

**FROM TEMPORARY SHELTER TO PROSPECTS OF
INTEGRATION. THE POLICY OF THE EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH A.C. IN ROMANIA REGARDING
REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE.
GOALS, LIMITS, AND CHALLENGES**

Abstract:	<p><i>Romania, as a neighboring country, has also been affected by the refugee crisis since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine. Whether as a destination or a transit route to other countries, in the last five months Romania has been a short, mid-, or long-term haven for many Ukrainian refugees. The government's measures to support refugees – ranging from money for food and shelter to ensuring access to the Romanian labor market and education system - have often been ambiguous and incomprehensible. But these were completed by the massive mobilization of non-profit organizations, churches, and the population. Starting from the month of March 2022 until today, several hundred refugees have found shelter in the homes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church A.C. in Romania.</i></p> <p><i>The aim of the present paper is 1) to analyze the measures implemented by Evangelical Lutheran Church A.C. in Romania to provide a medium or long-term rapid response to the needs of Ukrainian refugees: accommodation, food, transport, assistance with funds, collection of food and goods, medical, psychological, or spiritual care; 2) to identify the limits, challenges, and the risks of working with refugees 3) to outline on the analyzed data the main lines of development of a church strategy regarding refugees, to what extent they can be integrated, given that we are talking about migrants who live mostly in transit, traumatized by the losses and destructions caused by the war, in the hope of a return as soon as possible.</i></p> <p><i>From a methodological point of view, the study is a qualitative one, the research methods used are participatory observation in the locations where the refugees are accommodated, biographical interview with the refugees, and interview with a group of experts</i></p>
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Introduction

Migration is a constantly evolving process that plays a significant role in the development of societies. This phenomenon has a global dimension and political, economic, and social implications. Today, when we put the two terms - migration and Romania - in context, we are thinking of Romania as a country of emigration. The phenomenon of migration of Romanians from their country acquired mass dimensions after 2002¹. Romania remains a country of emigration, with the phenomenon of emigration being the second main cause of the country's population decline. The balance of international migration in Romania in 2021 was negative, the number of emigrants exceeded the number of immigrants by just over 16,000 people².

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a war of aggression against Ukraine in violation of international law. The destruction and experiences of violence have had a profound impact on the people affected and have permanently changed the conditions of social coexistence in Ukraine³. But the effects of the Russian-Ukrainian war also resonate strongly with neighboring countries, all of Europe, and the world. This is the largest refugee crisis Europe has faced since World War II. Since the beginning of the conflict, the number of people who have crossed the border from Ukraine to Romania until now (September 2022) reaches over 1,246,945. Out of these, 80,498 are individually registered refugees⁴. The effects of the war in Ukraine are complex and stretch over the long term. According to unofficial estimates by aid organizations, 90 percent of the refugees have so far

¹ Remus Gabriel Anghel, *Note despre consecințe ale migrației din România*, <http://migrationcenter.ro/wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Note-despre-consecin%C5%A3e-ale-migra%C5%A3iei-din-Rom%C3%A2nia.pdf>, (12.09. 2022); I. Horvath, R.G. Anghel, *Migration, and its Consequences for Romania*, in "Südosteuropa", Vol. 57, No. 4, 2009, pp. 386-403

² Institutul național de statistică (INS), *Press release*, 210/30.08.2022, https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/poprez_ian2022r_0.pdf, (30.09.2022)

³ Stephan Hensell, Martin Kahl, Wolfgang Schreiber, *Transformative Effekte des Ukraine-Krieges*, in "Soziopolis: Gesellschaft beobachten", GESIS, 2022, p.1

⁴ *Estimations of the number of Ukrainian refugees after the mass migration to the neighboring countries since February until September 2022, Status: September 13, 2022*, <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/1293861/umfrage/anzahl-der-kriegsfluechtlinge-aus-der-ukraine-nach-aufnahmeland/>, (22.09.2022)

been women and children. Over time, even more, vulnerable people will seek protection – such as elderly people or unaccompanied minors – or people injured and traumatized by the brutal Russian warfare and increasing destruction.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church A.C. in Romania (ECR), as a humanitarian, independent, non-profit, non-political institution, has been involved in the defense, support, and promotion of basic human rights - according to its possibilities and capacities - since the beginning of the Ukraine war crisis in spring 2022. The Church, as an institution for people, has seen it as a necessity to contribute, through its programs and activities, to the prevention and alleviation of suffering in all forms, and to the protection of the lives of people in vulnerable situations.

