴ However, Romanian society is relatively divided along ethnic lines and other community characteristics.¹⁵ This has contributed to a fragmentation of the experiences of Romanians and at times differing perceptions of social issues and challenges. This fragmentation emerged strongly in the research workshops where participants often held divergent views and there were few occasions in which participants reached consensus on any given topic.¹⁶ One example was the perception of barriers to employment. Where Ukrainian and some Romanian participants highlighted language barriers, lack of information on where to access opportunities, and challenges securing childcare as reasons why Ukrainian refugees struggle to access

⁹ Moldovan, Iana. BBC. 2018. [The country where 96% of homes are privately owned](#). Accessed 4 August 2023.

¹⁰ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹¹ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹² Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

¹³ Romanian Insider. 2022. [Romania to provide free rail transportation to all Ukrainians for another month](#)

¹⁴ Protysk, Oleh 2010. [Representation of minorities in the Romanian Parliament](#). Accessed 22 June 2023.

¹⁵ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023; De Rosa, Donato, and Kim, Y. S. 2018. [Romania: Thriving cities, rural poverty, and a trust deficit](#). Accessed 22 June 2023.

¹⁶ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

employment, the Romanian participants were split on the issue, with some citing a lack of willingness to work as the primary driver for Ukrainian unemployment.¹⁷

Although research points to higher integration of Ukrainians than other refugee communities into the job market, the perception of a lack of intent to work persists.¹⁸ This is reflected the diversity of experience and thought in Romania and suggests that fragmentation of views and experience in the country is deeply entrenched. This has far-reaching potential policy impacts, as a successful approach to fostering community cohesion in Bucharest may not be replicable in other cities, or in rural communities.

Furthermore, the significant difference between Romanian (a Romance language) and Ukrainian (a Slavic language) poses a barrier to refugees' access to the labour market, and to building relationships with host communities.

To respond to this risk and mitigate potential tensions, this report recommends:

- Increasing the provision of language classes, ideally tailored to facilitate refugees' access to the labour market and other specific needs.
- Providing training for teachers and employers on how to support Ukrainians who are just learning Romanian.
- Conducting more activities to increase interactions that members of both communities enjoy (such as movie screenings or sports activities), providing opportunities for the groups to meet and get to know one another.
- Creating additional free or affordable after-school activities for the children of both communities, which also provides an avenue for parents to become acquainted.
- Improving the training of search engines and generative artificial intelligence to help reduce bias and potential abuse.

Political discourses fuelled by disinformation and historic grievances have the potential to stir tensions

Russian-aligned and populist stakeholders have been active in spreading disinformation in Romania, including anti-refugee propaganda.¹⁹ Narratives have been identified stating that 'Ukrainians and Russians are basically the same', that Ukraine is an artificial state, and that Russia's claim to Ukrainian territory is legitimate.²⁰ These narratives build on the historically lower interaction between Ukraine and Romania than some other neighbouring countries, and significant linguistic differences between the two countries. Some have been replicated by a small number of Romanian lawmakers and politicians, thereby legitimising the claim to their supporters.

Nationalist parties have raised the treatment of Ukraine's Romanian minority, putting forward a narrative that Ukraine mistreats Romanian minorities and therefore Romania should not treat Ukrainian refugees better.²¹ One politician said that Romanians must 'protect their own' and show greater outrage at the treatment of Romanian

¹⁷ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁸ OECD. 2023. *What we know about the skills and early labour market outcomes of refugees from Ukraine*. Accessed 22 June 2023.

¹⁹ Gomboş, Cătălin. Verdica.ro. 2022. [Romania in 2022: Top FAKE NEWS & DISINFORMATION narratives debunked by Veridica](#). Accessed 10 January 2023.

²⁰ Georgiana Marina. Digi24.ro. 17 September 2022. [Declarații halucinante ale fostului ministru Andrei Marșa: Ucraina trebuie să cedeze teritoriul României, Rusiei, Ungariei și Poloniei](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

²¹ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

minorities,²² although this issue appears to have received little attention in public debate prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.²³ Historically overlooked groups such as the Romanian minority in Ukraine appear to be used for political gain.

To mitigate potential tensions that can arise due to political discourses, this report recommends:

- Implementing strategic communications to reach target audiences and penetrate information bubbles. This includes working with journalists to support quality journalism that does not contribute to the spread of incendiary discourses, as well as producing radio and TV programming to address tensions, including 'edutainment' programmes that use fiction to help build inter-community understanding.
- Organising community dialogues around topics such as Ukrainian history and culture and the realities of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- Reviewing school curricula, including the teaching of history and digital literacy.

Many challenges are rooted in longstanding operational challenges

Some of the concerns that Romanian host communities expressed, and, with them, the incendiary and misleading narratives shared by both actors with malicious intent and some parts of the population, are rooted in longstanding issues such as strained healthcare and childcare systems. Prior to the arrival of refugees from Ukraine, healthcare provision in Romania faced challenges such as staff shortages²⁴ and unequal regional provision of healthcare.²⁵ Challenges in accessing childcare and early childhood education in Romania also predate the arrival of refugees from Ukraine;²⁶ a 2021 UNICEF study found that more than 50 percent of parents in Romania relied on informal care provided by family, friends, and neighbours.²⁷ In these circumstances, refugees with fewer social networks are more likely to struggle accessing childcare and, additionally, the labour market. Perceived additional pressure on essential services could lead to increased tensions between host communities and Ukrainian refugees.

The arrival of Ukrainian refugees has highlighted some of these longstanding challenges, but it also can speed their resolution, as the issues have become even more visible; in some cases, different sources of funding have become accessible to address them. This could improve the situation for both Ukrainians and host communities.

To mitigate potential tensions around long-standing operational challenges, this report recommends:

- Linking community cohesion-focused work with broader efforts to improve operational concerns in Romania.
- Conducting conflict and context analysis to inform programming and communication campaigns, and implementing specific programs to improve access to services for the local and refugee populations where needed (e.g., by providing translation services for healthcare and mobile clinics or supporting social intermediaries in the rental process, guaranteeing rent payments and minimum tenancy standards).²⁸

²² Calistru, Elena, and Burtan, L. GLOBESC, National Endowment for Democracy. 2022. [Funky Citizens](#). Accessed 10 March 2023.

²³ Balkan Insight. 2022. [Ukraine seeks closer ties to Romania, vows to resolve minority issues](#)

²⁴ The Economist. 2019. [Romania's health-care system, the EU's worst, struggles to reform](#)

²⁵ The Economist. 2019. [Romania's health-care system, the EU's worst, struggles to reform](#)

²⁶ Gromada, Anna, and Richardson, D. UNICEF 2021. [Where do rich countries stand on childcare?](#)

²⁷ Gromada, Anna, and Richardson, D. UNICEF 2021. [Where do rich countries stand on childcare?](#)

²⁸ See, for example, Habitat for Humanity. n.d. [Introducing Social Rental Agencies in Poland](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

Introduction

The world was shaken by Russia's brutal escalation of hostilities and full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and the ensuing human suffering. By April 2023, European countries recorded more than 8 million people displaced by the violence in Ukraine, with more than 5 million having registered for temporary protection (TP) or similar national protection schemes on the continent.²⁹ Of the 5 million, 123,761 have registered for TP in Romania, as of 3 April 2023.³⁰

Ukrainian refugees have been warmly welcomed by the Romanian authorities and citizens. Governments, NGOs, businesses, multilateral organisations, and ordinary citizens provided whatever support they could to Ukrainians fleeing the invasion. Starting just a few days after the invasion, the Romanian government organised a series of coordination meetings and policies with key government, NGO and international organisation stakeholders across the country and established a government taskforce to respond to the influx of refugees.³¹ While a quick end to the war is hoped for, it is possible that the conflict will become prolonged, and therefore likely that displaced Ukrainians will continue to reside in neighbouring and other European countries.

Romania is also facing significant challenges – rising economic pressures, relentless disinformation efforts,³² and potential policy pitfalls, among others. There is a risk that these factors may erode currently high community cohesion in the longer term. In other crises, over time, tensions have led to increased polarisation of society and discrimination or hate crimes against minorities. This in turn can decrease the resilience of a society to disinformation and to shocks more broadly and, in the worst cases, increase criminality and violence or conflict between communities and lead to human rights violations, including exploitation of vulnerable individuals and lack of access to basic services.

Early signs point to support for Ukrainian refugees beginning to erode in some countries. In Slovakia, for instance, GLOBSEC polling from December 2022 indicated that only 42 percent of the population view Ukrainian refugees positively.³³ In the Czech Republic, in September 2022 energy protestors demanded that the government 'enter into direct gas supply contracts with Russia' and 'return Ukrainian refugees to their homes'.³⁴

Objectives

Several months into the war's second year, this report aims to help understand the factors that might undermine cohesion between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in Romania in the medium term.

²⁹ UNHCR. 2023. [Operational Data Portal](#). Accessed 3 April 2023.

³⁰ UNHCR. 2023. [Operational Data Portal](#). Accessed 3 April 2023.

³¹ Romanian Prime Minister's Office. 2023. [Romania's Response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis](#). Accessed 24 March 2023.

³² Council of the European Union. 2022. [EU Imposes Sanctions on State-Owned Outlets RT/Russia Today and Sputnik's Broadcasting in the EU](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

³³ GLOBSEC. 2022. [New report shows that the V4 population supports Ukrainian refugees with some reservations](#). Accessed 22 March 2023. Although there has been debate about methodological approaches to polling conducted by GLOBSEC and the [Slovak Academy of Science](#), such as noting the different scales given to participants to respond to questions (1–5 or 1–10) and how responses were collected (online or in-person); even when the question posed is the same. See: GLOBSEC. 2002. [New poll: Slovaks want Ukraine to win the war, Not Russia](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

³⁴ Chastand, Jean-Baptiste. Le Monde. 2022. [In the Czech Republic, the social crisis has awakened pro-Russian forces](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

We provide recommendations for specific programmes as well as programmatic and service delivery approaches that could be taken by local, national, and international stakeholders to increase community cohesion and reduce the likelihood of these potential tensions occurring.

We understand community cohesion³⁵ as a society in which:

- All communities have a sense of belonging;
- The diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued;
- Similar life opportunities are available to all; and
- Strong and positive relationships exist and continue to develop in the workplace, in schools and in the wider community.

This report considers community cohesion at the local, regional, and national levels.

Approach, methodology, and structure of the report

The project team conducted research in five focus countries: the Czech Republic, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. In total, six research reports have been produced: five country reports and a regional report. The regional report summarises the findings of the country reports and draws out the key commonalities and differences in the potential tensions that might arise between the Ukrainian refugee and host communities. This report focuses on Romania.

To conduct the research, the project engaged a diverse team: a core group responsible for the overall research framework, methodology, and delivery across the five countries; country researchers in each of the five focus countries; and an advisory group of subject matter experts to provide specialist inputs. The teams used the same approach and methodology for each country.

The research was undertaken in two phases. The inception phase took place between November and December 2022. The research team developed the approach and methodology and conducted initial desk-based research. This research examined the key relevant stakeholders in each country; existing programmes in this space; and characteristics that can make different refugee groups vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, and challenges in accessing services. Finally, the team completed an initial mapping of the tensions that might arise between the host communities and refugees in the medium term.

The research phase took place between January and March 2023. The research team organised interactive two-day workshops with key experts from local and national governments, multilateral organisations, local and international non-governmental organisations, academia, religious leaders, and the private sector. The morning session of the first workshop day was conducted with only Ukrainian refugees, discussing the characteristics that can make refugees more vulnerable. Representatives from academia and local NGOs joined for the afternoon sessions, which focused on refugee journeys. The second day included a broad range of participants and focused on incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees in the country and tensions that might arise in the medium term. In Romania, the workshops were conducted on 15 and 16 February with 53 experts from a broad range of organisations. In total, the project engaged with 229 workshop participants across the five

³⁵ Slight variations of this definition are used by various schools and councils in the UK and put forward by the Department for Children, Schools, and Families (now called the Department for Education).

countries. The discussions focused on the mid-term, with September 2023 as a focus point, to orient the discussion toward risks that might become significant in that period. The research team then followed up with a survey that asked key experts to rate how effective various programmatic responses could be to mitigate the five tensions that are most likely to affect community cohesion by September 2023 and to share programmatic lessons learnt that could be useful for others working in this space. Finally, the findings from the workshops and the surveys were supplemented by additional desk-based research.

The report is structured according to the different stages of Ukrainian refugees' journeys in the country: (1) entry, legal status, and registration for services; (2) healthcare; (3) housing; (4) education; (5) employment; and (6) community, social, and political life. This allows the report to bring out more clearly the links between misleading and incendiary discourses, the underlying challenges that such discourses exploit, the increased vulnerabilities of certain groups of Ukrainian refugees, and where tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities might emerge or become more significant, as well as to offer more targeted recommendations.

Chapter 1 provides a broad overview of the legal structures to facilitate the reception of the refugees and the support provided to refugees by various organisations. This chapter also presents data on the key political, economic, and demographic characteristics of the country and statistics on the numbers of refugees hosted, their demographic characteristics, financial support received, access to services and employment, and host population attitude polling figures.

Chapter 2 details the characteristics that have increased (and can increase) different Ukrainian refugees' vulnerabilities to exploitation, discrimination, and ability to access necessary services. This chapter draws on the desk-based research and research workshop findings.

Chapter 3 focuses on incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees. This section is based on the IFES' Chain of Harm framework,³⁶ which maps the path by which disinformation, misinformation, and dangerous speech (DMDS) move through an information ecosystem, depicting the ways in which directed disinformation commonly amplifies hate speech or other divisive narratives to achieve its aims. The discourses section uses three sources of data: (1) findings from the in-country workshops, (2) research from third parties on misleading and incendiary discourses about Ukrainian refugees, and (3) Facebook content found via CrowdTangle.³⁷ The approach led to the development of recommendations regarding discreet intervention points where the Chain of Harm could be disrupted.

Chapter 4 summarises tensions that might occur between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in the medium term. The chapter presents a long list of possible tensions to highlight the possibility of malign actors relentlessly promoting related discourses and of underlying challenges worsening enough to increase tensions around a particular subject. This chapter draws on the desk-based research and research workshop findings.

Chapter 5 provides programmatic approach recommendations, first cross-cutting and then specific to the stages of the refugee journey, aimed at reducing potential tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities. The chapter particularly focuses on the five potential tensions that workshop participants and the research team

³⁶ [Disinformation Campaigns and Hate Speech: Exploring the Relationship and Programming Interventions](#)

³⁷ The team used the CrowdTangle research tool to triangulate the findings from the workshops and third-party research and to identify examples to incorporate in the report. See Crowdtangle. 2023. [Welcome page](#). Accessed 22 March 2023.

(following additional desk-based research) considered the most likely to affect community cohesion in the medium term. The chapter draws on the survey on programmatic responses, information gathered during the workshops, and desk-based research to discuss various programmatic responses that could be applicable in Romania to mitigate the risks of each of the five tensions. The programmatic recommendations are intentionally broad, but with illustrative examples to enable a range of organisations – governments and multilateral organisations, NGOs of various sizes, and small community initiatives – to consider and adapt those in their programming.

Annex 1 provides an acronyms and abbreviations lists, and **Annex 2** presents data on the key political, economic, and demographic characteristics of the country as well as statistics on the numbers of refugees hosted, their demographic characteristics, financial support received, access to services and employment, and host population attitude polling figures.

Given that the political, economic, and broader context may change very quickly after the publication of this report, **Annex 3** provides a summary of the key links to relevant statistics that can be consulted for an up-to-date picture of the situation. Annex 3 also provides a range of recommended readings for deeper dives into the topics discussed in this report – Ukrainian refugees' needs and challenges, reports on discrimination, pressures on social services, public attitude polling, disinformation discourses, programme lessons learnt, and other topics.

This report was commissioned by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office and delivered by Palladium and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), in collaboration with British embassies in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, and Moldova.

Chapter 1. Country Overview

1.1 Country Overview

There has been a strong demonstration of support from the Romanian government, NGOs, multilateral organisations, and civil society in response to the influx of refugees. 123,761 refugees have registered for TP in Romania, as of 3 April 2023.³⁸ Robust action was taken despite the country having little recent experience supporting large refugee inflows. By comparison, in 2020 and 2021 Romania received 6,158 and 9,591 applications for asylum, respectively.³⁹

Refugees from Ukraine have been warmly welcomed. The government has put in place extensive legal structures to facilitate their reception and their stay in the country. However, there is a general perception that the majority of the refugees do not intend to stay in Romania in the long term but will travel further west or go home once they have greater certainty about the viability of returning to Ukraine.⁴⁰ The Temporary Protection Act of March 2022 offered simplified procedures and rapid access to humanitarian assistance for Ukrainian citizens (and their non-Ukrainian family) who have arrived in Romania as well as non-Ukrainian third country nationals (TCNs) who had legally resided in or benefited from international protection prior to the invasion. The act grants refugees the right to stay in Romania for up to one year, which extends automatically by up to two periods of six months if the war continues.⁴¹

The government launched the 50/20 programme on 7 March 2022⁴² through the implementation of Government Emergency Ordinance no 15/2022, which supports hosts, and thereby refugees, with housing and food costs from the state – providing 50 lei per person per day for housing and 20 lei per person per day for food.⁴³ Alongside the key multilateral organisations – the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and International Organization for Migration (IOM) – Romanian civil society organisations, religious organisations, and NGOs have been crucial in the response. These organisations have played an essential role in organising and supporting refugees, mobilising quickly to fill gaps around government support structures, including in securing accommodation and connecting them with employers.⁴⁴

Social services and systems were already stretched before the war, and pressure on the housing, health and education systems is increasing. Other challenges are likely to arise as the conflict protracts and needs and concerns evolve, particularly in the context of inflation continuing to rise (Romania’s annual inflation rate reached 15.52 percent in February 2023)⁴⁵ and Russia-aligned stakeholders continuing disinformation campaigns. Incendiary and misleading narratives about refugees, such as those claiming that Ukrainians do not need or deserve assistance or that they have unfair and preferential access to services, can exacerbate existing concerns and have the potential to negatively impact community cohesion. Looking ahead, with the invasion ongoing, the

³⁸ UNHCR. 2023. [Operational Data Portal](#). Accessed 3 April 2023.

³⁹ European Commission. 2022. [European Website on Integration](#). Accessed 24 March 2023.

⁴⁰ UNHCR. 2022. [Lives on Hold: Profiles and Intentions of Refugees from Ukraine #1](#). Accessed 24 March 2023.

⁴¹ European Commission. 2022. [European Website on Integration](#). Accessed 24 March 2023.

⁴² GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI. 2022. [ORDONANȚĂ DE URGENTĂ nr. 20 din 7 martie 2022](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁴³ UNHCR. 2022. [Operational Data Portal](#). Accessed 24 March 2023.

⁴⁴ Danish Refugee Council. 2023. [Romania – a safe haven and transit point for Ukrainian refugees](#). Accessed 24 March 2023.

⁴⁵ Trading Economics. 2023. [Romania Inflation Rate](#). Accessed 24 March 2023.

priorities of organisations that currently support Ukrainian refugees might change, which might result in a drop in funding available to support refugees and communities hosting them.

Despite these challenges, the disruption to the status quo leads to clear opportunities to improve the situation for both refugees and local communities. Building on strong support throughout the Romanian third sector from the government and the public, there is an opening to develop more cohesive communities throughout Romania, that integrate the Ukrainian populations and harness the social and economic benefits for both communities.

Chapter 2. Vulnerabilities to exploitation and discrimination

2.1 Overview

This section of the report details the official refugee journey through the six identified stages: (1) registering for legal status, welfare, and benefits; (2) healthcare; (3) housing; (4) education; (5) employment; and (6) community, social, and political life. It then delves into the practical challenges, varied experiences, discrimination, and difficulties faced by specific groups of refugees and identifies some of the intersectional characteristics that can make people particularly vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination and to experiencing challenges in accessing services. These characteristics are summarised in Table 1. They were selected as they have had an impact on refugees' experiences to date and are likely to affect refugees in the future, particularly if programmatic priorities change, financial support decreases, and/or disinformation efforts gain more traction.

TABLE 1: Characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable in Romania

Journey stage	Characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable
Legal status, welfare, and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People unable to attend in-person registration (due to disability, living situation, income, or other reasons) face barriers to registration and therefore delays in accessing services. • People with incomplete or inaccurate documents are more vulnerable to exploitation and delays and barriers to accessing services. • People who do not speak Romanian may struggle to access information and understand their rights and responsibilities. • Children who cross the border without a legal guardian, and unaccompanied children who cross the border without any guardian, face additional challenges and vulnerabilities. • TCNs have a double burden of proof to register for temporary protection as they need to prove (1) they cannot return to their country of origin and (2) they have sufficient ties to Ukraine. • Transgender people whose official documents do not match their chosen names face issues registering for TP. • Adult male refugees may be hesitant to register officially in Romania for fear they will be called to return to Ukraine.
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elderly people report the highest level of healthcare need yet often face significant barriers to access. • Women seeking sexual and reproductive health support cannot access information easily, especially in Ukrainian. • People with chronic physical or mental health needs may face barriers to accessing medicine, particularly if their health records are not in Romanian. • People who do not speak Romanian or English face challenges in navigating a foreign healthcare system. • People on lower incomes cannot afford medical treatment that is not publicly funded or not easily available, such as dental care. • People in different regions of Romania report significantly different levels of access to hospitals and general healthcare.

Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single people rely on one income, making housing less affordable, and face discrimination from landlords who can earn more renting a single space to multiple people. • People who arrived with low income or low savings often cannot afford the deposit required to secure more sustainable private rental accommodation. • Residents in collective shelters are likely to be amongst the most vulnerable refugees. • Parents of children with disabilities have specific housing needs and a more acute burden, making accessing employment, and therefore housing, more challenging. • Ukrainian Roma face discrimination and prejudice in accessing housing.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents of pre-school children may not be able to access limited kindergarten and pre-school spaces. • Roma children are more likely to live below the poverty line and enrol in school at lower rates. • Children who speak limited or no Romanian struggle to join Romanian public schools at the correct educational grade. • Children of all ages attending online Ukrainian school face additional risks of isolation and failure to integrate.
Employment and income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents or guardians of multiple children can face challenges in getting and keeping jobs due to lack of childcare and are therefore at greater risk of no income, low wages, and/or poverty. • People who were not economically active in Ukraine may be further away from the labour market and face additional difficulties finding employment in a new country. • People who speak neither Romanian nor English may struggle to access work, particularly well-paid work. • People living outside the major cities (Bucharest, Cluj, Constanta, Timișoara, Iași) may have fewer employment opportunities overall and more seasonal and/or low-paying jobs. • Older people who are still working but near retirement age, particularly those who do not speak Romanian, may have fewer routes into the labour market.
Community, social, and political life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, particularly those enrolled in online school and without Romanian language skills, have more limited social connections. • People suffering from trauma can struggle to participate in community life, particularly if unable to access mental health support and counselling. • People separated from family and/or in Romania alone may face additional challenges including poor mental health, loneliness, and isolation.

2.2 Legal status, welfare, and benefits

The government of Romania responded quickly to the displacement of people from Ukraine following the escalation of the Russian invasion in February 2022. On 18 March, it issued Decision No. 367, the Temporary Protection Act, to clarify administrative procedures for people fleeing Ukraine to claim TP and access humanitarian assistance.⁴⁶ The General Inspectorate for Immigration also launched a governmental platform with information in Ukrainian, Romanian, and English about TP rights in Romania.⁴⁷

In line with the EU Temporary Protection Directive⁴⁸ and the 18 March 2022 legislation, Ukrainian citizens and non-Ukrainian TCNs are exempt from regulations regarding short-stay visas to enter the EU.⁴⁹ They have the right to move freely within the EU to enter and stay in Romania for a maximum of 90 days without the need to register. To extend their stay beyond 90 days, Ukrainian citizens and non-Ukrainian TCNs must apply for one of

⁴⁶ Government of Romania. 2022. [DECISION no. 367 of March 18, 2022, regarding the establishment of conditions for ensuring temporary protection, as well as for the modification and completion of some normative acts in the field of foreigners](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

⁴⁷ Government of Romania. 2022. [Informații pentru cetățenii ucraineni](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

⁴⁸ European Union. 2022. [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/382, 4 March 2022](#)

⁴⁹ Government of Romania. 2022. [Arrival in Romania](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

the schemes available under the government of Romania – a work residency permit, TP, or asylum.⁵⁰ According to the government’s advice for people fleeing Ukraine, the appropriate scheme is TP.⁵¹

There are two mechanisms under which TP can be granted to people displaced to Romania by the invasion of Ukraine. The first applies to Ukrainian citizens and their non-Ukrainian spouses. Under the EU Temporary Protection Directive, Ukrainian citizens and their non-Ukrainian spouses who left Ukraine after 24 February 2022 may legally stay in Romania for up to three years.⁵² The second status applies to TCNs. Should they meet the requirements of the EU Temporary Protection Directive in that they legally resided in Ukraine prior to the invasion and are unable to return to their country or region of origin in safe conditions, they are entitled to immediate TP.⁵³ Registering for TP to secure the associated residence permit and personal numeric code (*Cod Numeric Personal*) needed to access services is a relatively bureaucratic process. Refugees must visit the General Inspectorate for Immigration in person to show identification documents, submit personal data, and sign a consent form.⁵⁴ TP status for both Ukrainian citizens and TCNs needed to be renewed in March 2023 and again every six months.⁵⁵

For refugees who decide not to stay in Romania after the initial 90-day period, the government of Romania, along with humanitarian partners, has facilitated onwards travel support to other border crossing points through green corridors. As of 13 January 2023, the Ministry of Transportation had granted 687,820 transiting refugees from Ukraine no- cost travel through Romania.⁵⁶ The groups discussed below have been identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

People unable to register in person: Due to the requirement to physically visit an office of the General Inspectorate for Immigration to register for TP, people who face barriers to travel can experience delays in securing legal status and benefits. According to the UNHCR, Slovakia (30 percent) and Romania (26 percent) have the highest reported number of Ukrainian refugee households with at least one person with specific needs (defined as disability, serious health conditions, or old age vulnerabilities) of all countries except Russia that border Ukraine (Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia).⁵⁷ People with a disability cannot send a family member in their place.⁵⁸ Other groups that may find this an issue include those residing in remote areas; those on lower incomes for whom distance and cost can be prohibitive; and adults who have caring responsibilities for young, elderly, or unwell relatives.⁵⁹

People with incomplete or inaccurate documents: According to the UNHCR, 26 percent of Ukrainian refugees in Romania had already been displaced internally in Ukraine at an earlier date.⁶⁰ People who have experienced multiple displacements or who have had to flee quickly may have lost documents and can face challenges and delays in registering for TP in Romania. Similarly, individuals whose documents have errors – including any made by Romanian authorities – can find access to services delayed.