Its experience in refugee work was limited to organizing workshops and events and building and coordinating a network that would sensitize society and mobilize internal actors (church representatives, leaders or employees, aid organizations, and NGOs) for the refugee problem. Of course, the refugee situation in Romania at that time did not have the scale it has now. There were refugee centers in Bucharest and Timisoara, as well as some regional offices, coordinated by AIDRom, for the support of refugees.

Thanks to its own financial and logistical commitment and the support of its internal (Romanian state, association, company, private individuals) and external partners (Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Lutheran World Federation, Hope for Eastern Europe, Diakonie Württemberg, Association of Transylvanian Saxons, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Missionswerk Berlin, Alliance of Transylvanian Saxons in Cleveland, etc.), the ECR has implemented concrete, viable and sustainable projects. Projects such as "Emergency Aid Ukraine. Support of refugee work in ECR", co-financed by Hoffnung für Osteuropa Diakonie Württemberg, the two projects "Nothilfe Ukraine. Evangelical "Elimheim". On the run and in anticipation of return" and "Emergency aid Ukraine. Accommodation of refugees from Ukraine in institutions of the Evangelical Church A.B. in Romania", as well as the project "A new home – in dignity and with joy" co-financed by the Lutheran World Federation and ELCA, with a total budget of over 1.5 million euros (out of which more than 400,000 euros are own contribution) have been created to support Ukraine refugees, whether through aid (food, clothing, shoes, medicines, hygiene items, etc.), transporting them over the border or organizing transit to other destination countries in Western Europe, or offering a (temporary) home and supportive social environment.

All these measures that ECR implemented in the long term were not an easy thing, as the economic and social conditions in Romania - as well as in other European countries - are not the best: rising inflation, a major economic crisis, and the inevitable entry into recession. While at the beginning of the conflict there was a show of self-sacrificing hospitality, courageous love, and unwavering commitment to the displaced, there is a slight dilution of the sense of solidarity towards Ukrainian refugees at the European level, but also in Romania, against the background of a burden that costs many resources.

This study aims to capture the defining elements of this strategy of the ECR in its work with refugees. A small church, a church in the diaspora using German as the official language in a country with another national language, and as an Evangelical Lutheran Church in a non-Lutheran environment¹, it faces major challenges related to its existence, such as low membership² or preservation of church buildings and fortified churches³. The total size of this group can be estimated at about 250,000, with over 200,000 living in the Federal Republic of Germany, and another 30,000 in Austria and overseas (Canada and the United States). Their fate is part of the great European history of the 20th century⁴ and it is also determined by the phenomenon of migration.

From March to September 2022, hundreds of refugees (especially families with school and small children) have been accommodated in church homes and parsonages as well as other apartments of ECR. Besides accommodation and daily meals, they also receive medical, psychological, and spiritual care and various other forms of personal assistance. The refugees hosted in the ECR rooms are individuals, families, extended families, and heterogeneous groups.

The data of the present research has been obtained through qualitative methods, by observing the refugees, by interviewing them, the expert group, the team for coordination of work with refugees, volunteers, but also through the content analysis of documents of ECR relevant to the topic of the study (circulars, project applications and reports from the project managers of the superior consistory, press releases, info letters).

Project activities implemented by Evangelical Lutheran Church C.A. in Romania and results achieved in the support for and work with refugees during the last 6 months

1.1. Receiving the refugees

Refugees have come to the quarters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church A.B. in Romania through three channels: picked up directly from the border, assigned by state coordination centers, or mediated by partner organizations.

¹ Hans Klein, *In eine offene Zukunft, Vorträge und andere Texte zur Lage der Evangelischen Kirche A.B. in Rumänien zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Martin-Luther-Verlag, Erlangen, 2011, p. 13

² After the fall of the Iron Curtain, two-thirds of the members of the evangelical communities migrated in 1990 to Germany. This process continued in the following years so that less than 15 percent of the Evangelicals living in Transylvania before 1990 are still members of the Evangelical Church A.B. in Romania. In 2013 that was around 12,700. See: <https://www.evang.ro/geschichte/>, (19.09.2022)

³ Most of the Transylvanian Saxons have left the region in the past few decades. The dramatically declined number of members belonging to the German, Lutheran community are barely capable of preserving this cultural heritage on their own.

⁴<https://www.evang.ro/einrichtungen-werke/kirchliche-einrichtungen/institutionelle-kooperation/>, (19.09.2022)

The initiative of some parishes - like the parish in Fagaras - to take refugees directly from the Ukrainian border was an arduous, challenging, costly, but necessary action. Surprisingly, it was not easy to get to the refugees, so the help of the representatives of the Ukrainian minority in Suceava was necessary. Helping the traumatized people, who had lost all trust in strangers, could only be possible by building a network of trust.

Other refugees arrived at the Evangelical Church A.B. in Romania thanks to the mediation of state coordination centers (inspectors for emergency situations), partner organizations, or some Ukrainian refugee networks (created through social media channels). Through these actions and initiatives, as well as thanks to mediations and contacts, a safe and stable home was offered to those in need of protection.

1.2 Providing living quarters

In the period from 01.03.2022 to 31.08.2022, short-, medium- or long-term accommodation was offered to refugees - according to their needs - in the church homes and parishes (a total of 14,514 nights/ an average of 83 people x 180 days). The Superior Consistory of the Evangelical Church A.B. in Romania (for the homes in Vulcan and Cisnadioara) and the parishes in Fagaras, Sibiu, Braşov, Vulcan şi Mediaş welcomed the refugees within their maximum capacities.

Until spring 2022, the rest home in Cisnadioara and the rest home in Vulcan served as accommodation and catering facilities especially for church employees and for guests from Germany and abroad, but also as a meeting place and conference center for various groups, both from the ECR and from other institutions. Beginning March 2022, the two church homes offer accommodation and meals exclusively to Ukraine refugees.

Due to the excessive and particular use of the maximum operating capacity, some interventions and measures were necessary, such as room or kitchen endowments, the installation of a new central heating system, or a capital roof repair. Adaptations, renovations, or room endowments were also necessary for the other lodging places. The establishment of appropriate apartments for small families, which by their construction would better meet the needs of a family, was a necessity, such as the conversion of a classroom into an apartment for one family (room and bathroom, small kitchen) in the parish of Sibiu. Providing properly equipped or adapted accommodation places, short or long term, as well as according to needs to the shelter seekers from Ukraine, who fled from their homeland because of the war, means offering a safe home corresponding to their needs.

1.3 Prepared and served meals

Refugees who have fled their homes have left everything behind. Not only all their belongings but also their familiar lifestyle. This also includes food. In addition to the usual daily meals, they also need to be provided with nutrient-rich supplementary food (fruit or vitamins) or food specific to children and infants.

Through the involvement of some Ukrainian women in kitchen activities (employment in homes), making them active and useful persons in the community, the refugees in the homes had the opportunity to enjoy Ukrainian meals as well.

However, offering everything ready-made to the refugees does not correspond to the Church's ideas of care. Most of the refugees are women. For them, cooking for the family was a daily activity. Both the ECR and these women wanted them to take part in these social and family activities from time to time. So, as a result of these actions and initiatives, besides the fulfillment of basic physical needs (drinking and eating) and food security, we also count the fulfillment of an important social need. However, we also talk about migration-specific needs. According to interviews, the most important needs include aspects such as family substitute, emotional warmth, a sense of home, a sense of community, security, and a search for social connection in a foreign country.

1.4 Psychosocial support for groups and individuals

During these months (March to August 2022), the church institutions and congregations of the ECR have endeavored to offer a home, a piece of normality. Psychosocial care is an essential element and ECR has been heavily involved in it. Volunteers, service providers, and professionals have been involved in this purpose. The care services include learning and recreational activities for children and adults, organizing smaller or larger excursions to get to know the country and its people or different minorities in the country, each with their own religious faith, culture, and history, or organizing hikes in the area, celebrations (March 8 - Mother's Day, June 1 - Children's Day, Easter, Pentecost, birthday parties). In addition, there are weekly, regular, and joint activities, such as creative workshops, sewing, cooking, or baking activities, sports activities, participation in bazaars, creation of a children's museum, summer activities (children's play city - a children's holiday camp for 2 weeks).

In addition to the learning or recreational programs for children, adolescents, and adults, other particular care services for groups or individuals have been secured, as needed. This means pastoral and psychological assistance for vulnerable persons, children, and adolescents, psychological weekly therapy for stress and post-traumatic stress disorder (open discussion groups, individual meetings), but also separate medical assistance. In addition to nutrition, health care for refugees plays a key role in refugee assistance. Offering refugees unlimited access to health services in the Romanian public or private health system is necessary. Thus, weekly examinations have been offered by family doctors in shelters. However, psychosocial support also includes the necessary one-on-one care as needed, social support, assistance with a return or onward travel, help with integration into the labor market, and assistance with becoming self-sufficient.