⁵⁰ Government of Romania. 2022. [Arrival in Romania](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

⁵¹ Government of Romania. 2022. [Arrival in Romania](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

⁵² European Commission. 2023. Migration and Home Affairs. [Temporary Protection](#)

⁵³ European Union. 2022. [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/382, 4 March 2022](#)

⁵⁴ European Union Agency for Asylum. 2022. [Information on temporary protection in Romania](#)

⁵⁵ European Union Agency for Asylum. 2022. [Information on temporary protection in Romania](#)

⁵⁶ Government of Romania. 2023. [Romania’s Response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis](#)

⁵⁷ UNHCR. 2022. [Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine](#)

⁵⁸ Government of Romania. 2022. [Apply for temporary protection](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵⁹ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

⁶⁰ UNHCR. 2022. [Romania Protection and Profiling Monitoring Factsheet](#)

Participants in the workshop shared examples of temporary protection cards issued by Romanian officials with either hand-written or incorrect information which were then invalidated later, requiring the refugee to re-register.⁶¹

People who do not speak Romanian: Many participants in the workshop raised the issue of language barriers, noting that Ukrainian and Romanian are very different languages and that before 2022 there was only a small bilingual community in Romania. Data from the IOM supports this, reporting that as of August 2022 only 11 percent of Ukrainians in Romania could speak Romanian.⁶² The language barrier can complicate refugees' access to information and their understanding of their rights and responsibilities.⁶³

Separated or unaccompanied children: The invasion of Ukraine resulted in the separation of many families, with minors often left in the care of people other than their immediate relatives. Unaccompanied children are likely to lack access to proper and appropriate identification, registration, documentation, and legal advice.⁶⁴ In the first month following the 2022 invasion, UNICEF identified up to 500 unaccompanied Ukrainian children who crossed into Romania but estimated that the total number was even higher.⁶⁵ In the same month, the government of Romania established the Unaccompanied Children's Taskforce to provide urgent support to unaccompanied children arriving in Romania from Ukraine and later developed an online platform to track and share information about accommodation and social service assistance needed for all unaccompanied children coming from Ukraine.⁶⁶

Participants in the research workshops considered unaccompanied children among the most vulnerable groups within the Ukrainian community in Romania, citing examples of severe loneliness and isolation, higher risks of mental health problems, self-harm and addictive behaviours, and vulnerability to exploitation due to inability to support themselves financially.⁶⁷

Third-country nationals: The number of TCNs fleeing Ukraine to seek protection in Romania is relatively low. As of December 2022, of 98,162 persons granted TP in Romania, 97,132 had Ukrainian nationality, and 1,030 were TCNs.⁶⁸ However, TCNs face additional requirements in registering for TP, as they must demonstrate both that they cannot return to their country of origin and that they had sufficient legal ties to Ukraine before February 2022. This can lead to delays in securing the residency permit needed to access benefits and the right to work. TCNs who are stateless and/or lack documentation are particularly vulnerable as they may be unable to secure legal status, leaving them at greater risk of exploitation and abuse. They may also face barriers to accessing essential services and support, such as healthcare, education, and legal aid, which can further exacerbate their vulnerability. While the total number of stateless TCNs arriving in Romania from Ukraine is likely to be small (there is no current data to confirm the exact number) one workshop participant shared a story of an Armenian man who arrived from Ukraine without papers and required specialist NGO support to avoid destitution.⁶⁹

⁶¹ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

⁶² IOM. 2022. [Ukraine intervention – 9 month report, 24 February - 24 November 2022](#)

⁶³ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

⁶⁴ European Union. 2021. [Briefing – Vulnerability of unaccompanied or separated child migrants](#)

⁶⁵ UNICEF. 2022. [Children fleeing war in Ukraine at heightened risk of trafficking and exploitation](#)

⁶⁶ EuroChild and UNICEF. 2022. [Policy & Legal review for children in alternative care & unaccompanied and separated children from Ukraine arriving in Romania](#)

⁶⁷ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

⁶⁸ UNHCR. 2022. [Operational Data Portal](#)

⁶⁹ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

Transgender people: Romania is a relatively conservative society, and LGBTQIA+ rights are restricted.⁷⁰ This creates a challenging environment for the country's small LGBTQIA+ civil society space to provide support to Ukrainian refugees, and there is a paucity of evidence on how LGBTQIA+ groups have fared since arriving from Ukraine. There are reports of discrimination against transgender refugees on the Ukrainian and Romanian sides of the border. On the Ukrainian side, NGOs reported cases of transgender women being asked to submit to humiliating 'biomedical' checks and of those who have not undergone gender-affirming surgery being immediately conscripted and sent back.⁷¹ On the Romanian side, participants in the workshop shared cases of transgender refugees struggling to access residence permits since their official documents did not match their biological identity and/or names.⁷²

Adult male refugees: While the largest group of Ukrainian refugees are women and children, men also seek TP in Romania. Although adult males are entitled to register for TP status, workshop participants commented that some are unwilling to do so out of fear that their personal data will be shared with the Ukrainian government and they will be called back to fight. Participants did not cite any cases of this happening but reported it as a common fear that leads some men to refuse to register – and therefore being unable to access basic services.⁷³

2.3 Healthcare

TP entitles Ukrainian refugees in Romania to access free national healthcare services including primary healthcare, emergency medical assistance, and treatment for acute or chronic diseases. They also have the right to be included in national public health programmes aimed at the prevention of infectious diseases, such as vaccination initiatives. Refugees who have not yet applied for or received TP status can use their border crossing documents as evidence of the right to access national health services.⁷⁴ There are some reported general challenges in healthcare access, particularly with regard to registering for a family doctor, since there is no legal requirement for general practitioners to register new patients and no financial incentive to do so. Combined with longer consultation times for Ukrainians (due to the need for interpretation and translation, complex needs, etc.), this creates a disincentive for doctors to register Ukrainian patients.⁷⁵ Access to dental care is also somewhat restricted as 95 percent of dental care in Romania is delivered privately, and public resources allocated for dental care are limited.⁷⁶ The groups discussed below have been identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

Elderly people: Ukrainian refugees aged 60 and over report the highest need for healthcare, with 45 percent of those over 60 surveyed by UNHCR in Romania reporting a need within the past 30 days.⁷⁷ However, the same group reported the lowest access to healthcare (by age) amongst those who needed it, with only 61 percent of respondents saying they were able to access the medical care they needed compared to 70 percent of adults under 60 and 93 percent of children.⁷⁸ In addition, more elderly people report mobility issues, further increasing the risks of failing to access healthcare.

⁷⁰ Equaldex 2023. [LGBTQ rights in Romania](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

⁷¹ HIAS and Voice. 2022. [Romania Assessment Report - Waiting for the Sky to Close: The Unprecedented Crisis Facing Women and Girls Fleeing Ukraine](#)

⁷² Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

⁷³ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

⁷⁴ European Commission 2022. [Romania: New order facilitates access to healthcare for people arriving from Ukraine](#)

⁷⁵ Help to Help Ukraine. 2023. [Access to healthcare for Ukrainian refugees in Romania](#)

⁷⁶ Dadnam, D., Lomasney, E., Gartshore, L., and McKernon, S. 2021. British Dental Journal. [Romanian dilemmas](#)

⁷⁷ UNHCR REACH. 2022. [Multi-sector needs assessment Romania December 2022](#)

⁷⁸ UNHCR REACH. 2022. [Multi-sector needs assessment Romania December 2022](#)

Women seeking sexual or reproductive health support: Information regarding sexual or reproductive health support can be incomplete or hard to find for Ukrainian refugees. One NGO shared reports of pregnant women returning to Ukraine to give birth due to a lack of clear information about support available in Romania.⁷⁹ The UNHCR has noted reports of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, toward women and girls in Ukraine and urged host countries to strengthen response services and specialised care such as emergency contraception, HIV prophylaxis, and abortion. A May 2022 cross-NGO Gender Analysis Brief reported that, while abortion before 14 weeks is legal in Romania, doctors often refuse to perform an abortion or they refer patients to private practices with higher fees, leaving Ukrainian female victims of sexual violence extremely vulnerable.⁸⁰

People with chronic physical or mental health needs: A study by the IOM of the period March to October 2022 found that, while healthcare issues were not as frequently raised in the initial months after February 2022, the more protracted the crisis becomes and the longer Ukrainian refugees remain in Romania, the more important access to healthcare has become for them.⁸¹ This is particularly the case for patients with chronic conditions who require access to ongoing and specialist medical care and those whose medical records are outside Romania. Of Ukrainian refugee respondents to the September 2022 REACH/UNHCR protection profiling survey in Romania, 13 percent reported travelling with at least one person with a serious health condition.⁸² Participants in the workshop shared examples of individuals with chronic health conditions, whose medical records were in Ukrainian, facing delays securing needed medical support in Romania.⁸³ A study by the Help to Help Ukraine association, a collective of Romanian NGOs funded by CARE, reported that many patients were asked to translate their medical records or re-submit them for full medical evaluation in Romania, a costly and time-consuming process that was risky for people with urgent treatment needs for chronic conditions.⁸⁴

People who do not speak Romanian or English: A study by the World Health Organisation (WHO) found that uncertainty about how the Romanian healthcare system works and services that Ukrainian refugees were entitled to made accessing healthcare challenging.⁸⁵ This was particularly the case for refugees who did not speak Romanian and/or those new to Romania, who reported uncertainty about how to register with a doctor or even secure an initial medical appointment.⁸⁶ The complex healthcare system can make it challenging for Ukrainian refugees to navigate and access specialist support when needed. Yet even after getting an appointment, there can be significant communication barriers given that few Romanian doctors speak Ukrainian. For refugees who speak neither Romanian nor English, communication challenges can impact their ability to receive and understand medical support.

People on lower incomes: The REACH/UNHCR protection profiling survey in Romania, noted that, in addition to a lack of Romanian or English language skills, costs were a common barrier to accessing healthcare.⁸⁷ People on low incomes are less able to afford medical treatment that is not publicly funded or not easily available (such as dental care).

⁷⁹ Internews. 2022. [BARIERE & PUNTI](#)

⁸⁰ CARE / SERA | The Federation of NGOs for Child Protection | The Federation of Social Services | Plan International. 2022. [Rapid Gender Analysis Brief Ukrainian Refugees in Romania](#)

⁸¹ IOM. 2022. [Ukraine response – Romania evolution of needs report](#)

⁸² UNHCR. 2022. [Protection Profiling Romania – September 2022](#)

⁸³ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

⁸⁴ Help to Help Ukraine. 2023. [Access to healthcare for Ukrainian refugees in Romania](#)

⁸⁵ World Health Organisation. 2023. [Understanding the obstacles faced by Ukrainian refugees in Romania](#)

⁸⁶ World Health Organisation. 2023. [Understanding the obstacles faced by Ukrainian refugees in Romania](#)

⁸⁷ UNHCR. 2022. [Protection Profiling Romania – September 2022](#)

People in different regions of Romania: The IOM Evolution of Needs report found significant differences in Ukrainian refugees' ability to access hospitals and general healthcare depending on their region of residence in Romania.⁸⁸ For example, 82 percent of Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest reported 'easy' access to a local hospital compared to just 36 percent of those in Constanta. Similarly, while 76 percent of Ukrainian refugees in Bucharest reported 'easy' access to a local health clinic, only 44 percent in Galati said the same. People in border towns and cities were more likely to cross back into Ukraine to receive medical support.

2.4 Housing

Accommodation for Ukrainian refugees in Romania includes collective sites, hosted accommodation, the private rental sector, and limited public housing units. To provide information on housing options, and to facilitate direct matching of hosts and guests, the government of Romania posted housing resources on its online platform for Ukrainian refugees, *dopomoha*.⁸⁹ Six main collective sites operate in the counties of Timis, Suceava, Tulcea, and Maramures and the capital city of Bucharest.⁹⁰ These sites provide free accommodation and food and are intended for short-term accommodation only.

To encourage private citizens to support the hosting of Ukrainian refugees, the government introduced the 50/20 programme,⁹¹ under which individuals who host Ukrainian refugees receive 50 lei (approximately \$11 USD or £9) for accommodation and 20 lei (approximately \$4.50 USD or £3.50) for food per day per refugee hosted. To access this accommodation, Ukrainian refugees must match with a host on the *Un Acoperiş* (One Roof) website.⁹² Both the host and the guest then register at a local police station for identity checks and for the Romanian citizen to claim the 50/20 allowance. Under this scheme, the regions hosting the largest number of Ukrainian refugees are Constanta, Bucharest-Ilfov, Suceava, and Brasov.⁹³ In March 2023, the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued a draft emergency ordinance proposing changes to the 50/20 programme, stating that it was fuelling the real estate market, benefitting profiteering landlords, and negatively impacting renters.⁹⁴

To provide more housing capacity, the government is identifying unused housing units owned by local and central public authorities which can be renovated and made available for the accommodation of Ukrainian refugees.⁹⁵ Ukrainian refugees can also access the private rental sector on par with Romanian citizens. The groups discussed below have been identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

Single people: Participants in the workshop identified access to housing as an issue for all Ukrainians, as there is limited government regulation or oversight and landlords hold considerable power, particularly in areas of high demand.⁹⁶ Single people reliant on one income face additional barriers. A December 2022 UNHCR rapid survey of the 50/20 scheme found that 23 percent of single respondents had experienced a problem with a landlord. The

⁸⁸ International Organisation for Migration. 2022. [Ukraine response – Romania evolution of needs report](#)

⁸⁹ OECD. 2022. [Housing support for Ukrainian refugees in receiving countries](#)

⁹⁰ OECD. 2022. [Housing support for Ukrainian refugees in receiving countries](#)

⁹¹ Dopomoha / Help for Ukrainians in Romania. 2022. [The 50/20 programme](#)

⁹² Un Acoperiş. 2023. [Welcome](#). Accessed 26 March 2023

⁹³ Government of Romania. 2023. [Romania's Response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis](#)

⁹⁴ Ministry of the Interior. 2023. [Notice invitation \(according to Law 52/2003\)](#)

⁹⁵ Government of Romania. 2023. [Romania's Response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis](#)

⁹⁶ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

most commonly reported issue was that landlords would not rent to a single person.⁹⁷ Moreover, in the context of significant landlord power and limited tenants' redress mechanisms, research workshop participants noted that single women are particularly vulnerable to both the cost of housing and potential exploitation by landlords.⁹⁸ Limited visibility of refugees living in private accommodation raises the risk that harms go undetected – including gender-based violence, exploitation, inadequate living conditions, and arbitrary eviction. The same UNHCR rapid survey found that over half of all respondents did not know where to report cases of violence or abuse related to the programme – an important information gap for refugees.⁹⁹

While the information on police and emergency numbers might be easily accessible, workshop participants commented that refugees might be reluctant to raise issues with authorities due to uncertainty about legal and procedural matters in Romania. In addition, refugees may fear that they will not be believed, especially if they complain against a Romanian citizens who are likely to be more familiar with procedures in the country and better able to express themselves in Romanian to refute any claims.¹⁰⁰

People who arrive with low income or low savings: Similar to single-income households, families or groups who have low incomes or low savings struggle to afford accommodation in the private rental market. This is exacerbated by inflation in Romania, reported at 13.4 percent in January 2023.¹⁰¹ People on low incomes spend higher portions of their income on private rental accommodation and are more vulnerable to sudden price rises. This also makes them more vulnerable to exploitative landlords who can use complex short rental agreements (including for tenants uncertain of their length of stay) to demand high deposits and punitive costs for early departure. Participants in the workshop added that people on low incomes are more likely to remain in collective centre accommodation which is not suitable for long-term use and can add to the trauma and mental health challenges many people arrive with.¹⁰²

Residents in collective centres: There are conflicting estimates of the number of Ukrainian refugees resident in collective centres, with different UNHCR studies suggesting as few as 2 percent¹⁰³ and up to 17 percent.¹⁰⁴ Standards of collective centres vary; the Refugee International team noted that some centres have relatively high-quality facilities and services including physical and mental health care, language classes, and mother and children facilities.¹⁰⁵ Others have lower standards (including poor preparation for winter weather), are less sustainable (due to funding or being dependent on volunteers), and may face closure as local authorities return repurposed buildings such as schools to their original use. Therefore, residents in collective sites are often in a precarious position in terms of the longer-term sustainability and appropriateness of accommodation.

Parents of children with disabilities: According to the UNHCR, people with disabilities face multiple vulnerabilities, including challenges accessing adequate housing.¹⁰⁶ Workshop participants shared examples of parents of children with disabilities, particularly neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism, who could not find suitable care for their children, were unable to secure employment, and in turn could not access housing –

⁹⁷ UNHCR. 2022. [Rapid survey of the 50-20 programme – UNHCR Romania thematic report](#)

⁹⁸ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

⁹⁹ UNHCR. 2022. [Rapid survey of the 50-20 programme – UNHCR Romania thematic report](#)

¹⁰⁰ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁰¹ Statista. 2023. [Harmonised index of consumer prices \(HICP\) inflation rate of European Union in January 2023 by country](#)

¹⁰² Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁰³ UNHCR. 2022. [Romania: Post Distribution Monitoring for Multi-Purpose Cash - Round 1/September 2022](#)

¹⁰⁴ UNHCR REACH. 2022. [Multi-sector needs assessment Romania December 2022](#)

¹⁰⁵ Panayotatos, Devon, and Cone, D. 2022. [Preparing for the unpredictable: ensuring the protection and inclusion of refugees from Ukraine in Romania and Moldova](#)

¹⁰⁶ UNHCR. 2022. [Ensuring the protection of persons with disabilities fleeing from Ukraine](#)

whether or not it was suitable for their children.¹⁰⁷ In major cities such as Bucharest, there are some resources to help families, but these are more limited in rural areas and outside the capital.

Roma: There have been reports of Ukrainian Roma refugees facing discrimination and prejudice when accessing core services, particularly housing. Media coverage from CNN found that Ukrainian Roma refugees in Romania faced issues including accusations of not being Ukrainian, segregation into lower-quality accommodation, and being misled about their rights.¹⁰⁸ In addition, more Roma than non-Roma Ukrainians are fleeing Ukraine without documentation. Roma communities are also more likely to travel in large, extended family groups, which creates challenges in finding appropriate housing.

2.5 Education

According to UNICEF, approximately 28 percent of Ukrainian refugees in Romania are school-age children.¹⁰⁹ TP grants Ukrainian children free access to the Romanian public school system, including pre-schools. Individuals may enrol their children in online Ukrainian school should they prefer. No single data source confirms how many Ukrainian children in Romania are registered in national public schools versus online Ukrainian schools. According to the UNHCR REACH Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, while 90 percent of people surveyed said they intended their children to access education, only 10 percent planned to enrol them in mainstream public schools in Romania.¹¹⁰ This is supported by data from the government of Romania which indicates that fewer than 1,000 Ukrainian children were registered as fully enrolled in Romanian schools as of January 2023 (although noting that over 6,000 children received government learning support or materials in other formats, and just over 3,000 students were ‘auditing’ Romanian classes).¹¹¹ UNICEF estimates that at least 50 percent of school-age children attend online Ukrainian school, with others attending informal in-person Ukrainian schools in Romania.¹¹² Some Romanian public schools and local authorities also deliver after-school Romanian-language programmes which Ukrainian students can access, and provide educational and extra-curricular activities outside of core schooling.¹¹³ The groups discussed below have been identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

Pre-school children: Lack of adequate kindergarten spaces is an ongoing issue¹¹⁴ that is particularly acute in Bucharest and some other areas of Romania. Ukrainians arriving with few or no social-communal networks struggle to access both informal and formal childcare. Evidence from UNICEF’s work on early childhood development indicates that access to quality care and education programmes helps provide children the emotional, social, cognitive, and language foundations that are linked to positive education and wellbeing outcomes throughout childhood.¹¹⁵ Therefore, limited access to pre-school care and educational programmes outside the home adds to the vulnerability of younger, pre-school children displaced from Ukraine.

¹⁰⁷ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁰⁸ Kottosová, Ivana. CNN. 2022. [‘You are not a refugee.’ Roma refugees fleeing war in Ukraine say they are suffering discrimination and prejudice](#)

¹⁰⁹ Kafembe, Innocent. UNICEF. 2022. [Using innovation in Romania to get Ukrainian children learning again](#)

¹¹⁰ REACH, UNHCR. 2022. [Multi-sectoral needs assessment](#)

¹¹¹ Government of Romania. 2023. [Romania: Report on the national response to those displaced from Ukraine](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

¹¹² Kafembe, Innocent. UNICEF. 2022. [Using innovation in Romania to get Ukrainian children learning again](#)

¹¹³ Edupedu. 2022. [News and education](#). Accessed 29 March 2023; Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai. 2022. [Romanian language – introductory courses for refugees from Ukraine – Erasmus section](#)

¹¹⁴ Gromada, Anna, and Richardson, D. UNICEF. 2021. [Where do rich countries stand on childcare?](#)

¹¹⁵ UNICEF. 2021. [The formative years: UNICEF’s work on measuring ECD](#)

Children who speak limited or no Romanian: In 2020, the government of Romania's national immigration strategy included actions regarding education and training programmes for migrants and refugees to support integration and language learning.¹¹⁶ Since then, the arrival of Ukrainian refugees has added to this need. Save the Children reported that nearly three-quarters of Ukrainian children had little or no knowledge of Romanian and were unable to continue their education in the Romanian education system due to the language barrier.¹¹⁷ While language classes are available and teachers volunteer time to support Ukrainian students, the language barrier remains an issue for many school-age Ukrainian refugees. As a result, students who enrol in Romanian schools struggle to join at the correct educational grade.

One participant in the workshop said that Ukrainian parents were concerned about their children falling behind educationally and that this was a key reason for preferring to continue with online Ukrainian schooling.¹¹⁸

In addition, Ukrainian refugee children may face psychological problems such as anxiety, trauma, and fear following displacement from Ukraine and experiences of war which, combined with language barriers, can make integration into Romanian school systems particularly challenging.

Children attending online Ukrainian school: As noted above, data from the government of Romania and multilateral organisations indicate that only a minority of Ukrainian children in Romania are enrolled in national public schools. The majority attend online Ukrainian schools. This means they have fewer opportunities for integration, language learning, and building social bonds. The government, with UNICEF, has committed to support an expansion of Romanian language learning and to scale up education programmes in Ukrainian (in-person and online) to address this.¹¹⁹ However, participants in the research workshop raised concerns about isolation, stigma, and demotivation among children, particularly the longer they attend online schools.¹²⁰ Participants also noted that some Ukrainian families want their children to attend Romanian public schools but certain areas (particularly major cities such as Bucharest) are oversubscribed, and parents are anxious about their children travelling long distances to attend school.¹²¹

Roma children: The EU estimates that over 80 percent of the Roma population in Romania live below the at-risk line and face significant discrimination in access to education, employment, healthcare, and housing.¹²² According to the government's national strategy on Roma inclusion, a significant educational attainment gap remains between Roma and non-Roma students in the country. The gap is driven by issues such as the low participation of Roma children in early childhood education, higher dropout rates at the secondary level, and continued school segregation.¹²³ Reports are increasing regarding abuse and prejudice directed toward Ukrainian refugees of Roma origin.¹²⁴ Participants in the workshop said that Ukrainian Roma children may be particularly

¹¹⁶ Government of Romania. 2021. [National Strategy on Immigration for the period 2021-2024](#)

¹¹⁷ Save the Children Romania. 2022. [Save the Children Romania education survey](#)

¹¹⁸ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹¹⁹ Kafembe, Innocent. UNICEF. 2022. [Using innovation in Romania to get Ukrainian children learning again](#)

¹²⁰ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹²¹ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹²² Government of Romania. 2022. [Strategy on inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022-2027](#)

¹²³ Government of Romania. 2022. [Strategy on inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022-2027](#)

¹²⁴ Kottosová, Ivana. CNN. 2022. [‘You are not a refugee.’ Roma refugees fleeing war in Ukraine say they are suffering discrimination and prejudice](#)

vulnerable, especially if they do not speak good Ukrainian, and may be unable to meaningfully attend either online Ukrainian school or in-person Romanian school.¹²⁵

2.6 Employment and income

Under the rights of TP, Ukrainian refugees in Romania are entitled to access the labour market on par with Romanian citizens. Via the government-sponsored *dopomoha* platform, Ukrainian refugees can access resources and job search tools.¹²⁶ The resources include the Adecco platform which details opportunities in Ukrainian and English; the Ateliere Fara Frontiere NGO which supports marginalised people to access the job market; and the dedicated Jobs4Ukraine platform that promotes in-person and remote working opportunities for Ukrainians in Romania.¹²⁷ The Romanian National Agency for Employment also provides free advisory services and training opportunities for Ukrainian refugees.¹²⁸ Individuals are entitled to register as digital workers for foreign companies and maintain remote jobs from Ukraine.

There are varying estimates of Ukrainian refugee employment rates in Romania. According to data from the Labour Inspectorate provided to national media, as of February 2023 there were 7,477 employment contracts for Ukrainian citizens in Romania, of which 6,130 had start dates after 24 February 2022.¹²⁹ Only 11 percent of respondents to the November 2022 UNHCR multi-sectoral needs assessment reported receiving formal income in Romania, with the majority relying on other sources of funds such as savings (20 percent), remittances (19 percent), social benefits from Ukraine (16 percent), and UNHCR cash assistance (14 percent).¹³⁰ The same survey found the lack of Romanian language proficiency and stable work opportunities as the main barriers to finding and keeping employment.¹³¹ Other reports suggest higher levels of employment, however. The IOM reported that 36 percent of refugees from Ukraine surveyed in October 2022 were in active employment.¹³² The groups discussed below have been identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

Parents or guardians of multiple children: Nearly half (45 percent) of Ukrainian refugee respondents surveyed by UNHCR in Romania were travelling with children.¹³³ Parents or guardians of children face challenges in accessing the labour market in Romania due to caregiving responsibilities. This is particularly acute for women, with the UNHCR multi-sectoral needs assessment identifying maternity leave and caring for children among the top five reasons for unemployment for female Ukrainian refugees in Romania.¹³⁴ Access to child care and early childhood education were issues in Romania which pre-dated the arrival of refugees from Ukraine.¹³⁵ A 2021 UNICEF study found that more than 50 percent of parents in Romania relied on informal care provided by family, friends, and neighbours.¹³⁶

¹²⁵ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

¹²⁶ Dopomoha. 2022. [Dopomoha \(Help\)](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

¹²⁷ Dopomoha. 2022. [Dopomoha \(Help\)](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

¹²⁸ Dopomoha. 2022. [Dopomoha \(Help\)](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

¹²⁹ EconoMedia. 2023. [ANALYSIS A year of war in Ukraine: More than 6,000 Ukrainian citizens have been employed in Romania](#)

¹³⁰ UNHCR. 2022. [Multi-Sector Needs Assessment Romania - Key preliminary findings, November 2022](#)

¹³¹ UNHCR. 2022. [Multi-Sector Needs Assessment Romania - Key preliminary findings, November 2022](#)

¹³² IOM United Nations Migration. 2022. [Ukraine response: Romania evolution of needs report](#)

¹³³ UNHCR REACH. 2022. [Romania Protection Profiling October 2022](#)

¹³⁴ UNHCR. 2022. [Multi-Sector Needs Assessment Romania - Key preliminary findings, November 2022](#)

¹³⁵ Gromada, Anna, and Richardson, D. UNICEF 2021. [Where do rich countries stand on childcare?](#)

¹³⁶ Gromada, Anna, and Richardson, D. UNICEF 2021. [Where do rich countries stand on childcare?](#)

For refugees arriving with few or no social-communal networks, there are additional challenges in accessing informal childcare. Without access to childcare, and therefore employment, parents or guardians of multiple children are more vulnerable to poverty.

People who were not economically active in Ukraine: Participants in the research workshop noted that refugees who had not recently been in employment in Ukraine, including carers, would be additionally disadvantaged in the Romanian job market as they lack the recognised professional skills and recent experience that would help them secure employment.¹³⁷ This may be particularly challenging for people who were not previously economically active in Ukraine but who, due to family separation and displacement, have become primary income earners in Romania.

People who speak neither Romanian nor English: A study by the IOM found that Romanian language proficiency among refugees from Ukraine was low.¹³⁸ Without this ability, refugees struggle to access work, particularly well-paid work. The government of Romania created dedicated Ukrainian resources, such as the *dopomoha* website,¹³⁹ but many advertisements and interviews are still mostly in Romanian.¹⁴⁰ 41 percent of respondents to the UNHCR multi-sectoral needs assessment reported that language barriers were a challenge in obtaining enough income to meet their household needs.¹⁴¹ Participants in the research workshops noted that refugees who speak English may have better access to employment opportunities in Bucharest, but refugees with neither Romanian nor English language proficiency were unlikely to secure work.¹⁴²

People living outside Bucharest: Unemployment levels in Romania differ across regions. In 2021, the Romanian National Institute of Statistics estimated that the lowest rates of registered unemployment were in Bucharest (0.8 percent) and the highest in the southwest (4.3 percent).¹⁴³ The nature of available employment also differs by region.¹⁴⁴ After Bucharest, Constanta hosts the second-highest number of refugees from Ukraine residing in Romania.¹⁴⁵ Participants in the research workshop discussed the seasonal nature of employment in Constanta, with more work available in the summer. This makes it challenging for Ukrainian refugees living there to secure stable, reliable year-round work and poses risks to their housing since landlords are more likely to evict them during a profitable summer tourist season.¹⁴⁶ A UNHCR area-based assessment of Constanta from August 2022 found that 92 percent of refugees surveyed relied on savings to meet household income needs and that livelihoods could become a priority need for Ukrainian refugees in the city as the conflict protracts.¹⁴⁷

People near retirement age: Participants in the research workshop noted that refugees who were close to retirement age faced additional challenges. Those who wanted to find employment in Romania had fewer routes into the labour market, particularly if they were unable to speak Romanian. Others who were able to work in Ukraine might be compelled to keep working (and potentially travelling) due to uncertainty about accessing their

¹³⁷ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹³⁸ IOM United Nations Migration. 2022. [Ukraine intervention 9-month report](#)

¹³⁹ Dopomoha. 2022. [Dopomoha \(Help\)](#). Accessed 20 March 2023.

¹⁴⁰ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁴¹ UNHCR. 2022. [Multi-Sector Needs Assessment Romania - Key preliminary findings, November 2022](#)

¹⁴² Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁴³ European Commission. 2021. [Labour market information: Romania](#)

¹⁴⁴ European Commission. 2021. [Labour market information: Romania](#)

¹⁴⁵ UNHCR REACH. 2022. [UNHCR Romania: Situation Overview in Constanta, Area-Based Assessment \(As of July-August 2022\)](#)

¹⁴⁶ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁴⁷ UNHCR REACH. 2022. [UNHCR Romania: Situation Overview in Constanta, Area-Based Assessment \(As of July-August 2022\)](#)

pensions.¹⁴⁸ A UNHCR Regional Protection Analysis found that, among the informational needs of Ukrainian refugees in the region, information on employment opportunities was the second-most important for those surveyed. Only 55 percent of respondents had sufficient digital awareness to access websites, with people aged 60 and above most likely to prefer to obtain information in person.¹⁴⁹

2.7 Community, social, and political life

Since February 2022 and the arrival of refugees from Ukraine, the response in Romania has been welcoming, with an initial focus on responding to immediate needs, and now looking at integration and community cohesion.¹⁵⁰ Integration objectives are addressed through the 2020 national immigration strategy, with proposed actions including better language support, labour market integration, and education and training programmes for migrants and refugees. The strategy also includes public awareness campaigns around the importance of integration.¹⁵¹ However, uncertainty over the intended and actual length of stay of Ukrainian refugees in Romania adds to the complexity – and, potentially, the relevance – of the 2020 strategy for supporting Ukrainians in particular. The UNHCR Regional Response Plan (RRP) recommended targeted interventions to support social cohesion between Ukrainian refugees and Romanian host communities as one of its four primary strategic objectives. Specific recommendations included language trainings, dissemination of accurate information, and increased participation of refugees in host community activities.¹⁵² The groups discussed below have been identified by the desk-based research and the research workshops as facing particular challenges at this stage of the refugee journey.

Children: Given the high numbers of Ukrainian children enrolled in online school¹⁵³ and their comparatively low Romanian language proficiency,¹⁵⁴ participants in the research workshop identified children and young people as particularly vulnerable to social isolation.¹⁵⁵ The UNHCR RRP acknowledged these factors as contributing to heightened risks of socio-economic exclusion for Ukrainian children in Romania.¹⁵⁶ One workshop participant shared an example of teenaged Ukrainian refugees in Romania struggling to form friendships or meaningful connections.¹⁵⁷ Another reported high levels of disengagement, demotivation, and depression among their peers.¹⁵⁸ A third added that a lack of social integration led to a form of stigma which compounded the negative impacts felt by the individual.¹⁵⁹

People suffering from trauma: The impact of trauma means that many Ukrainian refugees may struggle to participate in social and community life. The potential impacts of trauma can become especially acute for people who do not receive adequate mental health support or counselling.

One participant in the research workshop added that living with family members who are suffering from trauma created barriers to integration, sharing examples of young people

¹⁴⁸ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁴⁹ UNHCR. 2022. [Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine – regional protection analysis 1](#)

¹⁵⁰ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine situational regional response plan January-December 2023 Romania chapter](#)

¹⁵¹ Government of Romania. 2021. [National Strategy on Immigration for the period 2021-2024](#)

¹⁵² UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine situational regional response plan January-December 2023 Romania chapter](#)

¹⁵³ REACH, UNHCR. 2022. [Multi-sectoral needs assessment](#)

¹⁵⁴ Save the Children Romania. 2022. [Save the Children Romania education survey](#)

¹⁵⁵ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁵⁶ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine situational regional response plan January-December 2023 Romania chapter](#)

¹⁵⁷ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁵⁸ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁵⁹ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

struggling to support parents who were exhibiting signs of apathy, depression, and anxiety.¹⁶⁰

People separated from family and/or in Romania alone: The UNHCR estimates that 78 percent of refugees from Ukraine experienced separation during their refugee journeys,¹⁶¹ meaning that familial, social, and communal networks are severely disrupted and traditional support networks are not in place. Separated family members face multiple challenges including difficulty accessing support and resources, impacts on mental health, and greater risk of exploitation or harm. Participants in the research workshop noted that elderly people who were separated from family and in Romania alone faced greater risks of social isolation and higher barriers to integration.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁶¹ UNHCR. 2022. [Displacement patterns, protection risks and needs of refugees from Ukraine – regional protection analysis 1](#)

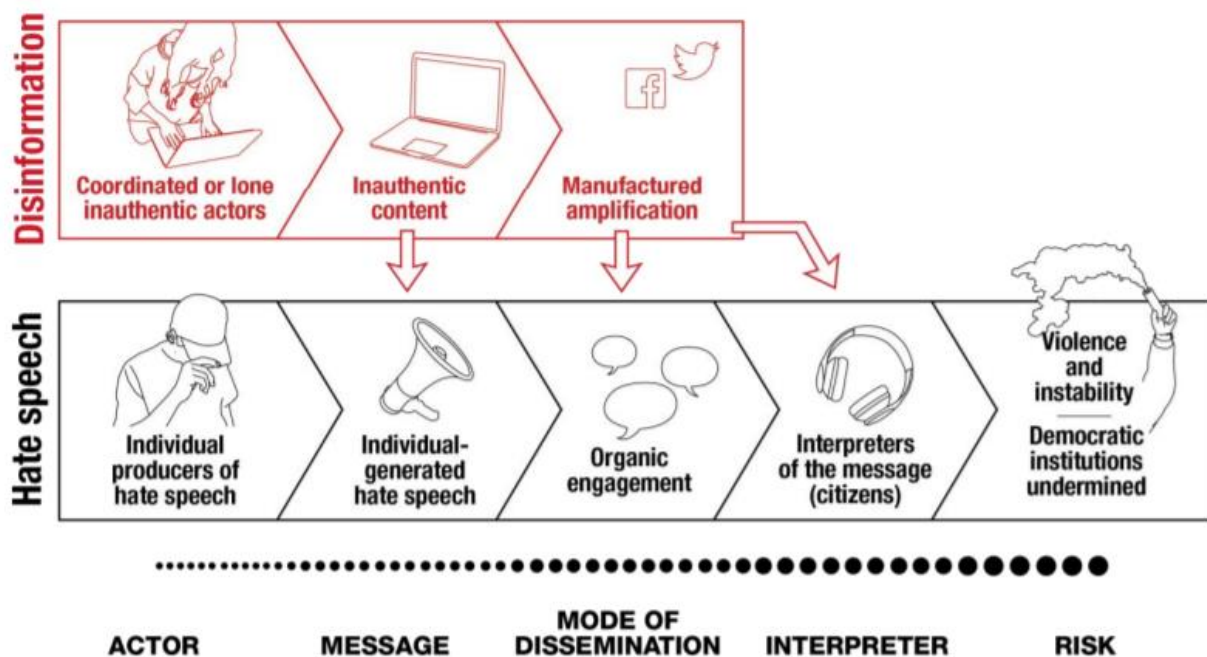
¹⁶² Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

Chapter 3. Misleading or incendiary discourses about Ukrainian refugees

3.1 Overview

This section discusses the key misleading or incendiary discourses about refugees in Romania. The analysis is based on the IFES Chain of Harm framework,¹⁶³ which maps the path by which disinformation, misinformation, and dangerous speech (DMDS) move through an information ecosystem, depicting ways in which directed disinformation commonly amplifies hate speech or other divisive narratives to achieve its aims. The framework allows researchers and practitioners to map DMDS along five stages, from the initial actors creating DMDS to the ultimate risks that manifest. Breaking down the challenges of DMDS in this way allows researchers and practitioners to identify discrete intervention points where the Chain of Harm can be disrupted to reduce the ultimate harms that would otherwise occur.

FIGURE 1 The IFES Chain of Harm Framework



The five stages of the Chain of Harm – actor, message, mode of dissemination, interpreter, and risk – are used below to analyse the different aspects of narratives in circulation in Romania.

¹⁶³ IFES. 2019. *Disinformation Campaigns and Hate Speech: Exploring the Relationship and Programming Interventions*. Accessed 31 March 2023.

3.2 Actors spreading misleading or abusive messages

Misleading or incendiary messages are spread in Romania by different actors. They include populist media sources such as *România liberă*, *Național*, *Activenews*, *GoldFM*, and *gândește.org*, as identified by the *Veridica* media monitoring platform.¹⁶⁴ Some political parties, particularly on the far right of the political spectrum, also propagate anti-refugee rhetoric.¹⁶⁵

The Russian government has stepped up efforts and investments to spread disinformation across Europe, particularly since February 2022.¹⁶⁶ In that year, Romania was the only country in the Central and Eastern European region where support for Western geopolitical orientation had decreased from the previous year (and support for Eastern geopolitical orientation had increased).¹⁶⁷ International Republican Institute (IRI) analysis reported this as a sign of public opinion shifting toward eastern alignment. GLOBSEC reported in 2022 that Romanian support for a western geopolitical orientation had decreased from 43 percent to 27 percent over the previous year, whilst 22 percent of the population believed that Russia ‘had the right’ to invade Ukraine.¹⁶⁸ At the community level, misleading narratives can spread due to individual political beliefs, including from those who subscribe to conspiracy theories or radical nationalism.

The UK Government Communications Service identified a variety of reasons why actors could spread misleading or incendiary content;¹⁶⁹ the motivations listed below could contribute to actors spreading misleading or incendiary narratives about Ukrainian refugees in Romania.

1. **Genuine belief in the messages**, which might resonate with strongly held personal beliefs. In some instances, actors may recognise that the messages they share are false or misleading but believe the sentiment illustrates ‘the kind of thing that goes on’. In this context, the messages could refer to pre-existing negative conceptions or stereotypes about Ukrainians.
2. **Grievances**: As inflation rises, for example, some people’s standards of living are deteriorating. Others might have lost their jobs, and Ukrainian refugees might be easy scapegoats for such problems.
3. **Lack of consequences of promoting misleading messages**: Actors may take advantage of the anonymity of online spaces and gain respect within certain online communities.
4. **Personal or institutional gain**, received by discrediting specific individuals (such as politicians) or organisations (such as government institutions, businesses, NGOs, multilateral organisations, or others). The gain could also be in **mobilising voters** in response to an imagined threat and building support as a result of anti-refugee rhetoric.¹⁷⁰
5. **Contributing to polarisation**, aiming to crowd out differing opinions.
6. **Financial gain**, either benefiting from increased traffic to websites to view posts or by selling specific products.

¹⁶⁴ Gomboș, Cătălin. Veridica.ro. 2022. [Romania in 2022: Top FAKE NEWS & DISINFORMATION narratives debunked by Veridica](#). Accessed 10 January 2023.

¹⁶⁵ Politico. 2023. [Romania: national parliament voting intention](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

¹⁶⁶ OECD. 2022. [Disinformation and Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine: threats and governance responses](#)

¹⁶⁷ GLOBSEC 2022. [GLOBSEC Trends 2022: CCE amid war in Ukraine](#)

¹⁶⁸ International Republican Institute. 2023. [Hostile narrative brief: war in Ukraine, a year of aggression](#)

¹⁶⁹ Government Communication Service. 2021. [Resist 2: Counter-disinformation toolkit](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

¹⁷⁰ International Republican Institute. 2023. [Hostile Narrative Brief War In Ukraine](#). Accessed 29 March 2023; Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights. 2023. [Raport „Granice nienawiści”](#). Page 91. Accessed 31 March 2023.

7. **Geopolitical gain**, through which hostile actors aim to destabilise other countries' financial and security circumstances. The aim of Russian 'trolling' is often to create a sense of chaos and confusion about what information is true, given the large number of conflicting 'facts' being proposed to audiences.¹⁷¹

Types of messages and approaches

Table 2 summarises discourses about refugees that were identified in the workshops and through research from third parties that we triangulated using CrowdTangle. The five discourses that are likely to have the highest potential to affect community cohesion in the medium term, taking into account the prevalence of the narratives and the likelihood of these having an impact on community cohesion, are boldfaced. These are analysed in more detail in the following analysis.

TABLE 2: Misleading or incendiary discourses about refugees in Romania

Journey stage	Misleading or Incendiary Discourses about Ukrainian Refugees
Legal status, welfare, and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refugees from western Ukraine and regions less affected by the Russian invasion are not genuine refugees; the war has not really affected them, so they do not deserve support. Refugees abuse the benefits system (for example, crossing the border just to claim cash assistance). There is corruption within support systems for Ukrainian refugees. Ukrainians are supported more than other refugees.
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ukrainians create burdens on the healthcare system. Local doctors don't want to treat Ukrainians. Ukrainians misuse services (for example, they make unnecessary ambulance requests and emergency room visits).
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ukrainians create burdens on the housing system.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ukrainians create burdens on schools and kindergartens and taking locals' places.
Employment and income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic challenges and the energy crisis are fuelled by hosting refugees ('they drive prices up'). Ukrainians do not want to pay taxes, or they want to work illegally. Ukrainians do not want to work. Ukrainians are rich ('they drive around in fancy cars and spend their time in malls and cafés whilst locals are working') and behave as if they are on holiday. They do not need assistance. Refugees are supported more financially and get better benefits than the local population. Help to refugees comes at the cost of the local population ('we should help our poor, not the Ukrainians').
Community, social, and political life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refugees are ungrateful and have unrealistic or high expectations of the support and shelter they should receive. They abuse hospitality (for example, leaving rental apartments in poor condition). They are selective about the support they receive (for example, they do not want to live in small cities). Refugees are not really traumatised (for example, they go to cafés and live a nice, normal life). Refugees are coming to nazify the local society. Ukrainians and Russians are basically the same. Ukrainians treat Romanian minorities in Ukraine badly. Ukraine is not really a country. Ukrainian refugees create diplomatic tensions with Russia. They need to accept their fate, negotiate, and, if needed, become part of Russia and move on. They are endangering other countries (including the host country) by resisting.

¹⁷¹ Tyimińska, Ada. 2022. [Granice nienawiści. Mowa nienawiści w kontekście kryzysów humanitarnych na granicy polskiej \(2021/2022\)](#). Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka.

- Ukrainian refugees are not Romania's responsibility.
- Ukrainians do not follow local rules (for example, they are reckless drivers).
- Refugees are crime risks or security threats (for example, they are prone to criminality and anti-social behaviour; organised crime comes from Ukraine).

Modes of dissemination

Discourses are spread through:

- **Online (social media, websites, email and messaging apps):** According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the five most frequently used social media platforms in Russia in 2022 were WhatsApp, VKontakte, Instagram, Telegram, and TikTok – all used as a source of independent news and propaganda and disinformation within Russia and beyond.¹⁷² In Romania, there are reports of disinformation spreading via social media sites including Facebook,¹⁷³ YouTube,¹⁷⁴ Twitter,¹⁷⁵ and Telegram.
- **Hardline political parties:** As of January 2023, the leader of Romania's main far-right party had over 1 million followers on Facebook (an increase of about 10 percent since February 2022), and a prominent, more extreme right-leaning senator had over 400,000. Both regularly post far-right messages, including misinformation on topics related to foreign policy, security, and democracy.¹⁷⁶ The Ukraine Monitor project found that online discourses about the war in Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees in Romania were also moving beyond the nationalist and far right channels and individual accounts into other conservative and Eurosceptic online groups.¹⁷⁷
- **Russia-aligned media:** In Romania, the Russian state-owned¹⁷⁸ media outlet Sputnik (a prominent proponent of Kremlin propaganda) has a dedicated Romanian-language website.¹⁷⁹ Other Kremlin-friendly online portals and social media accounts, while not transparently pro-Russian, can spread narratives that Romania is a pawn of the West¹⁸⁰ or a colony of the EU,¹⁸¹ eroding trust in western EU partners.
- **Traditional media:** Mainstream TV channels have been reported to propagate disinformation and fake news accidentally or intentionally, targeting both Romanians and Ukrainian refugees.¹⁸²
- **Events and public announcements:** Public statements that align with some of these discourses have been made, particularly by politicians from right-wing, conservative parties, as have politicians in prominent roles. For example, , the Romanian defence minister resigned in October 2022 after making public statements that Ukraine may have to cede territory to Russia as part of negotiations to end the war.¹⁸³

¹⁷² OECD. 2022. [Disinformation and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine: threats and governance responses](#)

¹⁷³ International Republican Institute. 2023. [Hostile narrative brief: war in Ukraine, a year of aggression](#)

¹⁷⁴ YouTube. [Iosefina Pascal](#). Accessed 2 April 2023.

¹⁷⁵ Global Focus. 2022. ["Ukrainianisation" in pro-Russian propaganda in Romania, Poland, Serbia and Hungary](#)

¹⁷⁶ Funky Citizens. 2022. [Anti-Western narratives in Romania](#)

¹⁷⁷ Global Focus. 2022. ["Ukrainianisation" in pro-Russian propaganda in Romania, Poland, Serbia and Hungary](#)

¹⁷⁸ OECD. 2022. [Disinformation and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine: threats and governance responses](#)

¹⁷⁹ Sputnikro. [Sputnik News Romania](#)

¹⁸⁰ Gomboş, Cătălin. Verdicta.ro. 2022. [Romania in 2022: Top FAKE NEWS & DISINFORMATION narratives debunked by Veridica](#). Accessed 10 January 2023.

¹⁸¹ Necşuţu, Mădălin. Verdicta.ro. 2022. [DISINFORMATION: The EU pursues imperialist policies and the states on its periphery, like Romania, are exploited by the strong ones at the centre](#). Accessed 2 February 2023.

¹⁸² Metamorphosis Foundation. 2023. [Interview with Romanian anti-disinformation activist reveals disinformation campaigns often target refugees from Ukraine](#)

¹⁸³ Timu, Andra. 2022. [Romanian defense chief quits after controversial Ukraine remarks](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

- **Word of mouth:** Some discourses spread through ordinary conversations between individuals, including sharing narratives found online, and particularly discourses related to increasing financial pressures or other ways in which refugees may impact people's quality of life. Participants in the research workshop commented on the importance of information spread by word of mouth, with incidents or stories about Ukrainian refugees at risk of becoming generalised and spread.¹⁸⁴

Host community reactions (interpreters)

A February 2023 analysis by the IRI's Beacon Project examined narratives in Central and Eastern Europe that have the potential to erode support for Ukraine. The analysis found that, while overall media sentiment was either neutral or positive in support of Ukraine, the topic of Ukrainian refugees had the most resonance for hostile messaging on online media.¹⁸⁵ The study estimated that 20.2 percent of online mentions of Ukrainian refugees showed signs of increased potential for hostility compared to 19.8 percent on the energy crisis and 16.3 percent on NATO, which ranked second and third, respectively.¹⁸⁶

The European Digital Media Observatory found that disinformation about refugees was directed at three groups of recipients:¹⁸⁷

1. Racist-minded individuals who already had negative attitudes toward refugees;
2. Supporters of conspiracy theories focusing on deliberate Ukrainian population transfers to Romania with aim to 'eventually replace Romanians'; and
3. Average concerned citizens, referring to rising prices and longer queues for healthcare and education.

The latter group can be quite broad, as many people are under significant financial strain due to rising inflation and face challenges related to services and the economy, as discussed in Chapter 4. Therefore, some messages that refer to matters affecting day-to-day life may increasingly resonate with members of host communities. The financially worse-off segments of the Romanian population, particularly in regions with higher unemployment, may see Ukrainian migrants as a threat to their own economic wellbeing and jobs. According to IRI's analysis, narratives on Ukrainian refugees receiving preferential treatment to Romanians were found to resonate most online, largely for an audience of far right and nationalist supporters.¹⁸⁸

Reporters Without Borders' 2023 Index notes that, despite a diverse and established media landscape, public interest journalism in Romania continues to face competition from disinformation campaigns, including those led by individual politicians or media outlets.¹⁸⁹ This contributes to increasing public mistrust of media sources. The 2021 GLOBSEC Trends survey found that mistrust of the mainstream media had increased in Romania from 52 percent of respondents in 2020 to 58 percent in 2021, stating that they 'rather' or 'completely' distrusted those sources.¹⁹⁰ This increase is supported by media reports that disinformation (including suspected Russian-backed disinformation) had become more mainstream during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a 2020 poll suggesting that

¹⁸⁴ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁸⁵ International Republican Institute. 2023. [Hostile narrative brief: war in Ukraine, a year of aggression](#)

¹⁸⁶ International Republican Institute. 2023. [Hostile narrative brief: war in Ukraine, a year of aggression](#)

¹⁸⁷ European Digital Media Observatory. 2022. [European Digital Media Observatory 2022. 'Ukrainian refugees and disinformation: situation in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania'](#), Accessed 31 March 2023.

¹⁸⁸ International Republican Institute. 2023. [Hostile narrative brief: war in Ukraine, a year of aggression](#)

¹⁸⁹ Reporters Without Borders. 2023. [Romania](#)

¹⁹⁰ GLOBSEC 2021. [Globasec Trends 2021: Central and Eastern Europe one year into the pandemic](#)

up to 41 percent of respondents in Romania thought COVID-19 was a U.S.-made bioweapon.¹⁹¹ A 2020 report found that 39 percent of Romanians believe in conspiracy theories;¹⁹² a 2021 survey found that 55 percent of Romanians felt they had been exposed to disinformation in the last few months.¹⁹³ In this context, Romania, like many other European countries, faces a challenging media climate.