A high percentage of refugees were exposed to war trauma: they witnessed violence, destruction, and permanent or temporary losses of their family members, relatives, friends, or acquaintances. Scientific empirical studies prove that "the effects on those affected range from mild anxiety and suffering to full-blown mental disorders. Diagnosis distinguishes between short-term disorders that

immediately follow the traumatic event and long-term disorders. Long-term disorders are usually chronic stresses that have a delayed onset. Post-traumatic stress disorder is the most frequently diagnosed form”¹.

Pointing out these problems, the existence of this category of needs and upon the recommendation of partner organizations, Ukrainian refugees (individuals or groups) have been offered psychological counseling. All these initiatives and necessary actions have contributed to relaxation, family and group spirit encouragement, health, and cognitive improvement, and strengthening or psychological healing of traumas.

"Trauma is more than just the psychological symptoms of an individual: The respective social, cultural, political, and historical factors lead to different trajectories of traumatization and must therefore be considered not only in diagnosing but also in dealing with and healing from trauma. Factors of particular importance for refugees in this context are the restoration of existential security and the prospect of a normal life. However, this is prevented by the inadequate opportunities to get a job quickly in the new homeland which in many cases still lasts for a long time².

Relevance of activities for the refugees. Results achieved and impacts stated for the target groups

In common parlance, a refugee is first and foremost a person who is on the run. In concrete handling, other terms are certainly to be tested, such as people in need of protection or newcomers. The refugee crisis is the crisis caused by an armed conflict whose victims, the refugees, as the etymology of the word shows, are forced to leave the conflict zones, and need protection. The refugees are confronted with many psychosocial challenges (losing independence, forced separation from spouses, children, or parents, loss of motivation, adapting to a new, unwanted state of life, responsibility for their own life and family life, feelings of insecurity, fear, and unfamiliarity).

These "People for People Projects" are about great emotional participation. On the one hand, it should be noted the helpfulness of all (church employees, partners, volunteers, and service providers) to get involved in refugee work. These are signs of humanity and solidarity, which cannot eliminate the misery of war and flight, but which deprive the fleeing people of the worry of mere survival. "As a volunteer in the project whose goal is to support the people of Ukraine, I contributed through translation services. I have managed to reaffirm the importance of helping our neighbors, especially in a situation where they need

¹ Katrin Lehmacher, *Trauma-Konzepte im historischen Wandel, ein Beitrag zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der Posttraumatic-Stress Disorder in Deutschland (1980-1991)*, Bonn, 2013, pp. 20-21

² Jana Eisberg, Daniel Schweiß, *Trauma und Integration – eine gesellschaftliche Herausforderung*, in "360° - Das studentische Journal für Politik und Gesellschaft", Vol. 11, No. 2, 2016, p. 18

urgent support to adapt to the host country, which has become their second home at this difficult time. After the excursions, group activities, and discussions, I can safely say that the Ukraine refugees were extremely satisfied with the hospitality, empathy, material help, and support received." (Mihaela Cojocari, volunteer)

On the other hand, also worth noting are the numerous expressions of gratitude of the refugees (be it oral, non-verbal, or acting) for the safe home they get, for the good food, the protective environment, and the loving people who take care of them.

"I am now in Romania with my family because of the war. I met a lot of good people here. But Eve from the Evangelical Parish became my savior. During the hardest time of my life, when I received a bad diagnosis, Eve was sent to me by God. She helped me solve many problems; she made life here much easier for us. I am very grateful to God for meeting such wonderful people on my life path. I am very grateful to the people in the Evangelical Church who take care of us".

The physical, mental, and emotional well-being of refugees was achieved by providing them with housing, answers to their basic needs, and psychological support. In addition to housing and food, an attempt was made to give the refugees hope by allowing them to regain a small piece of their "normal" life, as can be seen from the statement of one of the refugees: "We are a family from Ukraine (Odessa) Lyudmilla Iudina and two kids, Tania & Vova. We want to express our gratitude to the Lutheran Congregation, particularly for their support and understanding at such a difficult time for us: accommodation, food, and all the necessary things. The children were pleased with excursions, walks, master classes, and all kinds of entertainment, which made it possible to distract them from thinking about the war in our homeland. Thanks to these incredible people with big hearts!! We hug you tightly!! During this time, we became one big family!" (Lyudmilla Iudina)

The external aspects of a person's life influence the social conditions, the environment, his/her inner structure, his/her psycho-spiritual development, and his/her religious life¹. But a piece of normality is integration. Here are some concrete examples of how small but concrete steps have been taken in this direction: it was possible to finance Iunia, a Ukrainian refugee, world champion hairstylist in 2021, who currently lives in the recreation home in Cisnadioara, to participate in the competition 2022 in Paris, in August 2022; Dmitro, a Ukrainian refugee, opera singer, who is currently with his family in the community in Vulcan has received the chance of signing a contract with the opera in Brasov. The family's prospects currently indicate that they might remain in Vulcan or in the Brasov area. This is what he says: "Our family has been living in Vulcan since the 9th of March. We are provided with everything necessary in the guest house, our children managed to visit many excursions: Bran Castle, Dino Park, bear reservations, and the Weavers' bastion. They also took part in a lot of activities in the fortified churches in Coldea, Cristian, Ghimbav, Feldioara, and the Black

¹ Gerhard Neumann, *Religionssoziologie der Flüchtlinge*, "Soziale Welt", Vol. 8, No. 2, 1957, p. 114

Church in Brasov. They also attended drawing master classes and a children's choir in Codlea, English and German lessons in Vulcan, and sports activities: football in Vulcan, and wall climbing in Brasov. Also, we took part in a lot of outdoor activities like hiking in the mountains and at the lakes in the area. Since May I managed to get a contract at the Brasov Opera house with the help of a member from the Lutheran congregation". (Dmitro Rusinyak)

Part of the normality of life before fleeing to Romania was also access to the Internet, a necessity today. Internet connection was provided for online lessons and "home office", which continued to be offered/possible from Odessa and other Ukrainian cities almost without interruption. Thanks to the equipment of the accommodation locations (internet connection), the children were able to attend school lessons online. Some adults were also able to work from home for Ukrainian employers where possible.

One faces the challenge of dealing with refugees who speak only Ukrainian or Russian rarely English or German, and none speak Romanian. Romanian courses have been offered on a regular basis, but also English courses to give children and adults a basic knowledge of the English and Romanian languages. Language exercises (German and English) have also been offered by the volunteers. All these measures have contributed to the fact that the refugees have developed language and communication skills: „I am grateful to all who made it possible for my family to be in Elimheim. We have good fresh food every day, many activities, and care. The best memories for me are the trips to Medias, Biertan, and Sighisoara. Also, we painted pictures on canvas by acryl – it was a new experience for me. And it is great that we can speak with other Ukrainians every day – our language, our problems, news from our country, and news about living in Romania “. (Olena Yantchuk)

Education for refugees is interdisciplinary cooperation. The various childcare services such as painting lessons and children's choir, excursions, handicrafts, celebrations, etc. have helped to build new, positive experiences that have given the refugees hope or a better perspective for the future. „Casa Elimheim, located in a picturesque place on the hillside, from which we saw a beautiful view of the Carpathian Mountains. The estate was surrounded by the greenery of fruit trees, beautifully trimmed meadow grasses, and pink greenhouses. We came from Ukraine, we were given free accommodation with all amenities, food three times a day, and a very good and attentive staff. The management of our hotel held many charity events for us and gave us financial support, for which we are very grateful. We painted on the canvas, crafted handmade objects from different materials, sewed, cooked Ukrainian dishes, and learned the Romanian language. On Easter, we used to listen to the sermon in our Hall. The most memorable day for us was the excursion to Medias, where we listened to the sermon in the church with organ music“. (Nina & Volodya Zhukov)

Challenges of refugee work at ECR

We divide this category into two subcategories, namely challenges regarding the target group, and challenges related to the management of projects for refugees.

Regarding the target group

a. A challenge for the Church is the development of a proper way of dealing with the refugees. In addition to special needs such as psychological care, the refugees also need leisure activities. However, the refugees are not exactly tourists whose goal is to visit the country and the sights. But offering them concrete possibilities for leisure activities such as excursions, visits, and getting to know the tourist attractions and the country, which are in themselves pleasant activities and participation to them can also be forms of therapy.

b. A second challenge identified in the data analysis is overcoming communication difficulties with adaptive methods. Due to communication problems, the project managers (employees of the homes, pastors, volunteers, and service providers) are confronted with difficulties. First and foremost, in simple everyday communication, but also in conveying emotions such as compassion, comfort, willingness to help (on the part of the project owners), or gratitude, fear, and sadness (on the part of the refugees). The solutions for this were: employment, employment of Russian- or Ukrainian-speaking employees, psychologists, teachers, educators, or other service providers and volunteers, learning and using different translation programs on mobile phones (google translate, SprachApp etc.).