Risks

Incendiary and misleading discourses about refugees present various kinds of risks. First are risks to Ukrainian refugees, particularly in relation to discrimination and increased challenges accessing services, jobs, and housing, which are likely to have the greatest impact on more vulnerable groups. Discourses related to Ukrainians being rich and receiving better benefits than Romanians may lead to discrimination in the provision of services. A belief among employers that Ukrainians do not want to work may lead to greater discrimination in the job market. A perception may also grow that Ukrainians are not competent to work in certain professions (which already appears due to difficulties in getting professional qualifications recognised in Romania). Micro-aggression and more overt aggression from host communities toward refugees may develop due to growing frustrations regarding the perceived unfairness of Ukrainians receiving state support. Ukrainians may face greater discrimination in the housing market, particularly toward vulnerable groups such as mothers with children, Roma communities, and people with special needs.¹⁹⁴

Should the economic situation in Romania worsen, discourses about refugees driving prices up, deepening economic challenges, or taking locals' jobs could become much more prevalent, fuelling resentment toward Ukrainians. Host communities could use Ukrainian refugees as scapegoats for economic problems such as inflation, rising costs of living, and housing shortages and high costs.

Finally, such discourses present risks to community cohesion more broadly. There may be increased distrust and polarisation among the Romanian and Ukrainian communities, which could in some cases manifest in physical and verbal abuse. Tensions between polarised parts of host society can lead to more protests; clashes between opposing politicians on news channels; and fiery, often aggressive comments and discussions on social media between groups with opposing values. The spread of negative narratives related to Ukrainian refugees is likely to impede integration efforts by Romanian NGOs, foundations, and agencies. In addition, negative narratives can exacerbate sentiments of isolation for Ukrainians in the host country, making them feel unwelcome.¹⁹⁵

3.3 Top five discourses

The top five discourses identified during the desk-based research and the workshops are analysed below. Each is explored in turn, covering all stages of the Chain of Harm and the underlying challenges that are particularly distinct for this narrative.

¹⁹¹ Politico. 2020., [Disinformation fuels Romania's coronavirus spike](#)

¹⁹² GLOBSEC. 2020. [Voices of Central and Eastern Europe, Perceptions of democracy & governance in 10 EU countries](#). Accessed 10 March 2023.

¹⁹³ Romania Insider. 2021. [Survey: 55% of Romanians think they have been exposed to fake news, disinformation in the last months](#)

¹⁹⁴ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁹⁵ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

Discourse 1: ‘They don’t want to work’

Message: The narrative that refugees from Ukraine do not want to work revolves around a number of related messages. One is overall low engagement in the labour market (according to the UNHCR, in January 2023 only 15 percent of Ukrainians of working age in Romania reported being in full employment),¹⁹⁶ while TP status giving Ukrainian refugees the right to work is taken as evidence that, around one year into living in Romania, they are able to work but do not want to.¹⁹⁷ A participant in the research workshop said this narrative was reflected in a perception that Ukrainians prefer financial support over work, and ‘they are getting used to being assisted’.¹⁹⁸ Other participants noted that this perception was particularly strong in the port city of Constanta, with some narratives incorporating the message, ‘they are here on vacation’.¹⁹⁹

Another message is that Ukrainians are not in need of financial assistance, as many have outward signs of wealth (such as cars, clothes, and jewellery).²⁰⁰ As put by France24, ‘From Warsaw to Bucharest, social media have been flooded with images of luxury cars with Ukrainian license plates and unsourced, anonymous claims that wealthy-looking Ukrainians have been spotted standing in line for government aid.’²⁰¹ Some workshop participants shared narratives that people from western Ukraine were renting their homes to refugees from the eastern part of the country while they travelled to Romania to benefit from financial assistance there.²⁰²

The November 2022 IRI media analysis found that the most frequently cited concern among Romanian social media messages was the worsening economic situation and Romania’s continued financial support to refugees.²⁰³ IRI found that anti-refugee rhetoric in Romania was not typically rooted in xenophobia but more likely reflects domestic economic concerns.²⁰⁴

Considerations for Countering Anti-refugee Messaging:

Incendiary messages should be countered by those based in reality. The focus should be on balancing the type of information that is available and easily accessible online so audiences can access the fact-based information with as much ease as the incendiary and misleading narratives that are often associated with the far right.²⁰⁵

Counternarratives to address this discourse could focus on positive stories of Ukrainians working in Romania, starting local businesses, and contributing to the Romanian economy. They can also contextualise the numbers of people not working, as many are children and others are carers.

Given research findings regarding the prevalence of economic concerns,²⁰⁶ this approach should be combined with a messaging strategy that seeks to assure as much as to convince. This means including messaging such as, ‘There’s enough to go around’, or ‘We’re in this together’. It is also important to use emotionally evocative language to

¹⁹⁶ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter](#)

¹⁹⁷ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁹⁸ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

¹⁹⁹ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁰⁰ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁰¹ France24. 2022. [Disinformation shifting views on Ukrainian refugees](#). Accessed 26 March 2023

²⁰² Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁰³ International Republican Institute. 2022. [Hostile narrative brief: war in Ukraine, a year of aggression](#)

²⁰⁴ International Republican Institute. 2022. [Hostile narrative brief: war in Ukraine, a year of aggression](#)

²⁰⁵ ExpertForum.Ro. 3 March 2023. [Monitorizare online august – noiembrie – Războiul din Ucraina](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

²⁰⁶ International Republican Institute. 2022. [Hostile narrative brief: war in Ukraine, a year of aggression](#)

capture attention and increase recall of the messages shared²⁰⁷ and to build on the target audience's values²⁰⁸ – for example, aligning with positive narratives about Romania's economic progress over the last decade.

As much as possible, counternarratives should target specific audiences and the fora with which they engage, and they should be tailored based on these audiences' attitudes, perceptions, values, and norms.

Mode of dissemination: This narrative is spread by both social and traditional media, especially in discussions of real economic challenges. For example, IRI quoted²⁰⁹ a news story about a priest unable to offer any more support to Ukrainian refugees due to limited resources and the needs of his Romanian parish.²¹⁰ Word of mouth is also a means of disseminating this message.

Interpreter: The discourse is receiving a lot of attention, as it concerns Romanians' economic welfare. The segments of the Romanian population that might struggle financially may be concerned that government support to Ukrainian refugees reduces funding for other initiatives and support for Romanians. The rise of hard-right parties in popularity and polling in the past two years is also concerning,²¹¹ as Romania's main far right segment has a history of anti-refugee rhetoric. Participants in the research workshop noted that individual employers could also act as interpreters, with one participant citing an example of a recruitment advertisement including the phrase 'not for refugees'.²¹²

Underlying challenges: This discourse ignores some common barriers to employment that Ukrainian refugees face. Language barriers, lack of familiarity with the labour market, and challenges to validating Ukrainian professional qualifications in Romania are among the practical barriers. In addition, the disproportionate number of women and children among Ukrainian refugees in Romania makes pressure on childcare places a significant barrier.

Narratives around refugees and employment can themselves become barriers to Ukrainians accessing employment. There is also a narrative that Ukrainians are unreliable employees: a lack of clarity around length of stay and availability of other forms of assistance translates into a lack of commitment to jobs. Participants in the research workshop said that some employers believe Ukrainians will return to Ukraine shortly, so it is not worth the effort to employ, onboard, and train them.²¹³

Considerations for Countering Anti-refugee Messaging:

Given the relatively low Romanian language proficiency among Ukrainian refugees, additional language training could be beneficial. Employment-focused courses could be an efficient approach, equipping people with the language skills necessary to enter the workforce and expanding childcare provision.

²⁰⁷ Brady, W. J., Gantman, A., and Van Bavel, J. 2020. [Attentional capture helps explain why moral and emotional content go viral](#). *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 149, 746-756. 3.

²⁰⁸ Feinberg, Matthew, and Willer, R. 2015. [From Gulf to Bridge: When Do Moral Arguments Facilitate Political Influence?](#) *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41(12), 1665–1681.

²⁰⁹ International Republican Institute. 2022. [Hostile narrative brief: war in Ukraine, a year of aggression](#)

²¹⁰ Focus Press Romania. 2022. [Why the priest no longer receives refugees at Techirghiol: our efforts will only focus on mothers and children from Romania in difficulty](#)

²¹¹ Politico. 2023. [Romania: national parliament voting intention](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

²¹² Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²¹³ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

Working directly with employers to better understand and respond to the needs of Ukrainian refugees could help them to proactively address potential misconceptions and issues, thereby supporting better recruitment and retention of Ukrainian employees.

Greater awareness could be raised among Ukrainians regarding the Jobs4Ukraine website, which ‘matches candidates from Ukraine with the right job opportunities in Romania and abroad.’²¹⁴

Similarly, awareness could be raised amongst Ukrainians regarding the National Centre for Recognition and Equivalence of Diplomas in Bucharest, which offers assistance for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications to access the labour market.²¹⁵ Processes for recognising qualifications could be simplified and made less expensive (for instance, by providing free or reduced-fee document translation), where possible.

Discourse 2: ‘Ukrainians are rich, drive around in fancy cars and spend their time in malls and cafes while locals are working; they're in the host country on holiday – they don’t need assistance’

Message: This narrative centres around the idea that Ukrainians have enough money and do not need or deserve financial support from Romania. It is linked to assumptions that refugees should be visibly poor or in need (e.g., dirty and poorly dressed). The narrative appears to be validated when people see Ukrainian refugees with material goods of average or higher cost.²¹⁶ Workshop participants shared that the rhetoric is often based on individual stories, such as volunteers at a welcome centre commenting on the designer handbags that some Ukrainian refugees carry, a Ukrainian refugee seen driving a Porsche, and Ukrainians in Constanta spending time at a local shopping mall.²¹⁷ All of these narratives centre around the appearance of wealth, with one participant commenting that the image was more important than the reality.²¹⁸ This is illustrated by posts such as the following Facebook post in Romania:

‘90 percent of those who cross the border are from the rich class, those who can afford to give 1,000–1,500 euros bribe to Ukrainian customs to cross over to us’.²¹⁹

Mode of dissemination: This narrative is spread via social media and word of mouth.²²⁰ There are also examples of the narrative spreading via non-mainstream news websites. For example, the Newsbeezer site ran a story titled ‘Refugees but Rich’, quoting the general director of Ibis Continental Hotels Romania, Călin Ilie, saying ‘the hotel occupancy rate in Bucharest increased by 20 percent. Ukrainians also stayed overnight in five-star hotels’.²²¹

Interpreters: This discourse can spread when examples or perceptions are generalised and contrasted with expectations of what a person fleeing war should look like. Workshop participants noted that the narrative is likely

²¹⁴ <https://jobs4ukr.com/>

²¹⁵ National Centre for Recognition and Equivalence of Diplomas. 8 April, 2022. [Ukrainian citizens, Access to the labor market](#). Accessed 21 March 2023.

²¹⁶ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²¹⁷ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²¹⁸ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²¹⁹ France24. 2022. [Disinformation shifting views on Ukrainian refugees](#). Accessed 26 March 2023

²²⁰ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²²¹ Newsbeezer 2022. [Refugees but rich: more than 1,000 Ukrainians who came to Romania declared 140 million Euros](#)

to be believed by those with little experience interacting with Ukrainian refugees, and that poorer segments of the host community are more likely to be sensitive to it.²²²

Considerations for Countering Anti-refugee Messaging:

Encouraging people to share positive stories about Ukrainian refugees, and highlighting that Ukrainians are fighting against Russia for Europe as a whole, could help balance the narrative. The messages about Ukrainians should not focus on pity and compassion but rather on alliance and mutual gratitude.

Communication and education efforts can help host communities understand when they are being manipulated through disinformation. An example of this type of intervention is [videos on building resilience to anti-refugee narratives](#) aimed at the public, created through a partnership between Google's Jigsaw division and Info Interventions.

Underlying challenges: Romania has limited experience hosting refugees. It has not been and still is not perceived as a destination country for refugees. At the same time, many Romanians emigrate abroad to improve their livelihood opportunities.²²³ Thus, it can be difficult for some Romanians to understand how individuals who do not look poor may need help.

Considerations for Countering Anti-refugee Messaging:

Increase opportunities for Romanians and Ukrainians to interact with one another daily. This may include after-school activities for Ukrainian and Romanian children, activities where local and Ukrainian populations can get to know one another, and more events in the workplace (with translation provided as necessary). More educational activities and resources, such as in form of books, events, and theatre performances, to explain the diversity of Ukrainian refugee experiences should also be promoted.

Discourse 3: 'Refugees are supported more financially and get better benefits than the local population; help to refugees comes at the cost of the local population; we should help our poor, not the Ukrainians'

Message: This narrative promotes a view that support to Ukrainian refugees is unfair and comes at the expense of the local population, as host community needs are neglected and the poor lose out. It draws examples from a range of services that are under pressure – including healthcare, housing and education. This suggests that assistance to Ukrainian refugees conveys better treatment or additional benefits compared to the host community population. Some examples may be (partially) rooted in truth. For example, workshop participants said there was a misconception that Ukrainians are entitled to unlimited free travel within Romania²²⁴ when in fact the free-fare period for Ukrainians only ran only from March to May 2022 (the first two months of the 2022 escalation of the war).²²⁵ Others relate to stretched services, such as narratives about Ukrainians taking the spaces of Romanian children at kindergartens.²²⁶

²²² Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²²³ Institute of Public Affairs European Programme, British Council. 2018. [The Wages of Fear Attitudes Towards Refugees and Migrants in Romania](#). Accessed 21 March 2023.

²²⁴ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²²⁵ Romanian Insider. 2022. [Romania to provide free rail transportation to all Ukrainians for another month](#)

²²⁶ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

Mode of dissemination: Social media and word of mouth play an important role in disseminating this narrative. One research workshop participant noted,

'It usually only takes one person experiencing unequal treatment compared to a refugee in a state facility for a generalising statement to become commonplace. Spreading personal experiences on having limited access to help due to long waiting lines, including due to Ukrainians waiting for assistance, makes it easy to find someone to blame for queues, for example.'²²⁷

Another participant spoke of direct complaints to civil servants (emails and petitions) of perceived favouritism for Ukrainians in the delivery of services.²²⁸

Considerations for Countering Anti-refugee Messaging:

Social media campaigns could engage influencers to target the groups most likely to be swayed by this narrative. Social media, especially in the form of engaging videos and visuals, could provide guidance on how to talk to friends and family members who are saying incendiary things about refugees.

Tailored messages about economic development at the local level can play a role in addressing areas or sectors that are susceptible to this narrative.

Interpreters: People whose financial and welfare situation is challenging may be more vulnerable to this narrative. Participants in the research workshop added that it appears in certain information bubbles, including amongst people influenced by right-wing news sources.²²⁹

Underlying challenges: Romania has limited experience hosting refugees.²³⁰ Incomes are lower in Romania than many other European countries,²³¹ income inequality remains considerable,²³² and benefits for the poor are not substantial.²³³ Recent rises in rents and utility costs have increased the cost of living for Romanians, worsening economic concerns. The fact that benefits to those with TP status are not means-based has also been noted to contribute to frustrations.²³⁴

Discourse 4: 'Ukrainians and Russians are basically the same'

Message: This narrative can include messages such as 'Ukrainians and Russians are the same people' and 'Ukraine has been a part of Russia in the past. They should give up.' The argument can go so far as to suggest that Ukraine is an artificial state, created on the territory of other countries which they want to reclaim, making Russia's territorial claims legitimate. The narrative can present Russia's invasion as a civil war.²³⁵

Considerations for Countering Anti-refugee Messaging:

²²⁷ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²²⁸ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²²⁹ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²³⁰ Institute of Public Affairs European Programme, British Council. 2018. [The Wages of Fear Attitudes Towards Refugees and Migrants in Romania](#). Accessed 21 March 2023.

²³¹ World Bank. 2020. [Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines \(% of population\), Romania](#)

²³² European Parliament. 2018. [Romania: the country with the highest income inequality in the European Union](#)

²³³ OECD. 2022. [OECD Economic Surveys: Romania](#)

²³⁴ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²³⁵ GEORGIANA MARINA. Digi24.ro. 17 September 2022. [Declarații halucinante ale fostului ministru Andrei Marga: Ucraina trebuie să cedeze teritoriile României, Rusiei, Ungariei și Poloniei](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

The Youth Centre in Bucharest created a place especially for young people from Ukraine and Romania to spend time together, get to know each other better, and learn something about each other's cultures. This creates the possibility of helping distinguish Ukrainian national identity from Russian national identity.²³⁶ Such programmes could be replicated more broadly, including outside of Bucharest.

Mode of dissemination: This narrative is particularly spread on social media and through populist media outlets.

Interpreters: Participants in the research workshop noted that older people who remember Ukraine as part of the Soviet Union may be more susceptible to this narrative.²³⁷ Romanians who have not had much contact with other minorities or foreigners can also be interpreters of this discourse. Workshop participants added that the narrative does not necessarily spread through ill intent but stems from a lack of knowledge about Ukrainian culture, leading to assumptions of similarities between Russian and Ukrainian culture, history, and language.²³⁸

Underlying challenges: Participants in the research workshop commented that many Romanians have limited knowledge of Ukrainian culture and history and had limited interpersonal exchanges with Ukrainians and prior to the war.²³⁹

Considerations for Countering Anti-refugee Messaging:

Romanian President Klaus Iohannis publicly shared his admiration for Ukraine and the strength of the Ukrainians.²⁴⁰ Such public announcements by influential figures influence media and political audiences and can be used to broaden support for Ukrainians.

Some organisations, such as Expert Forum, have engaged in debunking myths and misconceptions around this discourse – for example, by organising discussions with academics on the differences between the countries.²⁴¹ This could be useful for audiences that are interested in learning about Ukrainian history.

Media organisations could help identify refugees who can be called on for quotes in the media or appear on TV as commentators to increase the representation of refugees' voices.

Events and activities to help Ukrainians and Romanians meet and get to know one another could also help Romanian communities better understand the refugee experience and Ukraine's history. Various organisations have recognised the role of history education in helping students better understand the past, approach information critically, and reduce risks of prejudice and discrimination.²⁴²

Discourse 5: 'They treat the host country's minorities in Ukraine badly'

Message: This narrative draws upon the treatment of Romanian minorities in Ukraine and political concerns about their rights. Participants in the research workshop commented that there was limited public awareness of the Romanian minority in Ukraine prior to February 2022,²⁴³ but that coverage in the national media increased

²³⁶ Centrul de tineret FNT. [Facebook page](#). Accessed 1 March 2023.

²³⁷ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²³⁸ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²³⁹ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

²⁴⁰ Twitter feed of President Klaus Iohannis. 2023. [Video](#) on the first anniversary of the Russian invasion. Accessed 25 March 2023.

²⁴¹ Expert Forum. 2022. [Conversation with the Ukrainian political scientist Dmytro Tuzhansky: Ukraine is not Russia! What are the differences?](#) Accessed 3 April 2023.

²⁴² UNESCO. 2020. [A future we can all live with: how education can address and eradicate racism](#) and Brookings Institute. 2022. [Learning to live together: how education can help fight systemic racism](#)

²⁴³ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

after the Russian invasion, including reports of diplomatic discussions between Ukraine and Romania.²⁴⁴ This matter has the potential to reduce Romanians' support to Ukrainians, leading to apathy or resentment.

Mode of dissemination: Far-right-leaning individuals and parties have spread this narrative.²⁴⁵ One far-right senator, who was expelled from her party over her views, commented on the law limiting Romanians' ability to study in their mother tongue in Ukraine: 'Since 2014 there have been problems there. But we have always had problems with Romanian citizens in Ukraine. And how, nobody reported it? The first citizens killed at the front were of Romanian origin! And how can that make me not jump up? Well, protect your own ... Now, don't fret, there are fatalities on both sides. Human life has no nationality'.²⁴⁶ This narrative is also spread by social media.

The Ukraine Monitor project reported that the term 'Ukrainisation of Romania' originally applied to alleged efforts of the government of Ukraine to forcibly assimilate Romanians in Ukraine.²⁴⁷ The project found that the far right has propagated this narrative online, including claims that 'the leader of the Ukrainian parliamentary party wants liquidation of Romanians'.²⁴⁸

Considerations for Countering Anti-Refugee Messaging:

Accuracy nudges – reminders that 'most people want to share accurate information' can be used online, for example as promoted posts on social media platforms. Such non-political and non-ideological prompts have been shown to reduce the spread of misinformation.²⁴⁹

Interpreters: Pro-Russian communities and right-wing party supporters promote this narrative. It gained traction amongst a broader segment of the Romanian population in response to the Ukrainian law limiting access to education in foreign languages in Ukrainian schools;²⁵⁰ it has also been raised in political and diplomatic discussions.²⁵¹

Underlying challenges: Some concerns about the treatment of the Romanian minority in Ukraine arose before February 2022 and have received greater attention since the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Romania. The Romanian President Klaus Iohannis reportedly having called for improvements in Ukraine's recognition of rights for the Romanian community.²⁵² Issues raised include the lack of Romanian language education in Ukraine, reports of education segregation, and the closure of Romanian schools.²⁵³

²⁴⁴ Balkan Insight. 2022. [Ukraine seeks closer ties to Romania, vows to resolve minority issues](#)

²⁴⁵ Calistru, Elena, and Burtan, L. GLOBESC, National Endowment for Democracy. 2022. [Funky Citizens](#). Accessed 10 March 2023.

²⁴⁶ Ionel Sclavone. evz.ro 2023. [Diana Șoșoacă, scenariu conspiraționist despre viitorul României: „Există o facțiune ce pornește din Iași”](#). Accessed 23 March 2023.

²⁴⁷ Global Focus. 2022. ["Ukrainianisation" in pro-Russian propaganda in Romania, Poland, Serbia and Hungary](#)

²⁴⁸ Global Focus. 2022. ["Ukrainianisation" in pro-Russian propaganda in Romania, Poland, Serbia and Hungary](#)

²⁴⁹ Pennycook, Gordon. McPhetres, J., Zhang, Y., Lu, J. G., and Rand, D. G. 2020. Fighting COVID-19 misinformation on social media: Experimental evidence for a scalable accuracy-nudge intervention. *Psychological Science*, 31, 770–780.

²⁵⁰ Sánchez Costa, Raúl. El Pais International. 2023. [Treatment of ethnic communities pits Ukraine against neighbors Romania and Hungary](#). Accessed 21 March 2023.

²⁵¹ Balkan Insight. 2023. [Romania president pushes Ukraine on minority rights](#)

²⁵² Balkan Insight. 2023. [Romania president pushes Ukraine on minority rights](#)

²⁵³ Balkan Insight. 2022. [Ukraine seeks closer ties to Romania, vows to resolve minority issues](#)

Chapter 4. Potential tensions

4.1 Overview

This section discusses phenomena, policies, and characteristics which are, or could in the future be, sources of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities. It is important to stress that, at the time of writing, these had not necessarily harmed community cohesion, although they could do so in the medium term – for example, should contextual factors change or disinformation actors magnify the tensions. This chapter notes the types of risks related to each aspect of the refugee journey, how they have manifested to date, and signs pointing to the likelihood of the tensions becoming more significant.

The five tensions that are likely to have the highest potential to affect community cohesion in the medium term, considering their propensity to occur or by potential impact, are boldfaced in Table 3. While the overall risks are generally low, the categorisation of the five top risks below is made in relation to the overall risks to community cohesion in the country. This means that the top five tensions might still be unlikely to materialise but are more likely to be higher risks than others. For example, tensions around the generally lower benefits received by TCNs who are not eligible for TP are unlikely to significantly threaten community cohesion given the small number of those TCNs in Romania. On the other hand, economic concerns are widely felt by the host and refugee populations.

TABLE 3: Potential sources of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities in Romania

Journey stage	Potential sources of tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities
Legal status, welfare, and benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived abuse of the benefits system (e.g., cross the border just to get money). • Unknown, unclear, or bureaucratic procedures to register for TP and services; (perceived) lack of information on the rights and obligations of people with TP status; Ukrainians made to feel unwelcome by new procedures.
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional pressures on the healthcare system, which already experiences challenges (including long waiting times). • Pressures on social services. • Differences in how services are used, resulting in perceived abuse of services (unnecessary ambulance calls, emergency room visits, doctors' visits).
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ukrainians face additional challenges and bureaucratic hurdles in receiving healthcare. • Additional pressures on housing and the rising cost of housing (also in the context of a lack of social housing). • Ukrainian refugees, and Roma in particular, are seen as undesirable tenants. • Uncertainty regarding length of stay for Ukrainian refugees in the host country, leading to lack of commitment to long-term contracts.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional pressures on schools. • Additional pressures on kindergartens and available spaces for children. • Integration issues in schools and a lack of specialised programmes, resulting in negative social experiences (such as Ukrainian children experiencing bullying, especially in Russian schools). • Uncertainty regarding length of stay for Ukrainian refugees in the host country, leading to poor school attendance and high dropout rates.
Employment and income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High inflation pressures on host and refugee communities. • Rising inequalities. • Low Ukrainian engagement in the labour market and entrepreneurial activities. • Tensions over distribution of scarce resources between disadvantaged local populations and Ukrainians, including poverty among local populations.

Community,
social, and
political life

- Reductions in financial assistance to refugees could lead to more refugees experiencing poverty and the state (or other organisations) needing to step in to support the vulnerable.
- Underemployment of refugees and difficulties in having qualifications recognised.
- Perception that Ukrainians receive higher benefits than host communities; poor communication about amounts and sources of support.
- Ukrainian refugees receive more support (such as financial support and labour market access) than other refugee groups, including TCNs from Ukraine.
- Uncertainty regarding length of stay for Ukrainian refugees in the host country, leading to low job retention among refugees.
- Lack of integration of Ukrainian refugees into the host society.
- **Language barriers, not learning the local language (lack of opportunity, or difficulty of language).**
- Differences between Ukrainians' experiences.
- Cultural differences and lack of understanding.
- Lack of understanding of Ukrainian trauma and its consequences.
- Fear of insecurity and war; refugees seen as making the situation worse.
- Perception of poor (or poorer) treatment of Romanian communities in Ukraine than Ukrainian communities in Romania.
- Locals' fatigue with supporting refugees.
- Expectation of more gratitude from refugees.
- Individual incidents that harm people (e.g., car crashes) might frame Ukrainians as a danger to the host society.
- Xenophobia and discrimination.