c. This category also includes the need to find solutions to unexpected needs. An example of such needs is the employment of refugees. After weeks, even months, some adults have expressed a desire to act, to get involved, to do something. This does not refer to the mothers of small children, who need all the attention and occupation of mothers during the day, but adults, such as young people without small children. Offering specific activities or temporarily employing some was a solution to these needs. Here we also mention the intermediation of jobs for some women refugees from Vulcan, employed at the Sergiana factory in Brasov. Another example is the need for special therapy. With the support of the staff, a refugee who was accommodated in one of the apartments of the Brasov parish was examined for thyroid cancer and operated on at the "Parhon Institute of Endocrinology" in Bucharest. After receiving an early appointment at short notice, the Ukrainian young mother remained in contact with the attending physician both before and after the operation and worked with him to draw up a short-, medium- and long-term intervention plan.

d. This category also includes the possibility of integrating refugees, to whichever extent this is possible, as only 10% of the persons taken over by the ECR stated that they intend to stay in Romania in the long term. Integration is a complex, lengthy process whose success depends on many factors. What makes this process difficult, in addition to "traumatic experiences and existential

insecurity of the refugees"¹ or "ability to confidently open up to the new and foreign, to allow unknown and unsettling experiences and to leave behind the old and familiar"² is also the willingness to integrate.

The Ukraine refugees who were placed in the ECR homes and parish formed a monolingual habitus (Ukrainian) and were trapped in a rather large social network. Established networks and support groups help to exchange constantly updated information (about their status and rights, or about the war situation). Likewise, the contacts and connections offered to them by the group are beneficial to convey the feeling of solidarity. At the same time, however, this hinders integration, at least at the level of communication. One doesn't learn Romanian or English if it's not necessary. In this way, an enclave is created, also based on this network on a virtual level. Online translation programs also help a lot with communication, and at the same time, the desire to attend courses that implicitly develop cognitive and linguistic skills is no longer mandatory. Learning Romanian is a key to integration.

More than half of the refugees (60%) feel the desire to learn the Romanian language. Even more of them want to learn English, 85% to overcome the difficulties of finding a job. These results correspond to those at the Sibiu level³. However, the key to integration in the case of participation in language courses is – in addition to the development of communication skills – also the development of social and emotional skills.

3.2. Regarding the project management

a. In all countries of the European Community, a legal framework was created to take over Ukrainian refugees, aimed at facilitating bureaucratic procedures (asylum application, obtaining the right of residence right to work, health insurance, subsidy for accommodation and food, recognition of studies for their continuation and employment). All EU countries have contributed financially to the admission and the host countries have already created the conditions for long-term residence. "As an important reaction to the extraordinarily large refugee movement from Ukraine, the EU states activated the EU directive on temporary protection adopted two decades ago on 4 March 2022. Accordingly, all Ukrainians and their family members are granted temporary protection and residence permits – like the protection status offered to groups of the population (*prima facie*). This is initially valid for one year and is automatically extended twice for half a year unless the Council decides otherwise. If a safe return is not yet possible, a further postponement of one year is possible. A special feature of the directive is the free choice of the EU Member State in which refugees want to settle for the time being.

¹ Jana Eisberg, Daniel Schweiß, *Op.cit.*, p. 13

² Marianne Rauwald, *Flüchtlinge und ihre Kinder. Der Einfluss von Migration und Trauma auf die Beziehung zwischen Eltern und ihren Kindern*, "Vererbte Wunden. Transgenerationale Weitergabe traumatischer Erfahrungen", Weinheim/Baser, Beltz, 2013, pp. 99-100

³ *Needs and challenges of Ukrainian refugees in Sibiu. Survey on 970+ people*, Fundația Comunitară Sibiu, Fundația Sus Inima, and Sibiu Ukrainian Center

In contrast to the classic asylum procedure under the Dublin rules, the responsibility for those affected does not lie with the countries of first reception¹. Experience has shown that refugees choose their place of residence according to where family members, friends, or acquaintances are already residents in the EU.

The change of location takes place on a voluntary basis and since it occurs in many cases, it leads to a great dynamic of refugee migration. This depends on external factors. As in the case of the classic migration model, we are also talking about the push and pull factors in the case of refugee migration. The pull factors include proximity, the ability of a country to take in refugee migrants, the refugee policy existing in the destination country, the attitude of society to the migration phenomenon, the social mood, the feeling of trust and solidarity of society with the war crisis, the trust in the institutions of the state, the appropriate information policy of the EU countries, appropriate information policy, the degree of economic development, the integration and development opportunities that a country offers, the medical and educational system, the integration policy supported by the state and the participation of non-governmental organizations in supporting the human resources mobilized in working with refugees, etc.

Migration is a phenomenon marked by a strong dynamic and unpredictability of dimensions. The variability of the number of refugees admitted to their own premises has been a challenge for the ECR in terms of the need for continuous adaptation and optimization (of the spaces, the number of human resources involved, and the services used by third parties). From this point of view, we can divide the category of refugees into several subcategories: refugees in transit, stable refugees; refugees of long, short, or medium duration; Individual refugees, refugee groups, and refugee families. The ECR's initiatives and projects in response to the crisis of the war in Ukraine had beneficiaries, refugees who – for a brief time or for a longer period - could occupy their own rooms, which were made available for this purpose. Of the total number of refugees from Ukraine taken on by the ECR, less than 10% of the beneficiaries were refugees in transit. In addition, there were many situations in which they went back for a short time. They returned to Romania amid insecurity, fear, and destruction of the infrastructure in their country (housing, water, gas, light) or an insecure supply of food and medicine. About 90% of them received here accommodation and food as well as psycho-social care services in the medium or long term.

b. Unpredictability is a major characteristic of all refugee projects. Perhaps the biggest challenge was to deal with unusual and unforeseen situations correctly and efficiently. For this purpose, it was necessary to put some people in charge of the project. The internal staff responsible for these projects include the

¹ Steffen Angenendt, Nadine Biehler, Raphael Bossong, David Kipp, Anne Koch, *Flucht aus der Ukraine: Mobilität erhalten und langfristig denken! Vom temporären Schutz zu Integrationsperspektiven*, “SWP-Aktuell“, 2022, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik – SWP-Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, <https://doi.org/10.18449/2022A24>, (15.07.2022)

management of the law firm, the project management department, the cash, and finance office department, the coordination team of refugee work, and the management of the homes and communities. To implement the refugee projects, a coordination office has also been created, which is committed to the interdisciplinary and professional cooperation of all church institutions and state authorities active in the field of Ukraine refugee work in Sibiu and the region.

The tasks and obligations of this body include a financial overview of expenses, assessment of future needs, billing of costs, establishment of contact and network of different actors (municipalities, homes, departments of the Superior Consistory, partners, service providers), public relations (inquiries and announcements to all those involved in the refugee projects).

Development of strategic lines of the ECR in refugee work. From attitude to coordinated action

The beneficiaries of ECR projects are victims of armed conflict, and vulnerable people going through the trauma of war. However, the topic of trauma has long since left the boundaries of medical and psychiatric science and has become the predominant "instrument of interpretation for the personal and social processing of events perceived as threatening"¹. We are talking about the collective handling of large-scale violence or other events that are shocking at the level of society as a whole².

A strategy for the planning, management, and development of the actions should be developed. In this process of concrete participation in the aid and support of refugees from Ukraine, it is necessary to develop a positive attitude toward working with refugees. Whether we talk about church representatives, church employees or church institutions, work groups and departments (women's work, youth work, diakonia, committees) and their participation in the actions of the church for refugees, or about increasing the sensitivity of society to the cause. Openness to dialogue, solidarity, generosity, and tolerance are human values but also theologically founded and justified central axioms, which play a decisive role in this context. The ECR has been committed to nurturing these values since the beginning of the conflict and throughout the period of the last six months. This is all the more necessary as public opinion tends to undergo some changes in terms of willingness to help Ukrainian refugees in the long term. It turns out that religion is part of the integration process at all three levels of the social sphere, that integration readiness and efforts are generally better off than often appear in the

¹ Svenja Goltermann, *Die Gesellschaft der Überlebenden. Deutsche Kriegsheimkehrer und ihre Gewalterfahrungen im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, München, 2009, pp. 425-426

² Angela Kühner, *Kollektive Traumata. Annahmen, Argumente, Konzepte. Eine Bestandaufnahme nach dem 11. September, Report Nr. 9*, Forschungszentrum für Konstruktive Konfliktbearbeitung, Berlin, Berghof, 2002, p. 14

public media perception, and that religion is more a form of help than a cause of conflict, despite all the ambivalences.