4.2 Legal status, welfare, and benefits

Perceived abuse of the benefits system (e.g., refugees cross the border just to get money): The TP system in Romania allows refugees access to the same services as Romanians. Little information is available online about mechanisms to verify whether Ukrainians have remained in Romania after registering, and there might be opportunities to abuse the system.²⁵⁴ Workshop participants also pointed out that TP requires no means testing to ensure that those who receive benefits fall under the low-income threshold. Many Romanians perceive this use of status-based, versus means-based, targeting (allowing all Ukrainians to access benefits) as unjust, according to workshop participants and as discussed in Chapter 3.

Unknown, unclear, or bureaucratic procedures to register for TP and services; perceived lack of information on the rights and obligations of people with TP status: Despite efforts to ensure that Ukrainians are well informed about legal status and benefits, gaps remain. A World Vision assessment found that 39 percent of Ukrainian refugees lacked information about available services, 30 percent about their legal rights, and 23 percent about how to register for asylum.²⁵⁵ Access to information depends on language, location, and access to technology. Specific groups also face particular challenges; bureaucratic hurdles can limit parents' ability to apply for child allowance under TP, and the registration process can be particularly challenging for people with disabilities.²⁵⁶ Barriers to services can be particularly acute for the most vulnerable groups, including survivors of gender-based violence.²⁵⁷ As a result, Ukrainians may feel unwelcome, and Romanians may perceive refugees as not conforming with required policies and procedures.

²⁵⁴ Care International. 2022. [Rapid Gender Assessment: Romania](#); World Vision International. 2022. [Warm welcomes, lurking tensions](#)

²⁵⁵ World Vision International. 2022. [Warm welcomes, lurking tensions](#)

²⁵⁶ Care International. 2022. [Rapid Gender Assessment: Romania](#)

²⁵⁷ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter](#)

4.3 Healthcare

Additional pressures on the health system, which already experiences challenges including long waits:

The Romanian healthcare system is a public system that faces long-standing challenges. In 2016, it provided coverage for 85 percent of the population.²⁵⁸ The system has suffered from a lack of investment; healthcare spending in Romania was under 5 percent of GDP in 2021²⁵⁹ compared with the EU average of 9.9 percent.²⁶⁰ The system also experienced staff shortages, reported corruption, and unequal regional provision of healthcare.²⁶¹ Those challenges have a strong impact on the population: In 2016, it was noted that, whilst life expectancy was increasing and mortality was declining, both remained among the worst in the EU.²⁶² The arrival of Ukrainians has increased the number of people seeking healthcare and demand for specific issues (e.g., war-related injuries and psychosocial issues) that require scarce specialist support. Participants in the workshop said that healthcare staff were already under strain and that the additional complexities of registering and treating Ukrainian patients (such as the need for translation and to verify foreign documentation and explain a new system) increased pressure on them.²⁶³ Some of these issues were borne out through academic research demonstrating the additional stress on Romanian health care staff.²⁶⁴ Other participants commented that Romania's healthcare system is widely seen to deliver poor service to all, so pressure from the arrival of Ukrainians was not a prominent discourse.²⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the challenges associated with healthcare provision could lead to Ukrainians being blamed for system weaknesses.

Differences in how services are used, resulting in a perceived abuse of the services: Workshop participants noted that friction can arise between refugees and Romanian doctors due to additional workloads on the doctors, such as communicating with patients who do not speak Romanian. One participant stated that some doctors feared fines or criminal charges if they prescribed treatment on the basis of non-EU medical documentation that they had not verified.²⁶⁶ Some differences in the use of health services may arise from refugees' demographic profiles; the predominance of female refugees, for instance, may lead to greater demand for reproductive health services. Similarly, health is more highly prioritised by refugee households who have chronic illnesses; these families may be accustomed to more intensive engagement with health services in Ukraine, and this may give rise to perceived differences in use of services.²⁶⁷

Workshop participants mentioned that the complexity of the Romanian healthcare system and the lack of understanding among Ukrainian refugees meant that Ukrainians were more likely to use or be directed to the wrong referral process.²⁶⁸ One participant cited examples of Ukrainian refugees not needing to go through the same referral steps as Romanians – in effect, skipping a step and accessing specialist treatment more quickly. In the context of long waiting lines for healthcare in Romania, the participant noted that some people

²⁵⁸ Vladescu, C., et al. 2016. [Romania Health System Review](#), European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. Accessed 1 April 2023.

²⁵⁹ Economist Intelligence Unit. 2021. [Romania's underfunded and beleaguered healthcare system](#)

²⁶⁰ Prusaczyk Artur, et al. 2023. [Care Organization in Poland in Light of the Refugee Crisis Related to the Military Conflict in Ukraine](#). International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.

²⁶¹ The Economist. 2019. [Romania's health-care system, the EU's worst, struggles to reform](#)

²⁶² Vladescu, C., et al. 2016. [Romania Health System Review](#), European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. Accessed 1 April 2023.

²⁶³ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁶⁴ Häisan, Anca; Mairean, C, Lupusoru, S. L., Tarniceriu, C., and Cimpoesu, D. 2022. [General Health Among Eastern Romanian Emergency Medicine Personnel during the Russian Ukrainian Armed Conflict](#)

²⁶⁵ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁶⁶ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁶⁷ Care International 2022. [Rapid Gender Assessment: Romania](#)

²⁶⁸ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

viewed this as unfair treatment for Romanians who had ‘paid into the system, so why are they waiting?’.²⁶⁹

Ukrainians face additional challenges and bureaucratic hurdles in receiving healthcare: Research workshop participants commented on the complexity of the Romanian healthcare system and shared examples of small, bureaucratic obstacles to equitable healthcare delivery.²⁷⁰ Several discussed challenges around registering with a doctor, reporting that the format of Ukrainian identification numbers differs from Romanian ones, so they cannot be entered into the public healthcare IT systems for doctors to receive payment. This could lead to some doctors refusing to treat Ukrainian patients.²⁷¹ Others said the issue was compounded by the lack of incentives for registering Ukrainian patients, because a doctor receives a set fee regardless of the length of an appointment (and a bilingual or translated consultation with a Ukrainian patient may take up to twice as long as a consultation with a Romanian).^{272, 273} Workshop participants also expressed frustration with not being able to access non-urgent care and the costly and time-consuming requirements around translation of the medical documents of people with chronic conditions.²⁷⁴ The perceptions of workshop participants are broadly borne out by needs assessments and studies conducted in Romania. The RRP for Romania indicates that 25 percent of surveyed refugees reported barriers accessing health systems, mainly due to language barriers and lack of information.²⁷⁵ Specific barriers for survivors of gender-based violence include the lack of specialists who speak Russian or Ukrainian.²⁷⁶ Romania’s Ministry of Health has committed to adopting specific measures, including awareness raising campaigns about vaccinations and access to services.²⁷⁷ Challenges accessing healthcare can also lead to discontent on the part of Ukrainians, which can be perceived as ingratitude by the host population.

4.4 Housing

Additional pressures on housing and its rising costs: The cost of housing in Romania was rising before the arrival of refugees from Ukraine, albeit more slowly than in other EU countries. In addition, Romania had the highest overcrowding rate (the percentage of people living in overcrowded households) in the EU.²⁷⁸ Much of the country’s current social housing stock is in need of renovation, and the housing market is characterised by strong stratification.²⁷⁹ Social housing and affordable housing in particular have not been prioritised at the policy level; stocks of housing are thus low, in poor condition, and in high demand.²⁸⁰ Participants in the workshops warned that housing access and affordability was a challenge for many in Romania, making housing a topic with the potential for disinformation and exploitation by malign actors.²⁸¹ Certain regions of Romania are particularly expensive, such as the capital city, Bucharest, and the tourist city of Constanta. Participants said that many Ukrainian refugees were housed in Constanta in the early stages of the refugee crisis. This was done for practical reasons (the off-season availability of accommodation) but attracted negative attention due to the spike in rental

²⁶⁹ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁷⁰ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁷¹ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁷² Help to Help Ukraine. 2023. [Access to healthcare for Ukrainian refugees in Romania](#)

²⁷³ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁷⁴ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁷⁵ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter](#).

²⁷⁶ CARE/SERA, Federation for Child Protection, Federation for Social Services and Plan International in Romani. 2022. [Rapid Gender Analysis Brief Ukrainian Refugees in Romania](#)

²⁷⁷ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter](#).

²⁷⁸ Eurostat. 2022. [Living conditions in Europe - housing](#)

²⁷⁹ Soaita, Adriana. 2020. [Housing stratification in Romania: mapping a decade of change](#); Turcu, Catalina. 2017. [Mind the Poorest: Social Housing Provision in Post-Crisis Romania](#)

²⁸⁰ Turcu, Catalina. 2017. [Mind the Poorest: Social Housing Provision in Post-Crisis Romania](#)

²⁸¹ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

prices in a popular holiday destination and the perception that Ukrainians were being offered luxury holiday apartments.²⁸²

The 50/20 scheme, under which individuals who host a Ukrainian refugee receive a government payment of 50 lei (approximately \$11 USD or £9) for accommodation and 20 lei (approximately \$4.50 USD or £3.50) for food per day, per refugee hosted,²⁸³ has been positive in supporting Ukrainian refugees to access housing. However, workshop participants expressed concern that Ukrainian guests in Constanta would be evicted when landlords could charge higher rents to summer tourists than they receive through the 50/20 scheme.²⁸⁴ Only a few Ukrainian respondents to one survey reported issues with landlords (8 percent of the sample), but most did not know how to report abuses by landlords.²⁸⁵ This lack of a feedback system, when ordinary Romanians who are not landlords see rising rents (by 8.7 percent in 2022),²⁸⁶ can lead to increasing inequalities. Workshop participants also noted that high demand for housing enables some landlords to engage in exploitative practices, such as insisting on informal rent agreements, raising rents significantly, and increasing evictions (particularly when no official contract is signed).²⁸⁷

Ukrainian refugees, and Roma in particular, can be seen as undesirable tenants: Romanian law states that housing is the right of every citizen and prevents discrimination against marginalised or minority groups.²⁸⁸ However, a 2018 EU report found Romania among the European countries where 80 percent of Roma lived below the at-risk poverty line, with one in three living in a dwelling without running water and one in 10 without electricity. The report also noted that the Roma face continued discrimination in access to education, employment, healthcare and housing.²⁸⁹ The structure of the Romanian housing market contributes to stratification and generally allows for discrimination: Most housing is privately owned, social housing schemes are minimal and face challenges, and a steadily greater proportion of the population faced housing disadvantage before Russia's invasion of Ukraine.²⁹⁰ Workshop participants noted the risks that Roma from Ukraine will also face marginalisation, which the media has already reported.²⁹¹

Some workshop participants noted that the 50/20 scheme had incentivised landlords to rent to Ukrainians, but others added that uncertainty over upcoming changes to the scheme, combined with incidents of delayed payments to landlords,²⁹² created a risk to community cohesion and landlords' willingness to support Ukrainians as tenants.²⁹³

Uncertainty regarding length of stay for Ukrainian refugees in the host country, affecting commitment to long-term contracts: Ukrainians may also be at a structural disadvantage in the housing market. Return intentions among Ukrainian refugees are complex; regional surveys indicate that the majority say they plan to return to Ukraine, with many planning to do so once the war ends.²⁹⁴ Participants in the research workshop noted

²⁸² Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁸³ Dopomoha / Help for Ukrainians in Romania. 2022. [The new 50/20 programme](#)

²⁸⁴ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁸⁵ UNHCR. 2022. [Rapid Survey of the 50-20 Programme](#).

²⁸⁶ Property Forum. 2023. [Resi rent prices in Romania up 8.7% in 2022](#). Accessed 2 April 2023.

²⁸⁷ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁸⁸ Housing Rights Watch. 2021. [Housing rights violations against a Roma community](#)

²⁸⁹ European Commission. 2018. [Strategy of the Romanian government on inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022 to 2027](#)

²⁹⁰ Turcu, Catalina 2017. [Mind the Poorest: Social Housing Provision in Post-Crisis Romania](#)

²⁹¹ CNN. 2022. ["You are not a refugee". Roma refugees fleeing war in Ukraine say they face discrimination and prejudice](#)

²⁹² Balkan Insight. 2023. [Romanians Hosting Ukrainian Refugees Complain of Delay in Payments](#).

²⁹³ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁹⁴ Vyshlinsky, Hlib, Tomilina, M., Samoiliuk, M., and Mykhailyshyna, D. 2023. [Ukrainian Refugees: Who are they, where did they](#)

that uncertainty regarding length of stay in Romania has two effects. First, uncertainty among Ukrainians hoping to return to Ukraine translates to unwillingness to sign long-term rental contracts, which makes it harder to find stable accommodation. Second, uncertainty contributes to perceptions that Ukrainians are not long-term residents and therefore are unreliable tenants, leading to landlords' discrimination and preference to rent to Romanians in high-demand areas.²⁹⁵

4.5 Education

Additional pressure on schools: In 2022, the Romanian education system underperformed compared to EU averages on indicators including dropout rates (15 percent in 2019 compared to the EU rate of 10 percent), proportion of 15-year-olds underachieving in reading (40.4 percent compared to the EU rate of 22.5 percent), and underachievement in maths (46 percent compared to the EU rate of 22.9 percent).²⁹⁶ This performance is likely due at least in part to relatively low spending on education: Romania spends 3.2 percent of GDP on education, compared to the EU average of 4.6 percent. In absolute values, per-student spending at the primary and secondary school levels was €1,930 compared to the EU average of €6,240.²⁹⁷

In this context, the addition of Ukrainian refugees might generate further challenges and tensions. Despite the relatively low number of Ukrainian students enrolled in public schools, participants in the workshop noted a shortage of school places and teaching staff²⁹⁸ as factors that might increase concern regarding additional pressure on the school system.²⁹⁹ Fewer than 1,000 Ukrainian children were fully enrolled in Romanian schools as of January 2023, with 3,000 others 'auditing' Romanian public school classes.³⁰⁰ Those who audit with 'observer' status are restricted from advancing to higher grades and thus developing relationships with peers.³⁰¹

Additional pressure on kindergartens and available spaces for children: Lack of kindergarten spaces is an ongoing issue in Romania,³⁰² with early childhood education rates and participation in childcare both below EU averages.³⁰³ For childcare in particular, the availability of facilities was a systematically low prior to the inflow of refugees, with Roma and rural areas particularly disadvantaged.³⁰⁴ Participants in the workshops raised this as a potential tension that could impact both Ukrainians and Romanians. They noted gaps in childcare provision for pre-school children as a key factor in limiting options for Ukrainian refugees seeking employment, particularly single-headed households.³⁰⁵ The need for childcare among Ukrainian refugees is acute, with the RRP plan emphasising this both as a need for children and as a prerequisite for engagement in the labour market.³⁰⁶ Other participants shared examples of over-subscribed kindergartens freeing up additional places for Ukrainian refugees, leading to a perspective that places were 'stolen' from Romanian children and generating concerns about staff-student ratio and the burdens on staff supporting children with additional needs, such as language

[come from and how to return them?](#) Accessed 28 March 2023; UNHCR. 2022. [Lives on Hold: Intentions and Perspectives of Refugees from Ukraine #2 \(September 2022\)](#). Accessed 25 March 2023.

²⁹⁵ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

²⁹⁶ European Commission. 2020. [Education and Training Monitor: Romania](#)

²⁹⁷ European Commission. 2020. [Education and Training Monitor: Romania](#)

²⁹⁸ Gyarakí, Réka. 2022. [Education challenges in Romania](#)

²⁹⁹ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁰⁰ Government of Romania. 2023. [Romania: Report on the national response to those displaced from Ukraine](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

³⁰¹ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter](#)

³⁰² Gromada, Anna, and Richardson, D. UNICEF 2021. [Where do rich countries stand on childcare?](#)

³⁰³ European Commission. 2020. [Education and Training Monitor: Romania](#)

³⁰⁴ European Commission. 2020. [Education and Training Monitor: Romania](#)

³⁰⁵ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁰⁶ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter](#)

support and trauma care.³⁰⁷ Workshop participants also raised the challenges associated with language barriers and the risk that teachers spending additional time explaining things to students who do not speak Romanian well could be perceived as a decline in the quality of education received by the class.³⁰⁸

Integration issues in schools and for children attending online schools. Ukrainian students face a range of challenges in attending Romanian schools. The RRP identified several barriers to education related to integration, notably pedagogical differences and high levels of psychosocial issues and trauma.³⁰⁹ Language and bureaucratic obstacles are other key barriers to school attendance; lack of school attendance may underpin further integration issues.³¹⁰

Participants in the research workshop talked about the psychological burden on children attending new schools or studying full-time online while dealing with the trauma of displacement, and how this limits opportunities for integration and building relationships. One participant said teenagers were particularly over-burdened between pursuing education, trying to support parents and families emotionally, and seeking friendships and social bonds in a new environment.³¹¹

Another participant added that the lack of certainty around length of stay in Romania comes at a formative moment in the education of teenagers, and many were unsure whether they should continue online studies in a Ukrainian school or join and integrate into a Romanian school.³¹² Integration and joint schooling systems have the potential to alleviate tensions, an opportunity which is not fully seized.

Uncertainty regarding length of stay in the host country for Ukrainian refugees leads to poor school attendance and high dropout rates. Understanding Ukrainian refugees' return intentions is complex, and uncertainty around their length of stay in Romania creates challenges for service access and integration. One research workshop participant said that the comparatively low number of students enrolled in Romanian public schools was in part a reflection of this uncertainty and refugees' hopes to return to Ukraine in the short or medium term.³¹³ Other reasons for low enrolment include language barriers³¹⁴ and the fact that Romanian education qualifications are not recognized in Ukraine.³¹⁵ Participants in the workshop also raised concerns about attendance in both Romanian and online Ukrainian schools, citing trauma, demotivation, and depression as factors that may drive overall poor attendance and potential school dropout rates.³¹⁶

4.6 Employment and income

High inflation pressures are acutely felt in the host and refugee communities. In January 2023, inflation in Romania was reported at 13.4 percent³¹⁷ EU estimates for inflation in 2023 stand at 9.7 percent, with a 2024

³⁰⁷ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁰⁸ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁰⁹ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter](#)

³¹⁰ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter](#); Mareci, Alina, et al. 2023. [A qualitative exploration of experiences of asylum seekers and people with refugee backgrounds in accessing the education system in Romania](#)

³¹¹ Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

³¹² Bucharest workshops, 15–16 February 2023.

³¹³ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³¹⁴ Save the Children Romania. 2022. [Save the Children Romania education survey](#)

³¹⁵ Edupedu. 2023. [Very few Ukrainian children go to Romanian schools](#)

³¹⁶ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³¹⁷ Statista 2023. [Harmonised index of consumer prices \(HICP\) inflation rate of European Union in January 2023 by country](#)

projection of 5.5 percent. While economic growth in Romania has been relatively strong over several years, the economy faced risks before the arrival of refugees, particularly with regard to the development of a supportive business environment.³¹⁸ The International Monetary Fund points out that Romania's government faces a structural disadvantage in managing inflation due to high fiscal deficits; the fund pointed specifically to the fact that the Russia-Ukraine conflict would cause challenges for the Romanian economy.³¹⁹ Workshop participants noted differing opinions within Romania regarding Ukrainian refugees' impact on the wider economy. One participant said that, while some local authorities saw Ukrainian refugees as a financial burden, others saw them as a resource to build the economy and fill labour gaps.³²⁰ High inflation and cost of living can generate resentment, with workshop participants noting that Ukrainian refugees who appear well off (through material items such as cars, jewellery, and clothes) can attract resentment, especially if the country's financial situation worsens.³²¹

The economic benefits that Ukrainians bring might be (1) longer-term; (2) not very visible to the population as a whole at this stage, particularly in the context of rapid and noticeable price increases in basic goods; and (3) more concentrated among the more affluent, such as business owners. The latter in particular might lead to tensions between Ukrainian refugees and those who stand to lose out from the evolving economic situation.

Rising inequalities: In 2015, the European Parliament reported that Romania had the worst income inequality within the EU.³²² While the income gap has reduced in recent years – alongside increases in GDP and reductions in absolute poverty levels³²³ – income disparity remains high.³²⁴ The inflow of Ukrainian refugees affects host country labour markets; in Romania, refugees are likely to increase the supply of labour by 1 percent to 1.5 percent.³²⁵ This increase may be associated with economic growth, but there is also a chance that it will exacerbate income inequality as Ukrainians are likely to join the labour market in low-skill areas, at least in the short term. There are documented challenges in the recognition of refugees' qualifications, and thus in their ability to engage in the labour market at their full potential. Therefore, the increase in supply of low-skilled labour may have a negative effect on wages in those jobs.

Participants in the research workshop disputed how much the narrative that 'poor Romanians should be helped before Ukrainians' resonated, but noted that poverty levels, income inequality, and a difficult macroeconomic climate³²⁶ mean that rising inequality remains a tension which risks undermining community cohesion efforts.³²⁷

Workshop participants also noted that specific areas (e.g., rural) and groups (e.g., lower-income) experience the effects of poverty and income inequality more acutely and might be more vulnerable to misinformation and disinformation attempts.³²⁸ One participant commented on the perception among some people that government support to Ukrainians was unconditional, which fuelled resentment.³²⁹ The 50/20 scheme was noted as a profitable scheme for wealthy Romanian landlords (particularly owners of multiple properties) who were

³¹⁸ OECD. 2022. [OECD Economic Surveys: Romania](#)

³¹⁹ International Monetary Fund. 2022. [Romania: Staff Concluding Statement of the 2022 Article IV Mission](#)

³²⁰ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³²¹ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³²² European Parliament. 2018. [Romania: the country with the highest income inequality in the European Union](#)

³²³ OECD. 2022. [OECD Economic surveys: Romania 2022](#)

³²⁴ International Monetary Fund. 2022. [Romania: selected issues](#)

³²⁵ OECD. 2022. [The potential contribution of Ukrainian refugees to the labour force in European host countries.](#)

³²⁶ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter](#)

³²⁷ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³²⁸ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³²⁹ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

incentivised to provide short-term housing to Ukrainian families instead of seeking to rent longer-term, particularly to tenants on lower incomes.³³⁰

‘While (relatively) wealthy Romanians benefited from 50/20 by receiving government subsidies and Ukrainians benefited from 50/20 by receiving free accommodation, the average low-middle income Romanian did not benefit and may in fact have been worse off due to rising rental market costs.’ – Workshop participant³³¹

Low Ukrainian engagement in the labour market and entrepreneurial activities: Workshop participants discussed limited engagement in the labour market as a prevalent discourse about Ukrainian refugees.³³² According to Labour Inspectorate data, just over 6,000 Ukrainian refugees were recorded as holding employment contracts with Romanian employers in February 2023.³³³ Reasons for not seeking employment are varied and complex, including practical barriers such as lack of language proficiency,³³⁴ information about available roles and preparation for interviews, and relevant employment experience; childcare issues;³³⁵ and psychological barriers such as dealing with the impacts of trauma and displacement.³³⁶ Participants in the research workshop linked low employment to negative discourses including the perception that Ukrainians don’t pay taxes and are content to live on state support.³³⁷ Low labour market participation, coupled with unconditional benefits, can generate resentment from the Romanian population.

Whether Ukrainians want to work generated heated discussions among workshop participants, with some stressing the difference between refugees *wanting to* and *being able to* work, particularly for mothers of multiple children accessing childcare and those who had been out of work for multiple years.³³⁸

Tensions over the distribution of scarce resources amongst disadvantaged Romanians and Ukrainians, and poverty in local populations: Price increases generally have a disproportionate effect on the poorest, and Romania had a poverty rate of approximately 20 percent in 2020.³³⁹ Tensions can arise around the ways in which limited government resources – such as social protection measures and cash transfers – are distributed. This is particularly likely to be the case in Romania, where high levels of income and housing inequality affect both rural areas and the Roma community.³⁴⁰ This tension is linked to the discourse that ‘Ukrainians have nice things and don’t need support’. A research workshop participant shared a story of a Ukrainian arriving in a BMW to collect donated goods, causing a Romanian volunteer to charge for them.³⁴¹ Participants in all country workshops conducted under this project noted the risks of discourses that ‘we should support our poor, not the Ukrainians’ gaining traction if the economic situation worsens.³⁴² However, participants added that this narrative had not

³³⁰ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023; Balkan Insight. 2023. [Romanians Hosting Ukrainian Refugees Complain of Delay in Payments](#)

³³¹ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³³² Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³³³ EconoMedia. 2023. [ANALYSIS A year of war in Ukraine: More than 6,000 Ukrainian citizens have been employed in Romania](#)

³³⁴ UNHCR. 2022. [Multi-Sector Needs Assessment Romania - Key preliminary findings, November 2022](#); UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter](#)

³³⁵ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³³⁶ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³³⁷ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³³⁸ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³³⁹ World Bank. 2020., [Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines \(% of population\), Romania](#)

³⁴⁰ OECD. 2022. [OECD Economic surveys: Romania 2022](#); International Monetary Fund. 2022. [Romania: selected issues](#); 2017. [Mind the Poorest: Social Housing Provision in Post-Crisis Romania](#)

³⁴¹ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁴² Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

gained significant traction in Romania as of February 2023, potentially due to fewer Ukrainian refugees per capita than in neighbouring countries.³⁴³

Reductions in financial assistance to refugees could lead to more experiencing poverty, and the state (or organisations) might need to step in to support the vulnerable: Research workshop participants expressed concern over uncertainty about the continuation, reduction, or discontinuation of the 50/20 programme and the potential impact on the financial security of Ukrainian refugees.³⁴⁴ A March 2023 draft ordinance from the Ministry of the Interior proposed changes to the scheme that could reduce payments to landlords,³⁴⁵ but other reports suggest that payments will continue for the most vulnerable refugees and, in some cases, be made directly to refugees.³⁴⁶ A reduction in financial assistance could contribute to increased need amongst refugees, particularly the more vulnerable who are struggling financially. Equally, financial assistance paid directly to refugees, if administered outside the national social protection structures, could lead to perceptions of inequality and preferential treatment over host communities and reduce landlords' willingness to participate in the scheme, but with potentially positive effects on inequalities to which current 50/20 scheme has contributed, as discussed above.

Ukrainians receive higher benefits than host communities, with poor communication about the amount and sources of support: In Romania, refugees receive benefits which are not means-tested, including housing support through the 50/20 scheme. This situation has the potential to generate resentment from the host population, particularly among the most disadvantaged, such as Roma and those on low incomes in rural areas.

Underemployment of refugees and difficulty gaining recognition of qualifications: Participants in the workshop discussed the skill levels required for jobs available to Ukrainian refugees. One noted that some Ukrainian qualifications are not properly recognised in Romania and that the majority of jobs offered or advertised to Ukrainians are minimum-wage low-skilled jobs which some do not want to take.³⁴⁷ Data from the OECD supports the fact that much of the employment taken up by Ukrainian refugees in Europe is in low-skilled sectors; indeed, many Ukrainians work at levels lower below their professional background and experience.³⁴⁸ However, workshop participants commented that even those who accepted jobs below their qualification level often saw those roles as temporary, while they look for other opportunities. This fuelled narratives around Ukrainian employees being unreliable.³⁴⁹ Underemployment of Ukrainians who might not be able to use their skills in the labour market can cause frustration and be a lost opportunity to showcase how much Ukrainian refugees can contribute to host societies.

Ukrainian refugees receive more support (such as financial support and labour market access) than other refugee groups, including TCNs from Ukraine: Refugees from other countries and, to a much lesser extent, TCNs who had been living in Ukraine, have been subject to different processes and procedures (see Section 2.2). The generous support for Ukrainian refugees – by the government, for example through the 50/20 housing scheme, as well as the general population – does not compare to other refugee inflows, such as in 2015. Workshop participants noted that this generosity has the capacity to cause discontent among different refugee

³⁴³ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁴⁴ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁴⁵ Ministry of the Interior. 2023. [Notice invitation \(according to Law 52/2003\)](#)

³⁴⁶ Visit Ukraine. 2023. [Romania changes the terms of support for Ukrainian refugees: what will change](#)

³⁴⁷ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁴⁸ OECD. 2023. [What we know about the skills and early labour market outcomes of refugees from Ukraine](#)

³⁴⁹ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

groups despite the fact that the overall number of other refugees in Romania is low (see Section 1.2).³⁵⁰ One participant suggested, 'documentation for Ukrainians can take a few hours; for the rest of the refugees it's two years'.³⁵¹ Discontent can also arise from earmarked funding. Some NGOs have noted that donors allocate funding specifically for the Ukrainian crisis, whereas previously they could support a broader range of needy populations.³⁵²

Uncertainty regarding length of stay in the host country for Ukrainian refugees, leading to low retention of jobs among refugees: With regard to the level of engagement in the labour market, participants in the research workshops linked uncertainty over length of stay to low job retention and employers' prejudice against hiring Ukrainian refugees.³⁵³

4.7 Community, social, and political life

Lack of integration of Ukrainian refugees into the host society: While Romania may have limited experience in refugee resettlement and integration, its 2020 national immigration strategy included integration objectives for migrants and refugees before the Ukraine crisis.³⁵⁴ During the research workshops, however, participants reflected on the lack of integration they perceived between Ukrainians and Romanians. This included the community and social levels as well as low school enrolment and labour market engagement.³⁵⁵ Another challenge related to efforts to integrate is the perceived temporary nature of Ukrainian refugees' stay in Romania. A February 2023 survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights found that 49 percent of Ukrainians surveyed in Romania wanted to return to Ukraine despite overall favourable responses on their experiences in Romania.³⁵⁶ One workshop participant commented that she had not thought initially about integration because her hope to return to Ukraine quickly was appearing increasingly unlikely.³⁵⁷

Workshop participants shared that, as Ukrainian refugees have been in Romania for more than a year now, they will be very much expected to integrate or migrate further.³⁵⁸ Considering Ukrainians' uncertainty of length of stay and difficulty learning Romanian, possibilities for tensions arise.

Language barriers and not learning the local language due to lack of opportunity or the difficulty of the language: The language barrier between Ukrainian and Romanian is a significant factor impeding integration. Romanian language proficiency among Ukrainians before arrival in Romania was low.³⁵⁹ While the government and others have supported language learning resources³⁶⁰ which Ukrainian refugees have taken up, language was still cited as a key barrier to many areas of life and service access for Ukrainians in Romania.³⁶¹ Some

³⁵⁰ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁵¹ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁵² Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁵³ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁵⁴ Government of Romania. 2021. [National Strategy on Immigration for the period 2021-2024](#)

³⁵⁵ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁵⁶ Romania Insider. 2023. [Ukrainians in Romania say they have been treated fairly, but they wish to go home](#) and European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2023. [Fleeing Ukraine: displaced people's experiences in the EU](#)

³⁵⁷ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁵⁸ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁵⁹ Save the Children Romania. 2022. [Save the Children Romania education survey](#)

³⁶⁰ Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai. 2022. [Romanian language – introductory courses for refugees from Ukraine – Erasmus section](#)

³⁶¹ UNHCR REACH. 2022. [Romania Protection Profiling October 2022](#)

participants in the workshop commented on a perception that Ukrainians did not want to learn Romanian, though significant challenges to learning a very different language impede proficiency.³⁶²

Differences between Ukrainians' experiences (including origins in Ukraine and pre- and post-war arrivals): Workshop participants noted discourses about Ukrainians from the western regions of Ukraine not being seen as genuine refugees, particularly by other Ukrainian refugees, and that this perception has spread to the Romanian population.³⁶³ As discussed in Chapter 3, the discourses suggest that Ukrainians had rented their flats in western Ukraine to internally displaced people from the east of the country and came to Romania to claim financial support 'on holiday'.³⁶⁴ This has the potential to generate resentment and tensions between communities.

Cultural differences and lack of understanding: Despite being neighbouring countries, the culture, history, and language of Romania and Ukraine are distinct; prior to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Romania, there was little knowledge of each other's culture or language.³⁶⁵ One Romanian citizen who rushed to the Romania-Ukraine border to help refugees as soon as he heard about the war said, 'I never even thought of crossing the border to Ukraine or Moldova before, because in my head these places are Russian ... But now I see these people arriving: This is not Russia'.³⁶⁶

Lack of understanding of Ukrainian trauma and its consequences: The WHO estimates that one in five people fleeing war will have a mental health condition within ten years, with one in 10 developing a severe condition such as post-traumatic stress disorder or psychosis.³⁶⁷ There are indications that Ukrainian refugees in Romania experience high levels of trauma that can affect their day-to-day lives.³⁶⁸ Lack of understanding of trauma can lead to friction between the local populations, which might perceive some types of behaviour as 'lazy' or 'ungrateful', while these might actually be due to strong trauma. Traumatized people, in turn, might perceive insistence on finding work immediately or participating in 'fun' community activities as irritating and diminishing their experience.

One workshop participant commented that they knew Ukrainian refugees who struggled to complete normal daily tasks and were unable to engage positively in Romanian society, as they were acutely aware of the suffering in Ukraine.³⁶⁹

Fear of insecurity and war; refugees seen as making the situation worse: Fear of insecurity and war in Romania has been noted to negatively influence people living in border areas at the start of the invasion, as they believed the war would spread more broadly in Europe or that nuclear weapons would be used.³⁷⁰ However, six months in, the fears of insecurity and war largely gave place to concerns of inflation across Europe,³⁷¹ including in Romania.³⁷² Concerns over potential escalation of hostilities by Russia and fear of

³⁶² Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁶³ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁶⁴ Bucharest research workshop 9th February 2023

³⁶⁵ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁶⁶ Campbell, Charlie. 2022. [Despite decades of tension, Romanians are embracing Ukrainian refugees](#). Accessed 3 April 2023.

³⁶⁷ ReliefWeb. 2022. [WHO promotes action on urgent mental health needs of Ukrainian refugees](#)

³⁶⁸ Care International. 2022. [Rapid Gender Assessment: Romania](#); World Vision International. 2022. [Warm welcomes, lurking tensions](#).

³⁶⁹ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁷⁰ Mărcău, Flavius Cristian; Peptan, C., Gorun, H. T., Baleanu, V. D., and Gheorman, V. 2022. [Analysis of the impact of the armed conflict in Ukraine on the population of Romania](#)

³⁷¹ European Parliament. 2022. [Public Opinion and the War in Ukraine](#). Accessed 3 April 2023.

³⁷² Pratama, Rafly Gilang. 2022. [Romanian consumers fear inflation the most, followed by the Ukraine war and medical service cost](#). Accessed 3 April 2023.

conflict can be used to for political purposes and to generate anti-refugee discourses. The narrative that Ukraine should concede to Russia's demands to achieve peace is particularly salient in Slovakia but is also pushed by disinformation actors in Romania.³⁷³ There is a risk that this could be a source of tension between Romania and Ukraine, if amplified.

Perception of poorer treatment of Romanian communities in Ukraine than Ukrainian communities in Romania: Approximately 150,000 people of Romanian origin and approximately 300,000 of Moldovan origin resident in Ukraine, primarily in the border areas.³⁷⁴ The treatment of the Romanian minority in Ukraine is a political issue, with Romanian President Klaus Iohannis reportedly having called for improvements in Ukraine's recognition of rights for the Romanian community.³⁷⁵ Participants in the research workshop raised this as an issue that has gained attention since February 2022 and risks reducing public support for Ukrainians in Romania.³⁷⁶

Locals' fatigue with supporting refugees: Romania has shown strong support to refugees from Ukraine over the past year. However, there are concerns about fatigue setting in across Europe as the war continues and the economic situation and energy crisis protract.³⁷⁷ Workshop participants suggested that greater integration is important to counter potential fatigue.³⁷⁸

Expectation of more gratitude from the refugees: As discussed in Chapter 3, tensions can arise over perceptions that Ukrainians are well-off and do not need support, and stories of rejected offers of help or jobs that an average Romanian would welcome. One participant said that there was a perception that Ukrainians do not appreciate the support they've been given and are seen by some to 'act like kings'.³⁷⁹ Workshop participants also added that Romania has little experience with refugee resettlement and integration; as a country with historically high poverty, Romanians may consider the support offered to Ukrainians sufficient or generous.³⁸⁰

Individual incidents that harm people (e.g., a car crash) might frame Ukrainians as a danger to the host society: Research workshop participants raised the risks that the media or populations could generalise individual incidents involving Ukrainians to portray all Ukrainians in a negative light.³⁸¹ One participant highlighted the risks around Ukrainians working in jobs where a workplace accident or health and safety issue could be a trigger for conflict (particularly in cases where a language barrier between employer and employee causes unclear understanding and liability around safety issues).³⁸²

Xenophobia and discrimination: While support for Ukrainian refugees has remained high in Romania, there are issues of xenophobia and discrimination.³⁸³ As noted in Chapter 2, the Roma community experience discrimination in Romania, which impacts their access to services such as healthcare,³⁸⁴ finding employment,

³⁷³ Metamorphosis Foundation. 2023. [Interview with Romanian anti-disinformation activist reveals disinformation campaigns often target refugees from Ukraine](#)

³⁷⁴ European Centre for Minority Issues. 2022. [Romanians and Moldovans in Ukraine and their kin state's engagement before and after the war](#)

³⁷⁵ Balkan Insight. 2023. [Romania president pushes Ukraine on minority rights](#)

³⁷⁶ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁷⁷ Council on Foreign Relations. 2023. [How bad is Ukraine's humanitarian crisis a year later?](#)

³⁷⁸ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁷⁹ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁸⁰ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁸¹ Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁸² Bucharest research workshop, 15–16 February 2023.

³⁸³ Refugees.ro. 2023. [Understanding the Current Situation of Refugees in Romania](#)

³⁸⁴ https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/180-ROMA-HC-EN.pdf

and accessing accommodation.³⁸⁵ This discrimination is likely to impact Roma refugees from Ukraine. Roma refugees have been treated differently at the border in some cases, with aggressive police behaviour reported.³⁸⁶ Non-Ukrainian refugees crossing from Ukraine have reportedly experienced discriminatory treatment on their journeys and while crossing the border from Ukraine.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ https://www.enar-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/22._romania.pdf

³⁸⁶ Harvard School of Public Health. [Calling out a double standard in treatment of refugees from Ukraine](#)

³⁸⁷ IOL. 2022. [African students cross into Romania despite allegations of racism at Ukrainian border](#)

Chapter 5. Programmatic approach recommendations

5.1 Overview

This report has focused on medium-term risks to community cohesion. While we present a range of overarching recommendations to facilitate the Ukrainian and host communities to get to know one another better and develop strong relationships and trust, other recommendations are more operational. Our research demonstrates that many concerns that host communities expressed – as well as incendiary and misleading narratives shared by actors with malicious intent as well as some segments of the population – are rooted in longstanding issues. These include strained social protection structures and challenges in securing affordable and quality housing – issues that have been highlighted following the arrival of Ukrainian refugees. However, the refugees' arrival could speed the resolution of some issues which have become even more visible, because in some cases different sources of funding might become available to address them. This could improve the situation for both Ukrainians and host communities.

The research team selected the potential approaches noted below based on desk-based research and a survey circulated to key experts. The survey focused on five key tensions in each country, the potential effectiveness of the proposed mitigation approaches, and lessons learnt from existing programmatic interventions in each country.

5.2 Cross-cutting programmatic approaches

Some best practice programmatic approaches can be integrated across programme interventions and funding streams to better understand and reduce potential tensions between Ukrainian refugees and host communities.

Conduct conflict and context analysis: A cornerstone of cohesive and conflict-sensitive programming is solid conflict and context analysis.³⁸⁸ To be effective, conflict and context analyses must include diverse points of view; including the views of women and marginalised or stigmatised groups. Analyses which could be done at various levels – intervention, project, or sector-wide – should outline current political, economic, and social factors, as well as historical contexts and conditions that may contribute to conflict. In Romania, some conflict and context analyses have already taken place, including those examining ways in which proximity to a military conflict has affected quality of life and background reports on economic, political, and governance mechanisms in the country.³⁸⁹ For Romania specifically, some factors to consider include (1) structural inequalities around housing and access to quality education; (2) the medium-term macroeconomic context, including volatility in housing prices and inflation rates; (3) analysis of who stands to gain or lose from various changes; and (4) government policies with regard to investment in different services.

³⁸⁸ Saferworld. n.d. [Conflict Analysis, Chapter 2](#). Accessed 28 March 2023; United Nations 2016. [UN Conflict Analysis Practice Note](#). Accessed 28 March 2023; World Bank. n.d. [Conflict Analysis](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁸⁹ Mărcău, Flavius Cristian, Peptan, C., Gorun, H. T., Baleanu, V. D., and Gheorman, V. 2022. [Analysis of the impact of the armed conflict in Ukraine on the population of Romania](#); BTI. 2022. [Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index \(BTI\) 2022: Romania Country Report](#)

Share positive stories through social media: In Romania, public trust in the media is weak, with only 20 percent of Romanians saying they have high or very high confidence in news outlets.³⁹⁰ In addition, resources available to counter misinformation are perceived to be low and/or underutilised, and coordination between relevant institutions is not systematised.³⁹¹ Structural measures and capacity to combat misinformation should be reinforced, and positive messaging should also involve low investment of cost and resources.

Social media is used as a tool to disseminate incendiary and misleading discourses about Ukrainian refugees (see Chapter 3).³⁹² This use of social media corresponds with wider literature showing that it can be an effective conduit for misinformation and disinformation.³⁹³ In part to counter this practice, sharing positive stories on social media would support the creation of a counter-movement to mobilise communities to come together.

There is evidence that counter-messaging can be effective, particularly when coupled with local in-person activities and activism.³⁹⁴ Dynamics around the sharing of stories, including which ones to share, by whom, and through what outlets, should be planned around the most effective ways to penetrate information bubbles. Findings from business research show that sharing positive stories can improve morale;³⁹⁵ there is also evidence that social cohesion, or ‘glue,’ can form around social media messages and stories.³⁹⁶ Positive stories and messages should be developed around Ukrainians’ contributions to the Romanian economy and society as well as and Romanians’ hospitality toward Ukrainians (that is, about both the refugee and host communities). Positive messages should draw on a strong context analysis.

Implement strategic communications to reach target audiences and penetrate information bubbles:

Tactics to counteract misleading and incendiary discourses include proactive efforts to ‘pre-bunk’ or increase society’s resilience to misleading content. These can include awareness-raising campaigns and network building.³⁹⁷ Reactive efforts to ‘de-bunk’ could include counter-narratives, crisis communications, and policy responses.³⁹⁸ These should be tailored to target specific audience groups and their interests, values, language, norms, and beliefs. While providing accurate information is important – for example, by engaging dedicated fact-checkers – disseminating facts is usually not sufficient to change attitudes and behaviours around sensitive issues.³⁹⁹ An Overseas Development Institute report on understanding public attitudes toward refugees and migrants suggests that communications should highlight that the situation is manageable and emphasise shared values.⁴⁰⁰ Thus fact-checking, while particularly important in the context of policy debates and strategy, should be accompanied by other strategies to resonate with diverse groups. These can include (1) framing messaging to align with the target audiences’ moral values, this has been proven to shift attitudes on highly sensitive and

³⁹⁰ Meta.mk. 2023. [Romanian anti-disinformation activist reveals: Misinformation campaigns often target refugees from Ukraine.](#)

³⁹¹ Global Focus. 2023. [Is Romania Ready to Combat Disinformation and Communicate Effectively? Preparedness to identify and counter information manipulation and malign influence in the context of the war on Ukraine](#)

³⁹² See also, as an example, Walter, Jan D. and Klug, T. DW. 2023. [Fact Check: How propaganda denigrates Ukrainian refugees.](#) Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁹³ Bunse, Simone. 2021. [Social media: A tool for peace or conflict?](#) Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁹⁴ Bunse, Simone. 2021. [Social media: A tool for peace or conflict?](#) Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁹⁵ Cecchi-Dimeglio, Paola. MIT Sloan Management Review. 2020. [Why sharing good news matters.](#) Accessed 26 March 2023.

³⁹⁶ Duffy, Andrew, and Ling, R. 2020. [The Gift of News: Phatic News Sharing on Social Media for Social Cohesion](#), Journalism Studies. Accessed 26 March 2023.

³⁹⁷ Government Communication Service. 2021. [Resist 2: Counter-disinformation toolkit.](#) Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁹⁸ Government Communication Service. 2021. [Resist 2: Counter-disinformation toolkit.](#) Accessed 28 March 2023.

³⁹⁹ Dempster, Helen, and Hargrave, K. Overseas Development Institute. 2017. [Understanding public attitudes towards refugees and migrants.](#)

⁴⁰⁰ Dempster, Helen, and Hargrave, K. Overseas Development Institute. 2017. [Understanding public attitudes towards refugees and migrants.](#)

often politicised topics;⁴⁰¹ (2) appealing to emotions, which are strong drivers of decisions and behaviours and which make content more likely to be accessed and remembered;⁴⁰² and (3) shifting social norms or using normative messaging regarding expectations of behaviour, or the frequency of a behaviour, to promote those behaviours.⁴⁰³

Research indicates that both misinformation and disinformation can be promoted through specific hubs – media outlets that both local and foreign actors use to influence public opinion.⁴⁰⁴ After information is disseminated, it can be taken up by individuals who do not actively question the information they receive, since there is a global bias toward believing that fake news is something that affects other people.⁴⁰⁵ Finally, it is crucial that the target audience consider the messenger of the communications credible, and as much care should be taken in selecting the messengers as the message.⁴⁰⁶

Organise activities that allow refugees and host populations to get to know each other: Due to daily pressures related to work, family life, and the broader challenges discussed in Section 4.7, Romanian and refugee communities might not engage socially. Some research workshop participants shared that they only realised after the workshops that they do not engage socially in significant ways with the other communities.⁴⁰⁷ All types of stakeholders could organise activities to bring the host and refugee communities together socially and build informal networks – governments, municipalities, NGOs, and citizens' groups. Such activities have been noted to reduce prejudice.⁴⁰⁸ Some efforts to engage refugee and host communities already take place in Romania, with the Council of Europe supporting human rights education for Ukrainian and Romanian youth.⁴⁰⁹ In the Czech Republic, a workshop participant shared that a community held film screenings with short 'chat to your neighbour' intervals designed to help attendees get to know each other, with the movie providing a basis for conversation.⁴¹⁰ In Slovakia, some NGOs noted that activities designed to bring together Ukrainian and host community youth together were poorly attended. Another NGO shared that it usually attracts equal numbers of local and refugee children, but it does not advertise the activities as 'come meet Ukrainians'. Instead, it focuses on games or activities that the children are interested in and advertise in different places to reach Ukrainian and Slovak youth separately, using posters in both languages.⁴¹¹

Offer additional free or low-cost after-school activities: Support for after-school activities – provided at no cost or highly subsidised – has multiple benefits. First, the activities can help to bridge the gap between the school day and the work day, allowing mothers to work without seeking child care or incurring additional costs. Second, they create opportunities for Ukrainian and Romanian students to meet, get to know each other, and start to engage with issues around integration. Third, after-school activities could include language classes, which would benefit Ukrainian students. Such activities can also facilitate organic language learning by engaging Ukrainian

⁴⁰¹ Feinberg, Matthew, and Willer, R. 2015. *From Gulf to Bridge: When Do Moral Arguments Facilitate Political Influence?* Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 41(12), 1665–1681.

⁴⁰² Brady, W. J., Gantman, A., and Van Bavel, J. 2020. *Attentional capture helps explain why moral and emotional content go viral.* Journal of Experimental Psychology 149, 746-756. 3.

⁴⁰³ Petit, Vincent, and Zalk, T. N. UNICEF and PENN SoNG 2019. *Everybody Wants to Belong: A Practical Guide to Tackling and Leveraging Social Norms in Behaviour Change Programming*

⁴⁰⁴ "Why Not" Citizens' Association. 2019. *Disinformation in the online sphere: The case of BiH.* Accessed 26 March 2023.

⁴⁰⁵ Ipsos. 2018. *Fake news, filter bubbles, post-truth and trust.* Accessed 26 March 2023.

⁴⁰⁶ RAN C&N Academy. 2019. *Effective Narratives: Updating the GAMMMA+ model.* 19 December 2019.

⁴⁰⁷ Warsaw research workshop, 9 February 2023,

⁴⁰⁸ Pettigrew Thomas F., and Tropp, L. R. *A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory.* Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁰⁹ Council of Europe. 2023. *Human rights education with young Ukrainian refugees and host communities in Romania*

⁴¹⁰ Prague research workshop, 1–2 February 2023.

⁴¹¹ Bratislava research workshop, 7–8 March 2023.

and Romanian children in joint activities. Fourth, after-school activities could be beneficial for young people's mental and physical health.⁴¹² Participants in project workshops in all five countries noted that teenagers are particularly vulnerable to social isolation and poor mental health; some noted risks related to youth engaging in harmful behaviours if they do not have hobbies or take part in other activities.

Train search engines and generative artificial intelligence to recognise bias and potential abuse: Digital advances, including social media, enable messages and disinformation to spread increasingly rapidly, facilitating the creation of echo chambers that can reinforce confirmation bias.⁴¹³ Research shows that false information can spread more quickly than facts, suggesting that this might be due to the degree of novelty and emotional reactions the false stories can evoke.⁴¹⁴ On the other hand, some technologies, such as ChatGPT, have safeguards to attempt to prevent the spread of falsehoods about refugees. When asked to generate negative headlines about Ukrainian refugees, ChatGPT refused to do so and instead recommended ways to approach news stories about refugees 'with empathy and sensitivity, and to give a voice to those who are often marginalized and underrepresented in the media'.⁴¹⁵ ChatGPT also appeared to have mechanisms to recognise false assumptions, as illustrated below. Similar notices could be used by search engines, for example, to minimise the spread of falsehoods about refugees.

Request: Why do Ukrainian refugees in Romania not want to integrate?

GPT-3: It's important to avoid making generalizations about any group of people, including Ukrainian refugees in Romania. Integration can be a complex process that can be influenced by a variety of factors, including language barriers, cultural differences, trauma, legal and bureaucratic hurdles, and discrimination.

Many refugees may want to integrate but face significant obstacles, such as a lack of job opportunities or discrimination based on their refugee status. Others may prefer to maintain their cultural and linguistic identity, which can be an important source of comfort and connection in a new and unfamiliar environment.

It's also worth noting that not all refugees have the same experiences or motivations, and it's important to approach the issue with sensitivity and an open mind. Instead of making assumptions, it's essential to listen to refugees' own perspectives and experiences and work together to find ways to support their integration and well-being.

⁴¹² Nabors et al. 2022. [A University and Community-Based Partnership: After-School Mentoring Activities to Support Positive Mental Health for Children Who Are Refugees](#)

⁴¹³ OECD. 2022. [Disinformation and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine: Threats and governance responses](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴¹⁴ Vosoughi, Soroush, Roy, D., and Aral, S. Science. 2018. [The spread of true and false news online](#). Accessed 31 March 2023.

⁴¹⁵ General guidelines for how to do so were also provided:

'1. Avoid sensationalism: Avoid using inflammatory language or sensational headlines that can stigmatize refugees or perpetuate stereotypes.

'2. Use person-centered language: When reporting on refugees, refer to them as individuals rather than as a monolithic group. Use person-centered language that acknowledges their humanity and individual experiences.

'3. Provide context: Provide context for why refugees are fleeing their home countries and the challenges they face in their host countries. This can help readers understand the complexities of the issue and challenge any misconceptions or misperceptions.

'4. Interview refugees and stakeholders: Seek out perspectives from refugees themselves as well as experts and stakeholders in the field. This can help humanize the issue and provide more nuanced and accurate reporting.

'5. Highlight stories of resilience and hope: Highlight stories of refugees who have overcome challenges and made positive contributions to their host communities. This can help counter negative stereotypes and give a more balanced perspective of refugees' experiences.

'Remember that every person has inherent dignity and deserves to be treated with respect and compassion.'

5.3 Legal status, welfare, and benefits

Any changes to (re)registration processes and procedures should be simple and communicated clearly to refugees via a range of media. Digital literacy support could help vulnerable groups understand and use online services. Processes and procedures that streamline the complexity and length of time required for Ukrainians to prove they qualify under the refugee definition could be extended to other refugees fleeing war and persecution who are eligible under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Implement phasing programmes (focusing on the most vulnerable): Phasing programmes involves adapting programmes to target support to more vulnerable people over time after a conflict or natural disaster. Phasing is an underlying principle of ‘nexus’ programming that brings together humanitarian, development, and peace actors and links relief, rehabilitation, and development programming. Shortcuts associated with quick assistance – notably status-based targeting with little analysis of needs (for example, providing the same assistance to all people granted TP, as under the 50/20 programme in the first year of the 2022 escalation of the war) – are likely to be used during the initial phases of a crisis. However, it is possible to change the structure of support over time to ensure equity and access. The Romanian government announced changes to accommodation and financial support provision on 29 March 2023.⁴¹⁶

A phasing approach gives more support to those who are most vulnerable and need additional assistance (e.g., disabled and unemployed people), in line with national benefit systems. Phasing programmes helps manage potential tensions associated with community resentment of refugees receiving more support than poorer host populations, and high spending rates.⁴¹⁷ It helps demonstrate that refugees who receive benefits are in need, and that determinations of their needs are in line with citizens’ eligibility for benefits. In Romania, a country with high income inequality and where concerns have been expressed about the degree to which Ukrainians are in need, phasing programmes and adopting needs-based targeting criteria, while still supporting more vulnerable populations, is likely to be effective in reducing tensions. This could be the case for the 50/20 programme⁴¹⁸ which, a year after the Russian invasion, was offered to all Ukrainians regardless of their income levels.

Link humanitarian cash to social protection: Concerns about inequity between Ukrainians and host country citizens can be mitigated in part by efforts to link the humanitarian system to the national government benefits system.⁴¹⁹ A range of tools was developed to do just this in response to COVID-19.⁴²⁰ One well-documented key weakness in linking humanitarian cash and social protection, however, is coordination.⁴²¹ In all host countries analysed for this study, contributory benefit schemes are in place for both healthcare and housing. Channelling humanitarian support through these systems (expanding them horizontally to include both host country citizens and Ukrainian refugees) could help to alleviate concerns about inequality, as all individuals will be subject to the same type of means testing and receive benefits through the same systems. Implementing this recommendation will require humanitarian actors and national governments to develop streamlined systems and for humanitarian

⁴¹⁶ Visit Ukraine. 2023. [Romania changes the terms of financial support for Ukrainian refugees: what will change](#). Accessed 3 April 2023.

⁴¹⁷ Analysed in more detail under Sections 3.2 and 4.6.

⁴¹⁸ Visit Ukraine. n.d. [The 50/20 program in Romania: what it is, requirements for Ukrainians and how to apply](#). Accessed 3 April 2023.

⁴¹⁹ CALP Network. 2020. [State of the World’s Cash 2020](#). Accessed 17 April 2023

⁴²⁰ SPACE. 2020. [Social Protection and Humanitarian Cash and Food Responses to COVID-19: Needs, Coverage, and Gaps](#). Accessed 17 April 2023.

⁴²¹ SPACE. 2020. [Social Protection and Humanitarian Cash and Food Responses to COVID-19: Needs, Coverage, and Gaps](#). Accessed 17 April 2023.

assistance to be delivered through existing government social protection systems to support egalitarian distribution.

Invest in inclusive beneficiary accountability and feedback mechanisms: Beneficiary accountability and feedback mechanisms developed and implemented by INGOs, the United Nations system, and other stakeholders should focus on inclusivity to ensure that complaints from the host community and refugees are registered, for instance within the education system. Such mechanisms could be linked with a wider effort to regularly monitor tensions at the community level.⁴²² There is a shortfall in use of accountability mechanisms in Romania, with roughly half of beneficiaries surveyed for an evaluation of the 50-20 programme unaware of how to report issues.⁴²³ Investing in improving accountability would be likely to serve a role in identifying and resolving potential issues.

5.4 Healthcare

Overarching recommendations for mitigating potential tensions related to healthcare revolve around addressing operational challenges of an overstretched healthcare system⁴²⁴ which predate the Ukrainian refugees' arrival in Romania. The inflow of Ukrainians increased pressure on the system. Longer-term recommendations include investing in a long-term strategy for the national health system, including expanding the provision of basic services and strategies for recruiting and retaining staff. A review of bureaucratic challenges and hurdles that Ukrainian refugees face in accessing healthcare could be useful to pinpoint and address bottlenecks (such as delays in doctors receiving payment from insurance companies for treating Ukrainian refugees). In the short term, this report makes the recommendations below.

Streamline staffing processes to involve skilled Ukrainians in the health sector: Programmes that identify Ukrainians with appropriate health sector qualifications and skills, support them with language or other training, and place them in local health systems could be beneficial. Such programmes would likely involve outreach to identify qualified Ukrainians, processes to speed recognition of skills and qualifications, tailored language training, and placement in national hospitals and clinics. In the Czech Republic, UNICEF conducts similar programming with the Institute for Post Graduate Medical Education in Prague and the Centre for Nursing and Other Healthcare Professionals in Brno to support Ukrainian healthcare professionals to obtain required accreditations.⁴²⁵

Increase the number of interpreters: Evidence shows that poor health outcomes, including low vaccination rates, are driven in part by a lack of interpreters in healthcare settings.⁴²⁶ Indeed, the presence of interpreters is a best practice for the provision of healthcare to refugees, supporting cultural sensitivity and helping to ensure that refugees understand both their health issues and the procedures and systems they engage with. Investment in interpreters could reduce the strain on doctors by making it easier for them to communicate with their patients. This is particularly important in Romania, given the linguistic challenges which Ukrainian refugees face.

⁴²² International Alert. 2020. Donbas: [Taking stock of Peacebuilding](#). Accessed 30 March 2023;

Safer World. 2019. [Dip Beyond Box Ticking](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁴²³ UNHCR. 2022. [Rapid Survey of the 50-20 Programme – UNHCR Romania Thematic Report](#).

⁴²⁴ Discussed in Section 4.3 of this report.

⁴²⁵ UNICEF. 2023. [UNICEF Refugee Response in the Czech Republic: Initial Results and Priorities](#). Accessed 10 March 2023.

⁴²⁶ Ganczak, Maria, et al. 2022. [Health System Barriers to Child Mandatory and Optional Vaccination among Ukrainian Migrants in Poland in the Context of MMR and HPV Vaccines-A Qualitative Study](#). International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.

5.5 Housing

At an overarching level, addressing operational challenges such as the lack of affordable housing, including social housing,⁴²⁷ by investing in new or existing infrastructure could help mitigate tensions related to housing and benefit both refugee and host communities. The Romanian government is making efforts to invest in housing and schemes to support communities hosting Ukrainian refugees, including the 50/20 programme.⁴²⁸ In the longer term, housing aid to Ukrainians should be harmonised with support to more vulnerable Romanian groups, and such equity should be communicated clearly. International actors might be able to support housing availability and system resilience by (1) providing funding to support coordination by national actors, (2) channelling housing and rent support through the government housing allowance and subsidies systems (i.e., adapting mechanisms that link humanitarian cash and social protection to the housing market), and (3) supporting and investing in new housing developments. All activities should take place in line with, and ideally directly through, current government mechanisms to enhance housing infrastructure and access to housing. In addition, this report specifically recommends the specific programmatic approaches discussed below.

Provide viable opportunities for people to live, work, and go to school outside of major cities: Choosing whether to live in larger or smaller cities or in rural areas often poses a dilemma for refugees. Larger cities usually have more employment opportunities and options for education, and they often provide greater proximity to healthcare facilities. Smaller cities have more affordable housing options. A workshop participant in Poland cited a pilot project offering relocation to smaller villages or towns, with housing and employment opportunities and funding to renovate old homes.⁴²⁹ This kind of scheme could be expanded across countries to ease housing pressures in cities. Good practice also exists around employers (including in the private sector) providing well-rounded support to refugees. For example, PepsiCo provided support to 900 Ukrainian employees and their families to relocate to Romania, arranged for the employees to continue working for the company after relocation, recruited other Ukrainian refugees, arranged housing, and established the PepsiCo learning centre – a Ukrainian school for refugee children, employing Ukrainian teachers.⁴³⁰ Such holistic multi-sectoral models that enable Ukrainians to participate meaningfully in work could be explored, and policies could help address the barriers that companies might face in moving operations from Ukraine to host countries.

Support social intermediaries in rental processes: A social rental agency model could be piloted. In this model, a non-profit intermediary would negotiate between property owners and people in need of housing.⁴³¹ The intermediary would guarantee rent payments and minimum tenancy standards to owners, who would discount rents and guarantee stable, affordable, and quality accommodation to tenants. The intermediary could help mitigate challenges and issues associated with discrimination against Ukrainian tenants and could support the management of concerns and issues related to those tenants' short-term housing needs. Habitat for Humanity founded the Social Rental Agency in Poland, which provides such housing and employment services.⁴³² The approach could be leveraged to support the provision of housing to refugee groups, particularly those who are more likely to experience discrimination and stigma, such as Roma. Social intermediaries can act as interlocutors

⁴²⁷ OECD. 2020. [Social housing: A key part of past and future housing policy](#) Employment, Labour and Social Affairs policy briefs. Accessed 26 March 2023.

⁴²⁸ UNHCR. 2022. [Operational Data Portal](#). Accessed 24 March 2023.

⁴²⁹ Warsaw research workshop, 9 February 2023.

⁴³⁰ PepsiCo. 2022. [The story behind PepsiCo's school for displaced Ukrainian children](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

⁴³¹ Habitat for Humanity. n.d. [Introducing Social Rental Agencies in Poland](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

⁴³² Habitat for Humanity. n.d. [Introducing Social Rental Agencies in Poland](#). Accessed 27 March 2023.

between Ukrainian tenants and landlords to mitigate stigma; they may also be able to act as guarantors to protect against risks associated with short-term tenancies.

5.6 Education

Education can be a source of tensions if places are scarce, particularly in kindergartens, and some families are turned away. On the other hand, joint classes for local and refugee children can help build relationships between different communities and therefore increase trust and cohesion. In Romania, language barriers and low Romanian school attendance by refugee children emerged as two issues with the greatest potential to result in tensions between the refugee and host communities. Bolstering access to kindergartens and early childhood education could also support parents to find jobs, work standard hours, and encourage contact between host communities and Ukrainian children and their parents. This would lay a foundation for longer-term positive perceptions. In the short term, this report recommends:

Provide language support for Ukrainian children: In Romania, language poses a major barrier to integration overall and to integration into education specifically.⁴³³ One EU-funded study found that 13 percent of children who stopped attending education programmes cited language as the primary reason for their decision.⁴³⁴ Language classes were the most significant need identified by Ukrainians looking to engage with the Romanian education system.⁴³⁵ It should be noted that language classes have not been identified as a key need for students enrolled in the Ukrainian online system, but the lack of language skills could create challenges with integration in the medium to long term.

Embed mental health support in the education system: Mental health issues are prevalent among Ukrainian refugees and likely to be undertreated. In one survey of refugees, 49 percent of women and 50 percent of men identified mental health as an area of their lives most affected by the conflict.⁴³⁶ One-quarter of respondents to one survey indicated that they could not easily access health services; the majority of issues concerned mental health.⁴³⁷ Mental health support has been noted to be insufficient, including at reception centres and transit points.⁴³⁸ Integrating more mental health services into the school system could assist children and identify parents who need support (and it could be possible to provide that support to parents at school). As the amount of time spent in displacement extends, and given that children's mental health situations are particularly fragile, embedding mental health support in schools is highly promising.

Train teachers and educational staff to better support Ukrainian students: Training on mitigating conflict, managing and supporting psychosocial issues, and tailoring pedagogical methods to account for second-language learners would be useful. There are some indications, primarily from a project conducted by International Alert in Lebanon focusing on Syrian refugees, that training social services workers (teachers, health workers, and others) can generate community cohesion benefits.⁴³⁹ Trainings included analysing the context with

⁴³³ Gherman, Marin. 2022. [Ukrainian refugees in Romania are afraid to return home, but it's hard for them to integrate because of the language barrier](#)

⁴³⁴ Pop, Matei. 2023. [Language named as major barrier for Ukrainian refugees continuing their education in host countries / Romanian is one of the least known languages for those arriving from Ukraine, shows survey in 10 European countries](#)

⁴³⁵ REACH 2022. [Romania: Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment 2022](#)

⁴³⁶ Care International. 2022. [Rapid Gender Analysis: Romania](#)

⁴³⁷ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter](#)

⁴³⁸ Care International. 2022. [Rapid Gender Analysis: Romania](#)

⁴³⁹ International Alert. 2020. [Model on integrating conflict sensitivity and social stability into services provision](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

social services workers, developing and implementing tailored capacity development programmes, accompanying service providers in their work, and raising awareness around the impacts of psychosocial issues and health requirements of refugees.⁴⁴⁰ The demonstrable results of this programme included shorter waiting times, more willingness amongst refugees to discuss issues and problems, and the return of host community members to service centres that they had left.⁴⁴¹ In Romania, where teachers receive low pay and have little institutional support, programmes should use a relatively light touch.

Provide spaces in schools, libraries, and community centres for refugee children to follow the Ukrainian online curriculum in a social setting: Continuing education in a Ukrainian online school is the preferred option for many children, although doing so carries risks of social isolation. Making spaces available in schools, libraries, or community centres could facilitate social interaction and social bonds among Ukrainian and local students. This approach could also enable parents to work more easily. Individual and pilot programmes of this sort exist, as do resources that could be easily adapted. For example, UNICEF, in collaboration with municipalities and local civil society organisations, opened six Spilno Hubs around Poland ‘to provide comprehensive and longer term support on integration, mental health, legal assistance, protection and educational and social activities to the most vulnerable refugee children and families who have fled war in Ukraine’ and ‘to provide a safe space to connect with the local community’.⁴⁴² UNICEF launched similar Blue Dot hubs in Romania.⁴⁴³

Provide Romanian language courses to adults: Lack of language skills has been identified as a barrier to employment and engagement in the labour market for Ukrainian refugees. It also affects engagement with day-to-day life in the host community.⁴⁴⁴ Several efforts are ongoing in Romania to support uptake of language, including with engagement from the private sector. For instance, a Romanian language learning platform, Mondly, makes courses available to Ukrainian refugees at no cost.⁴⁴⁵ Provision of language courses could be tailored to labour market and refugee-specific needs. For example, training provided in communal accommodation should focus on how to engage with daily life, and specific lessons should be provided for employment and skills.

5.7 Employment and income

This report identifies Romania’s high inflation rate, the perception that Ukrainians receive more support than vulnerable Romanians, and low Ukrainian refugee engagement in the labour market or entrepreneurial activities as three of the five issues that are most likely contribute to tensions between host communities and refugees in Romania. Inflation reached 13.4 percent in January 2023,⁴⁴⁶ driving rising prices and exacerbating income inequality. Concurrently, there is a perception among some segments of the Romanian population that Ukrainians’ challenges in finding employment stem from unwillingness rather than structural or real barriers, such as lack of language proficiency and access to childcare. Strategies to alleviate these tensions can be broad-ranging, including higher-level macroeconomic approaches, further engagement with multilateral organisations

⁴⁴⁰ International Alert. 2020. [Model on integrating conflict sensitivity and social stability into services provision](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁴¹ International Alert. 2020. [Model on integrating conflict sensitivity and social stability into services provision](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁴² UNICEF. 2023. [UNICEF launches six Spilno Hubs in five months to support Ukrainian refugees and integration of local communities](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁴³ UNICEF Romania. n.d. [Blue Dot – providing critical support to refugees from Ukraine](#). Accessed 3 April 2023.

⁴⁴⁴ UNHCR REACH. 2022. [Multi-sector needs assessment Romania December 2022](#); see Chapters 2 and 4 of this report for more detail.

⁴⁴⁵ Andriescu, Vlad. 2022. [Free language courses for all Ukrainian refugees from the Romanian startup Mondly](#)

⁴⁴⁶ Statista. 2023. [Harmonised index of consumer prices \(HICP\) inflation rate of European Union in January 2023 by country](#)

for macroeconomic support on imports and exports, approaches to ensure and communicate equity in the distribution of resources among the Ukrainian and local populations that are in need, and boosting labour market participation and entrepreneurship. Many cross-cutting approaches will be particularly relevant, particularly where tensions may stem from mistaking real barriers to work (e.g., lack of childcare) for lack of willingness. Shorter-term recommendations are detailed below.

National and regional policy to support Ukrainians to find decent employment in the short term could include those discussed below.

Establish employment creation programmes with flexible work structures: Several efforts have been made to establish employment creation programmes to support peacebuilding and conflict mitigation.⁴⁴⁷ Such programmes could address areas with labour shortfalls, such as healthcare and construction. These could be combined with language support, more accessible job advertisements, interview support, and a streamlined process to recognise qualifications. Flexible work structures could include work-from-home arrangements and flexible work hours so, for instance, mothers can pick up their children from school. It will be critical to tailor employment opportunities to the skills of the target populations.⁴⁴⁸ One programme in the Czech Republic, for example, integrated language courses into employment placement programmes.⁴⁴⁹ A good practice could also be taken from Turkey and Jordan, where employment creation programmes systematically included both host and refugee communities, with host community beneficiaries often representing 50 percent of those supported.⁴⁵⁰

Introduce and publicise incentives to start businesses: A more favourable environment to start businesses could reduce potential challenges associated with unemployment and contribute to economic growth. Literature on best practices for supporting small business start-ups suggests funding innovation labs rather than investing directly in small businesses.⁴⁵¹ Multilateral organisations' learnings recommend (1) profiling migrants' and refugees' skills, their complementary to host community skills, and associated entrepreneurship possibilities; (2) clarifying and simplifying the regulatory environment for refugee businesses, including by removing restrictions on ownership of property, access to finance, and the right to work; (3) strengthening synergies amongst education initiatives (e.g., vocational training) and entrepreneurship opportunities; and (4) developing digital 'bazaars' to support the export of products and exchange of information.⁴⁵² Business start-up programmes could also consider conflict sensitivity training for entrepreneurs and encouraging joint Romanian-Ukrainian initiatives.⁴⁵³

Streamline procedures to recognise qualifications: Ukrainians have skills that could be useful in the Romanian labour market; in particular, those with health qualifications would be greatly valued. Ukrainians with other high-level qualifications could contribute to the labour market, supporting both economic growth and the wellbeing of refugees. Many Ukrainians work in jobs below their qualification level, largely due to language and

⁴⁴⁷ Cramer, Christopher, Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁴⁸ International Alert. 2019. [Consolidating peace through inclusive access to livelihoods in Nepal](#). Accessed 28 March 2023; International Alert. n.d. [Practice note 2: Integrating conflict analysis into peace-conducive economic development programming](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁴⁹ Deutsche Welle. 2023. [Well integrated: Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic](#)

⁴⁵⁰ Meraki Labs. 2022. [Gender Analysis of Programming in Jordan for Caritas](#)

⁴⁵¹ For example, Newman, Arielle Badger, and Christensen, L. J. 2021. [Doing it Right, but Getting it Wrong](#); Bizri, Rima M. 2017. [Refugee Entrepreneurship: A Social Capital Perspective](#); Meister, Alexander Dominik, and Mauer, R. 2019. [Understanding refugee entrepreneurship incubation – an embeddedness perspective](#); and Fong, Rowena, et al. 2007. [Pathways to self-sufficiency: Successful entrepreneurship for refugees](#).

⁴⁵² European Commission. 2018. [Policy Guide on Entrepreneurship for Migrants and Refugees](#). Accessed 2 April 2023.

⁴⁵³ International Alert. 2020. [Business and Peace: It Takes Two to Tango](#); International Alert. 2019. [Economic Development and Peace Practice Note Series](#)

other barriers such as childcare arrangements and the complexities of recognising qualifications.⁴⁵⁴ Streamlined and fast-tracked procedures to enable refugees and other immigrants with in-demand skills to enter the host country labour market more quickly would be beneficial. Some programmes to support qualification recognition, with the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees, are being piloted in Romania.⁴⁵⁵

Engage with businesses and organisations to make the most of a more diverse workforce: For decades, business research has suggested that a diverse workforce boosts creativity and innovation, enhances problem-solving and understanding of consumers' diverse needs, leads to better decisions, and can have reputational benefits and reduce prejudice.⁴⁵⁶ These benefits can in turn boost the economy.⁴⁵⁷ The Ukrainian population – particularly professionals – can help catalyse such benefits for national businesses. To take full advantage of the benefits of a more diverse workforce or candidate pool, it would be useful to train businesses on working in diverse environments and identifying and addressing potential bias in recruitment processes. This might also include reducing challenges that skilled Ukrainians face in accessing employment, such as through language training and workplace activities that engage both Ukrainian and national staff.

At the community level, NGOs, private sector firms, and community groups could support interventions including the following:

Increase day care provision, possibly by employers: A high proportion of Ukrainian refugees are women, many of whom have child care responsibilities. In Romania, child care challenges have been identified as an impediment to women's participation in the labour market.⁴⁵⁸ Provision of day care could support refugees' engagement in the labour market. Possibilities for programmes include (1) subsidising child care for refugee children, (2) supporting the start-up of day care centres by Ukrainian refugees, which would support both businesses and day care needs, and (3) encouraging businesses to provide day care, together with conflict sensitivity training. Providing childcare services in these ways could also help single carers to overcome the challenge of learning Romanian, thereby expanding their access to the labour market.

Provide community facilitators and peer support groups for parents: It can be challenging for refugee parents arriving in a host country to engage in the labour market. Community facilitators could ease entry into the labour market, particularly for those who do not have established networks in the host country. One option would be for facilitators to meet with groups of refugees to discuss common issues and solutions or to provide coaching and mentorship. Parents' groups could discuss challenges associated with leaving children at home. Lessons could be learnt from current programmes. For example, the WHO has recruited and deployed cultural mediators who raise awareness of health systems amongst refugee communities.⁴⁵⁹ The mediators build on the recognised profession of cultural mediation, which has a base in Romania. The programme could offer lessons and possibilities to improve the effectiveness of other sectors, including employment.

⁴⁵⁴ See Section 4.6.

⁴⁵⁵ Council of Europe. 2022. [European Qualifications Passport for Refugees \(EQPR\) supports Ukrainian refugees' access to job market in Europe](#)

⁴⁵⁶ For example, Brodock, Kate, and Massam, G. 2016. [How and Why to Hire a Diverse Workforce: What You Need to Know](#); Rosenzweig, Philip. 1998. [Managing the New Global Workforce: Fostering Diversity, Forging Consistency](#); Ely, Robin J., and Thomas, D. A. 2020. [Getting Serious About Diversity: Enough Already with the Business Case](#); and Moon, Kuk-Kyong, and Christensen, R. K. 2020. [Realizing the performance benefits of workforce diversity in the US federal government: The moderating role of diversity climate](#)

⁴⁵⁷ For example, Brunow, Stephen, and Brenzel, H. 2012. [The effect of a culturally diverse labour supply on regional income in the EU](#); Shaban, Abdul, and Khan, S. 2022. [Cultural diversity, human capital, and regional economic growth in India](#).

⁴⁵⁸ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter](#)

⁴⁵⁹ WHO. 2023. [The crucial role of cultural mediators in Romania's Ukrainian refugee response](#).

Increase job advertising in Ukrainian or offer language and job counselling support programmes to enable refugees to respond to advertisements and interview for jobs: Support to Ukrainian refugees to access job advertisements could help them enter the labour market. However, advertising and recruitment should be tailored. Information should be available in both Ukrainian and Romanian, and websites should be widely promoted among Ukrainian refugee communities. Counselling support programmes for Ukrainians looking to respond to job advertisements could also be useful. Some platforms exist; for example, the government of Romania, with its partners, has provided information to more than 2,000 refugees about accessing the labour market in Romania and has been strengthening the administrative capacity of the public employment service.⁴⁶⁰ Linkages with employers are needed to ensure there are sufficient jobs to support long-term credibility. In one case, over 9,000 refugees registered on an online platform to seek work, but only 2,200 employers were on that platform.⁴⁶¹ Tailoring the platform and outreach to different segments (e.g., employers) could support the effectiveness of job advertisement programmes.⁴⁶² Programmes could also include coaching. One workshop participant cited a private sector company's hosting of workshops to help Ukrainian refugees find job opportunities (a need that REACH/UNHCR survey respondents noted as the top reason they were unemployed)⁴⁶³ and subsequently practice interviewing, which can be daunting in an unfamiliar language.⁴⁶⁴ Similar initiatives would be welcome to support Ukrainian refugees to enter the labour market.

Disseminate information about decent labour conditions, including agency contract risks: International Alert's studies on business and conflict in East Africa and Nepal⁴⁶⁵ point out the importance of appropriate use of outcome-based contracts⁴⁶⁶ to minimise exploitation and of analysing the effect of investments on different communities before making final business decisions. Pre-investment considerations (e.g., a factory is built) should include a conflict analysis that considers matters such as how the investment will affect host and refugee communities and identifying suppliers. In multiple country workshops, participants noted that Ukrainian refugees have been exposed to risks associated with output-based contracts, and that they felt pressured to accept these opportunities to avoid financial insecurity.⁴⁶⁷ Educating business leaders and refugees about decent labour conditions and contract types, risks, and mitigation could reduce vulnerabilities.

5.8 Community, social, and political life

The significant differences between the Romanian and Ukrainian languages pose a barrier to the communities in building relationships. Romania's diverse society is relatively fragmented along ethnic lines and other community

⁴⁶⁰ European Commission. 2023. [Romania: Report on the national response to those displaced from Ukraine](#). Accessed 3 April 2023.

⁴⁶¹ Romania Insider. 2023. [Jobs for Ukraine: 9,000 users active on recruitment platform launched in Romania for Ukrainian refugees](#)

⁴⁶² Romania Insider. 2023. [Jobs for Ukraine: 9,000 users active on recruitment platform launched in Romania for Ukrainian refugees](#)

⁴⁶³ UNHCR REACH. 2022. [Multi-sector needs assessment Romania December 2022](#)

⁴⁶⁴ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February, 2023. Lack of employment options or knowledge of employment options, as well as language barriers, were also identified as two of the top reasons for livelihoods challenges by UNHCR REACH survey respondents.

UNHCR REACH. 2022. [Multi-sector needs assessment Romania December 2022](#)

⁴⁶⁵ International Alert. 2020. [Business and peace Dossier: It takes two to tango](#), accessed 29 March 2023; International Alert. 2019. [Consolidating peace through inclusive access to livelihoods in Nepal](#). Accessed 28 March 2023; International Alert. 2022. [Mobilising the Private Sector for Peace: The role of private sector actors in peace and conflict dynamics in Kenya and Somalia A peace and conflict analysis](#). Accessed 29 March 2023; and International Alert. n.d. [Practice note 2: Integrating conflict analysis into peace-conducive economic development programming](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁶⁶ Where an individual is paid a certain amount for a job done but the wages per hour or day might be very low, often below minimum wage, if the contracts are drawn up in an exploitative manner and the refugees are not aware of how long a task is likely to take.

⁴⁶⁷ Chisinau research workshop, 1 March 2023; Prague research workshop, 1–2 February 2023; Bratislava workshop, 7–8 March 2023.

characteristics.⁴⁶⁸ This emerged strongly in research workshops where participants often held divergent views and often failed to reach consensus on any given issue or challenge.⁴⁶⁹ Other potential tensions in community, social, and political life are diverse (see Section 4.7). A range of tensions could scale up without appropriate mitigation measures and prevention measures in place. The approaches discussed below, in addition to the cross-cutting measures suggested earlier in this chapter, could be particularly useful.

Foster community dialogues: Community dialogue programming involves targeted efforts to bring segments of a community together to exchange information, experiences, and stories around specific topics.⁴⁷⁰ They may be organised around sources of tension, such as the distribution of scarce resources between disadvantaged Romanian populations and Ukrainian refugees, the refugee experience, and Ukrainian history and culture. The goal is to develop mutual understanding and mitigate emerging issues. Community dialogue programmes have been used across geographies including the Balkans, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia.⁴⁷¹ They can be cost-effective and relevant to local contexts. Benefits include the ability to scale up over time, leverage local resources, and put forward practical small-scale solutions. Challenges include the possibility of sabotage, lack of sustained funding, and reliance on volunteers.⁴⁷² The literature indicates a slight but positive relationship between community dialogues and mitigation of local tensions.⁴⁷³ Dialogues can be accompanied by community efforts to develop and engage in longer-term activities that encourage interaction between Ukrainians and Romanians.

Increase opportunities for Ukrainians and Romanians to meet and help each other learn languages: ‘Conversation cafes’ are amongst many approaches to support host communities and refugees to interact. Initiatives like this for Ukrainian and Romanian communities could support further engagement.

Address tensions through radio and TV programming: Radio and TV dramas have been used as peacebuilding tools over decades and in many contexts. In general, there is evidence that such dramas can affect attitudes and counteract negative messages,⁴⁷⁴ although they do not significantly change deep-seated beliefs. Challenges associated with setting up radio and TV drama programmes relate to the willingness and interests of media owners; lack of audiences for peace stories compared to those on violence and conflict; resource constraints; legal and regulatory restrictions; and lack of media outreach.⁴⁷⁵ Stabilisation funding might be used to overcome some of these hurdles. Radio and TV dramas and mass campaigns can be aired in collaboration with governments, academic institutions, and civil society. This joint engagement can focus on understanding the refugee experience and on intercultural understanding.

Work with the media to avoid spreading incendiary messages: Quality journalism that does not contribute to the spread of incendiary discourses should be supported, including by providing journalists evidence of what works and what does not to debunk misinformation, as this is not always obvious. For example, directly countering

⁴⁶⁸ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁴⁶⁹ Bucharest research workshop 15–16 February 2023.

⁴⁷⁰ Cramer, Christopher, Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁷¹ Bolton, Laura. 2020. [Lessons from conflict resolution interventions](#). Accessed 29 March 2023; Cramer, Cramer, C., Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁷² Bolton, Laura. 2020. [Lessons from conflict resolution interventions](#). Accessed 29 March 2023; Cramer, Christopher, Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁷³ Bolton, Laura. 2020. [Lessons from conflict resolution interventions](#). Accessed 29 March 2023; Cramer, Christopher, Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁷⁴ Cramer, Christopher, Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁴⁷⁵ Cramer, Christopher, Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. [Rapid Evidence Assessment for Conflict Prevention](#). Accessed 28 March 2023.

'fake news' by repeating might have adverse consequences because bringing it to the attention of audiences again can reinforce acceptance.⁴⁷⁶ Countering disinformation also requires strong collaboration amongst multiple actors and a variety of actions – mapping and tracking disinformation actors, providing intelligence reports, and conducting information literacy activities. It is possible to build or leverage coalitions among media, civil society, and government entities that allow access to disinformation tracking mechanisms and promote information sharing amongst different types of actors (mapping and analysis by civil society, academia, and government actors that influence policy).

Review school curricula, including in history and digital literacy: Various organisations have recognised the role of history education in helping students to better understand the past, approach information critically, and reduce risks of prejudice and discrimination.⁴⁷⁷ During the research workshops, participants discussed the need for longer-term engagement of young people in critical analysis, including through mainstream education curricula, to proactively prevent polarisation, misinformation, and prejudice.⁴⁷⁸ Apart from the curricula themselves, history and/or social sciences education can be used effectively to improve critical thinking and source analysis. A 2021 OECD publication that examined digital literacy amongst young people found that only 54 percent of students reported receiving training at school on identifying bias in information sources.⁴⁷⁹ However, the European Commission has recognised the role of education, particularly in source literacy, in combatting misinformation.⁴⁸⁰

Establish an infrastructure to support refugees' dialogue with local and national governments: A significant amount of literature discusses infrastructures for peace which can take place in a bottom-up fashion⁴⁸¹ or through top-down mechanisms. Such infrastructure could enable clearer and more open discussion amongst representatives of disadvantaged local groups, such as Roma, rural communities, and refugees. Top-down mechanisms are those in which formal structures for discussion and engagement are built between a host country government and a displaced community, often involving local and national institutions. These may be appropriate in the Romanian context, given the relatively grassroots engagement between disadvantaged groups.⁴⁸² The advantages of a top-down approach are that a government agency has a clear mandate for conflict resolution, accountability mechanisms can be established, and media coverage and strategic communications can take place around established peacebuilding efforts. The disadvantages include reliance on the willingness of the national government and the possibility that the process might become excessively bureaucratic.⁴⁸³

Table 5 lists incendiary and misleading discourses, underlying challenges, characteristics that can make Ukrainian refugees vulnerable, and tensions at each stage of their journey.

⁴⁷⁶ Pennycook, Gordon., Cannon, T. D., and Rand, D. G. 2018. [Prior exposure increases perceived accuracy of fake news](#). Journal of Experimental Psychology.

⁴⁷⁷ UNESCO. 2020. [A future we can all live with: how education can address and eradicate racism](#) and Brookings Institute. 2022. [Learning to live together: how education can help fight systemic racism](#)

⁴⁷⁸ Warsaw research workshop, 9 February 2023.

⁴⁷⁹ OECD. 2021. [Twenty-first century readers: developing literacy skills in a digital world](#)

⁴⁸⁰ European Commission. 2022. [Commission steps up action to tackle disinformation and promote digital literacy among young people](#)

⁴⁸¹ For example, through community dialogues, as discussed below.

⁴⁸² Soaita, Adriana Mihaela. 2020. [Housing stratification in Romania: mapping a decade of change](#); Turcu, Catalina. 2017. [Mind the Poorest: Social Housing Provision in Post-Crisis Romania](#)

⁴⁸³ Cramer, Christopher, Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. [Evidence Synthesis: What interventions have been effective in preventing or mitigating armed violence in developing and middle-income countries?](#) London: Department for International Development. Accessed 29 March 2023.

TABLE 5: Summary of key discourses, underlying challenges, characteristics that can make refugees vulnerable, and potential tensions

Journey stage	Discourses about Ukrainian refugees	Underlying challenges	Characteristics that can make Ukrainian refugees vulnerable at the stage of the journey	Potential tensions
Entry, legal status, and registration for services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refugees from western Ukraine/less affected regions are not genuine refugees; the war hasn't really affected them; they don't deserve support They abuse the benefits system (e.g., cross the border just to get the money) There is corruption within support for refugees. Ukrainians are supported more than other refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requirements for in-person interviews for TP can make access challenging for some Documentation requirements can create a double burden for TCNs and transgender people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People unable to attend in-person registration (either due to disability, living situation, income) People with incomplete or inaccurate documents are more vulnerable, and face barriers to accessing services People who do not speak Romanian Separated children who cross the border without a legal guardian; unaccompanied children who cross the border without any guardian TCNs have a double burden of proof Transgender people whose documents do not match their chosen name Adult males may not register in Romania for fear they will have to return to Ukraine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived abuse of the benefits system (e.g., cross the border just to get the money) Unknown, unclear, or bureaucratic procedures to register for TP and services; (perceived) lack of information on rights and obligations of people with TP status; Ukrainians made to feel unwelcome by new procedures
Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ukrainians are creating a burden on the healthcare system Local doctors don't want to treat Ukrainians They misuse services (make unnecessary ambulance calls, emergency room and doctors' visits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stretched healthcare system Language barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elderly people Women seeking sexual and reproductive healthcare People with chronic physical or mental health needs may face barriers to accessing medicine, particularly without Romanian health records People who do not speak Romanian or English People on lower incomes cannot afford medical treatment that is not publicly funded. People in different regions of Romania report different levels of access to healthcare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional pressures on the health system which already experiences challenges (including long waiting times) Pressures on social services Differences in how services are used, resulting in a perceived abuse of services (e.g., unnecessary ambulance calls and emergency room visits) Ukrainians face additional challenges and bureaucratic hurdles
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ukrainians are creating a burden on the housing system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic challenges contribute to a more expensive housing market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single people rely on one income, making housing less affordable, and face discrimination from landlords who can make more renting a single space to multiple people People who arrived with low savings often cannot afford the deposit required for private rental accommodation Residents in collective shelters are likely to be amongst the most vulnerable Parents of children with disabilities have specific housing needs, making accessing employment and housing challenging Ukrainian Roma face discrimination and prejudice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional pressures on housing and rising housing costs (also in a context of lack of social housing) Refugees, particularly Roma, are seen as undesirable tenants Uncertainty regarding length of stay for refugees in host country, leading to lack of commitment to contracts

<p>Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ukrainians are creating a burden on schools and kindergartens; taking locals' places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressures on Romania's education system predates displacement. • Language barriers for children, parents, and teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-school children whose parents may not be able to access limited kindergarten and pre-school spaces • Roma children are more likely to live below the poverty line and have lower school enrolment rates • Children who speak limited or no Romanian struggle to join Romanian public schools at the correct grade • Children of all ages attending online Ukrainian school face additional risks of isolation and failure to integrate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional pressures on schools and kindergartens • Integration issues in schools and a lack of specialised programmes, resulting in negative social experiences, e.g., bullying • Uncertainty regarding length of stay for refugees in host country, leading to poor school attendance
<p>Employment and income</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic challenges and energy crisis are fuelled by refugees ('they drive prices up') • Ukrainians don't want to pay taxes or want to work illegally • 'They don't want to work' • Ukrainians are rich, drive around in fancy cars, and spend their time in malls while locals are working; they don't need assistance • Refugees are supported more and get better benefits than the local population; help to refugees comes at the cost of local services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ukrainians arriving in Romania are disproportionately caregivers, parents, or older, with acute needs • Opportunities in Romania are disproportionately focussed in larger cities • Language barrier • Challenges accessing childcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents or guardians of multiple children face challenges in getting a job due to lack of childcare and are therefore at greater risk of no or low income work and/or poverty • People who were not economically active in Ukraine may be further from the labour market and face additional difficulties finding employment in a new country • People who speak neither Romanian nor English struggle to find work, particularly well-paid work • People living outside the major cities may have fewer employment opportunities overall and a higher portion of seasonal and/or low-paying jobs • Older people who are near retirement age, particularly those without Romanian language skills, may have fewer routes into the labour market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflation pressure; rising inequality • Low Ukrainian engagement in the labour market • Tensions over distribution of scarce resources between disadvantaged local population and Ukrainians • Reductions in financial assistance could lead to more refugees experiencing poverty; the state might need to intervene • Ukrainians receive higher benefits than host communities • Ukrainian refugees receive more support than other refugees • Uncertainty regarding length of stay; low retention of jobs
<p>Community, social, and political life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees are ungrateful, with high expectations • They are not traumatised; they live a nice, normal life • Refugees will nazify Romania • Ukrainians and Russians are basically the same • They treat the Romanian minority in Ukraine badly • Ukraine is not really a country • Refugees create diplomatic tensions with Russia; they endanger Romania by resisting • 'They're not our responsibility' • They are reckless drivers. • They are a crime risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language barriers contribute significantly to lack of integration • Lack of provision for mental health and psychosocial needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, particularly those enrolled in online school and without Romanian language skills, have more limited social connections • People suffering from trauma can struggle to participate in community life, particularly if unable to access mental health support and counselling • People separated from family and/or in Romania alone may face additional challenges including negative mental health, loneliness and isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative views of Ukrainians provoked by political actors • Language barriers or difficulties • Differences between Ukrainians' experiences • No understanding of trauma • Fear of insecurity and war' refugees seen as making the situation worse • Perception of poorer treatment of Romanians in Ukraine than Ukrainians in Romania • Local fatigue in supporting refugees • Expectation of more gratitude • Singular incidents (e.g. car crashes) frame Ukrainians as dangerous. • Xenophobia and discrimination

Annex 1. Acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym	Meaning
ChatGPT	Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DMDS	Disinformation, Misinformation, and Dangerous Speech
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRI	International Republican Institute
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Plus.
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
RRP	UNHCR Regional Refugee Response Plan
TCN	Third-Country National
TP	Temporary Protection
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD	United States Dollar
WHO	World Health Organization

Annex 2. Key statistics

The table below summarises Romania's key economic, political, and demographic factors and the numbers and characteristics of refugees hosted by Romania.

Type	Characteristic	Romania statistics
Economic factors	GDP/per capita purchasing power parity in USD for 2021 in thousands	36.1 ⁴⁸⁴
	Inflation (2022)	12% ⁴⁸⁵
	Official development assistance eligible?	No ⁴⁸⁶
	RRP funding requested for 2022 (USD million)	226.6 ⁴⁸⁷
	RRP funding requested for 2023 (USD million)	153.6 ⁴⁸⁸
Political factors	Political party in power	Coalition: Social Democratic Party, National Liberal Party, Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania ⁴⁸⁹
	Next presidential election	2024 ⁴⁹⁰
	Next parliamentary election	2024 ⁴⁹¹
	Next local election	2024 ⁴⁹²
Country demography	Total population (million)	19.02 ⁴⁹³
	Poverty rates	30.4% ⁴⁹⁴
	Unemployment rate in December 2022	5.6% ⁴⁹⁵
	Size of Russian minority or citizens living in country before 2022	23,487 (2011) ⁴⁹⁶
	Size of Ukrainian minority/Ukrainians living in country before 2022	50,920 (2011) ⁴⁹⁷
Number of refugees hosted ⁴⁹⁸	Refugees from Ukraine recorded in country as of March 2023 (UNHCR)	109,559 ⁴⁹⁹
	Ukrainian refugees hosted as a percentage of total population	4% ⁵⁰⁰
	Total refugees hosted in 2022	88,137 ⁵⁰¹
	Total refugees hosted in 2021	4,200 ⁵⁰²

⁴⁸⁴ The World Bank. 2021. [GDP per capita, PPP \(current international \\$\)](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁴⁸⁵ European Commission. 2023. [Economic Forecast for Romania](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁴⁸⁶ OECD. [DAC List of ODA Recipients | Effective for reporting on 2022 and 2023 flows](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁴⁸⁷ UNHCR. 2022. [Ukraine Situation: Recalibration - Regional Refugee Response Plan \(March - December 2022\)](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁴⁸⁸ UNHCR. 2023. [Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan \(January-December 2023\)](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁴⁸⁹ Camut, Nicolas. Politico. 2023. [Romania taps social democrat Marcel Ciolacu as new PM](#). Accessed 4 August 2023.

⁴⁹⁰ BISTRA ROUSHKOVA, VANYA NAKOVA, Bulgarian News Agency. 2022. [Romanians Already Mulling Names of Future President Two Years before Elections](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁴⁹¹ PolitPro. 2023. [Romania elections](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁴⁹² DBpedia 2023. [Next Romanian legislative election](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁴⁹³ The World Bank. [Population, total - European Union 2021](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁴⁹⁴ The World Bank. 2020. [Multidimensional poverty headcount ratio \(% of total population\) - European Union](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁴⁹⁵ Eurostat | Euroindicators. 2023. [December 2022 Euro area unemployment at 6.6%, EU at 6.1%](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁴⁹⁶ Minority Rights Group International, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples. 2020. [Minorities and indigenous peoples in Romania](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁴⁹⁷ Minority Rights Group International, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples. 2020. [Minorities and indigenous peoples in Romania](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁴⁹⁸ UNHCR. 2022. [Refugee Data Finder](#). Accessed 17 March 2023.

⁴⁹⁹ UNHCR. 2023. [Refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵⁰⁰ Economic Commission of Europe, Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management. 2022. [Emerging needs of the ECE region in the areas of housing, real estate, and urban development](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵⁰¹ UNHCR. 2022. [Refugee Data Finder](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵⁰² UNHCR. 2022. [Refugee Data Finder](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

	Total refugees hosted in 2020	3,581 ⁵⁰³
	Total refugees hosted in 2019	3,860 ⁵⁰⁴
Ukrainian refugee demographics	Percentage of women and children	53% women, 22% children (March 2023) ⁵⁰⁵
	Percentage of refugee households with at least one member with a disability	12% ⁵⁰⁶
	Percentage of refugee households with at least one elderly member	9% ⁵⁰⁷
Support received by hosts	Total € received by hosts (UNHCR data)	Providing housing: 50 lei (approximately €10,11 USD, or £9) per person per day; Food: 20 lei (approximately €4, 4.5 USD, or £4) per person per day ⁵⁰⁸
Ukrainian refugees' access to services	Employment rate	5,007 ⁵⁰⁹ (total Ukrainians employed)
	Number of total Ukrainian children in country enrolled in school	882 enrolled in schools ⁵¹⁰ 3,087 children registered as observers ⁵¹¹
Host population attitude polling	Percentage of host population who believe Russia is not responsible for starting the war (it's NATO/Ukraine)	Ukraine (4.5%), NATO (3.9%) ⁵¹² West provoked Russia (26%) ⁵¹³

⁵⁰³ UNHCR. 2022. [Refugee Data Finder](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵⁰⁴ UNHCR. 2022. [Refugee Data Finder](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵⁰⁵ UNHCR. 2023. Operational data portal, [Ukraine Refugee Situation, Romania 2023](#). Accessed 29 March 2023

⁵⁰⁶ UNHCR. 2023. [Regional Protection Profiling & Monitoring 2023](#). Accessed 29 March 2023

⁵⁰⁷ UNHCR. 2023. [Regional Protection Profiling & Monitoring 2023](#). Accessed 29 March 2023

⁵⁰⁸ UNHCR Operational data portal. [Refugee situations, Rapid Survey of the 50-20 Programme - UNHCR Romania Thematic Report](#). Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵⁰⁹ Government of Romania 2023. [Romania: Report on the national response to those displaced from Ukraine](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵¹⁰ Government of Romania 2023. [Romania: Report on the national response to those displaced from Ukraine](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵¹¹ Government of Romania 2023. [Romania: Report on the national response to those displaced from Ukraine](#). Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁵¹² Inscop.ro, INSCOP Research. [2 June 2022 – NINE'O'CLOCK: INSCOP poll: 71.2 pct of Romanians deem Russia responsible for war in Ukraine](#) 2022. Accessed 29 March 2023.

⁵¹³ GLOBSEC TRENDS. 2022. [CEE amid the war in Ukraine](#). Accessed 29 March 2023

Annex 3. Statistics, surveys, and research reports

The table below lists sources for up-to-date statistics and for deeper dives into specific subject matter areas.

Subject area	Source	Type ⁵¹⁴	Language	Notes
Statistics				
Number of Ukrainian refugees	UNHCR. 2023. Operational Data Portal	MLR	ENG	
Demographics of Ukrainians under TP	UNHCR. 2023. Operational Data Portal	MLR	ENG	
	UNHCR. 2023. Overview of Temporary Protection Directive – Romania	MLR	ENG	
Support for Ukrainians under TP	European Commission 2022. Temporary Protection	MLR	ENG	Documentation outlining regulation and application of the temporary protection directive.
	European Union Agency for Asylum. 2022. Information on temporary protection in Romania	MLR	ENG	
	Government of Romania. 2023. Romania: Report on the national response to those displaced from Ukraine	NG	ENG/RO	
Access to social services	Help to Help Ukraine 2023. Access to healthcare for Ukrainian refugees in Romania	NGO	ENG	Documentation presents key data on refugees, such as demographics, people who received TP; explains the achievements and impact of each refugee sector
	UNHCR. February 2023. Regional Refugee Response in the Ukraine situation, Romania	MLR	ENG	
	Council of Europe. 2022. European Qualifications Passport for Refugees supports Ukrainian refugees' access to job market in Europe.	MLR	ENG	
Accommodation for Ukrainians under TP	UNHCR. 2023. Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan (January-December 2023): Romania Chapter [EN/RO]	MLR	ENG	2023 plan for accommodation of Ukrainian refugees in Romania
	UNHCR. 2023. UNHCR Romania: Ukraine Refugee Situation Update, Update #40, 31 March 2023	MLR	ENG	
	OECD. 2022. Housing support for Ukrainian refugees in receiving countries	MLR	ENG	

⁵¹⁴ Abbreviations: AR = Academic research; ENG = English; MLR = Multilateral report; MR = Media report; media; NG = National government; NGO = NGO report; ROM = Romanian

Subject area	Source	Type ⁵¹⁴	Language	Notes
Public attitude polling	European Parliament. 2023. Public opinion on the war in Ukraine	MLR	ENG	Shows a variety of studies and polls on how citizens view Russia's conflict with Ukraine and its consequences in EU nations
Donor support	UNHCR. 2023. Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan: Romania Chapter .	MLR	ENG	Documentation focussed on issues that children who must study outside of their home nation experience, with solutions
	UNICEF. UNICEF's work in Romania	MLR	ENG/RO	
	Kafembe, Innocent. UNICEF. 2022. Using innovation in Romania to get Ukrainian children learning again	MLR	ENG	2022 deeper-dive article into Ukrainian children's experience in Romania
	Government of Romania. 2023. Romania's response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis – monthly snapshot February 2023	NG	RO	
Deeper dives				
Ukrainian refugees' needs; analyses of vulnerabilities	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2023, displaced People's Experiences in the EU, Ukrainian Survey 2022	MLR	ENG	
	UNHCR. 2022. Lives on Hold: Intentions and Perspectives of Refugees from Ukraine #2 (September 2022)	MLR	ENG	Investigates variables that influence Ukrainians' choices and gives insights into their socioeconomic characteristics
	WHO. 2023. Understanding the obstacles faced by Ukrainian refugees in Romania	MLR	ENG	
	International Organisation for Migration. 2022. Ukraine response – Romania evolution of needs report	MLR	ENG	Shares insights on humanitarian assistance and on education, labour market, housing, and healthcare sectors in Romania
Examples of discrimination	CNN. 2022. "You are not a refugee". Roma refugees fleeing war in Ukraine say they face discrimination and prejudice	MLR	ENG	
	Housing Rights Watch. 2021. Housing rights violations against a Roma community	NGO	ENG	
Pressures on social services	Economist Intelligence Unit. 2021. Romania's underfunded and beleaguered healthcare system	MR	ENG	

Subject area	Source	Type ⁵¹⁴	Language	Notes
	European Commission. 2020. Education and Training Monitor: Romania	MLR	ENG	Describes the education situation in Romania, its history, changes implemented in recent years, and what modernised education entails
	International Monetary Fund. 2022. Romania: selected issues	MLR	ENG	Based on statistics, the publication outlines many elements of Romania and suggests issues within each sector
Public attitudes	British Council. 2018. Foundation Institute of Public Affairs. The Wages of Fear Attitudes Towards Refugees and Migrants In Romania	NGO	ENG	
	GLOBSEC. 2022. Trends 2022 Romania	NGO	ENG	
	GLOBSEC. 2020. Perceptions of democracy and conspiracies in Romania	NGO	ENG	
Tensions between host and refugee communities	European Parliament. 2018. Romania: the country with the highest income inequality in the European Union	MLR	ENG	
	Balkan Insight. 2023. Romanians Hosting Ukrainian Refugees Complain of Delay in Payments	MR	ENG	
Disinformation discourses	GLOBSEC 2021. Anti-Western Narratives in Romania	NGO	ENG	
	Ukrainian Refugees: Situation in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania	NGO	ENG	
	Walter, Jan D. and Klug, T. DW. 2023. Fact Check: How propaganda denigrates Ukrainian refugees	AR	ENG	Cites examples of fake news and uses them to show how to check the sources and truthfulness of various types of information
Good practice examples	Bunse, Simone. 2021. Social media: A tool for peace or conflict?	NGO/AR	ENG	Explains the potential of social media and how to use it to better comprehend conflict dynamics and fight extremism
	OSCE. Addressing Anti-Semitism, Intolerance and Discrimination through Education: Workshop for Policymakers, Teacher Trainers and Educators in Romania	MLR	ENG	
	Cramer, Christopher, Goodhand, J., and Morris, R. 2016. Evidence Synthesis: What interventions have been effective in preventing or mitigating armed violence in developing and middle-income countries?	NGO/AR	ENG	

Subject area	Source	Type ⁵¹⁴	Language	Notes
	Ukraine Monitor. n.d. "Ukrainianization" in pro-Russian propaganda in Romania, Poland, Serbia and Hungary	MLR	ENG	Disseminates information about Ukraine and describes how it is used by ultra-nationalist and radical groups to promote objectives compatible with Russian interests
	Government Communication Service. 2021. Resist 2: Counter-disinformation toolkit	NG	ENG	Addresses the topic of disinformation and how to recognise it, address it and prevent its spread
	Duffy, Andrew, and Ling, R. Journalism Studies. 2020. The Gift of News: Phatic News Sharing on Social Media for Social Cohesion	AR	ENG	Describes how social media works in the context of social cohesion
	ExpertForum.Ro. 3 March 2023. Monitorizare online august – noiembrie – Războiul din Ucraina,	NGO	RO	



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