The Church lays the basis for tolerance towards foreigners and refugees on the teaching of the Bible and the lesson of history. "The history of the world shows that everything we call history today has a background to migration (...) How can we continue with this in a prosperous Europe and in a safe Romania? We can learn from history and the Bible: God is a God who loves and protects strangers. He calls upon us to engage with strangers as well¹. To be created in the image of God means that every human being – including every refugee – regardless of their nationality or religion, legal status, or other differences, has an unbreakable dignity that makes their lives precious and worthy of protection.

Recent refugee migration has apparently activated civil society. Churches and religious communities have traditionally been important platforms for volunteering. They combine a religious ethic of solidarity, which is expressed, for example, in the Christian commandment of charity or the obligatory donation as one of the five pillars of Islam, with an individual promise of salvation and a community united by collective rituals.² The sensitization of church members, the theological justification for the commitment to tolerance, the fight for human rights and dignity, the love of humanity, and the openness to the foreign can be found in the internal appeal to the external partners for providing financial support or through the public campaign (press article, organization of interconfessional prayers for peace, setting a time of day - 12 noon - for prayer, a moment of silence for the victims of war, prayer to end the conflict).

Particularly important in the work with refugees is the coordination and good management of projects, the mobilization of human and logistical resources necessary to provide them with food, shelter, access to education and medical services, counseling and activities, and courses to better adapt and integrate. This has given the Church more space and time to build its administrative capacity, plan well, and act on time. Building a network of different actors (church and extra-church actors) such as professionals, service providers, staff, and volunteers was a necessity.

The context of migration, flight, and religion can be empirically traced not only from a sociological but also from a practical-theological perspective. It is important not only to respond to the basic needs of refugees (food, drink) but also to ensure psychosocial protection (psychological and diaconal, pastoral care). Refugees had to leave behind almost everything except their memories and their lived religion. They brought with them experiences of flight. It was important to

¹ Reinhart Guib, *Gott liebt die Fremden – Biblische Herausforderungen mit Fremden*, Broschüre für die Vernissage der Wanderausstellung, Sibiu, May, 2018, p.2

² Alexander-Kenneth Nagel, Yasemin El-Menouar, *Religiöse Hintergründe der Flüchtlingshilfe*, in O. Hidalgo und G. Pickel (eds.), *Flucht und Migration in Europa. Politik und Religion*, p. 251, https://doi.org/10.1007-978-3-658-23309-9_11, (26.08.2022)

show them a perspective of hope. Thus, a coordination center for pastoral, psychological, and diaconal care was created.

Also, through participation in the workshops organized by LWF, appropriate action guidelines for the protection of vulnerable people have been developed: Preventing child abuse and ensuring the protection of children and women¹. The purpose of these workshops was to exchange information about policies that are already in place in different churches and ideas on how to spread awareness about safeguarding, and how to make it clear and available for everyone involved in the projects. Based on a model developed by partner organizations, the ECR has its own code of conduct regarding child protection in emergencies.

Some of the refugees who came to Romania faced unfriendly, inadequate accommodation conditions, such as too many people for the space provided, insecurity (they had to move), lack of emotional comfort (hosts unfriendly to children), or financial difficulties (landlords' demands to pay rent for accommodation)². The ECR has used its resources to address potential sources of harassment in terms of properly dealing with refugees, and offering protection and comfort to refugees, more than the new milieu can, unfortunately, offer a potential source of disappointment because the expectations placed on these relationships are so high³.

We have seen that reception and longer-term integration is problematic if it is not a desired, final migration. From our interviews, 90% of Ukrainians hope and desire to return to their country as soon as possible, not least because family members (men of military age) have had to stay behind in Ukraine and families have been separated. In addition to the fear caused by the armed conflict and the partially or completely damaged houses, they expressed the desire to return to their country to rebuild, participate in social life, and find income opportunities. Most respondents indicated that they would only stay in Romania until the end of the war, 25% would like to stay in Romania for more than a year, regardless of whether the war ends or not. The Church's commitment is to continue to be as flexible as possible, offering, or mediating opportunities for integration (language courses, employment of refugees - according to their needs and abilities - in its own institutions and ministries, or mediation of possible jobs on the labor market).

Conclusions and consequences for future work

Like all governments, non-governmental organizations, or institutions that were surprised by the escalation of the conflict and put in a position to mobilize

¹ 1,000 children have been killed or injured in the war in Ukraine, figures that the UN has been able to confirm, the real number is much higher. Ukraine's education system has been devastated by escalating armed conflict across the country. 1 in 10 schools has been damaged or destroyed, <https://beta.news.un.org/story/2022/08/1125132>, (10.09.2022)

² *Needs and challenges of Ukrainian refugees in Sibiu. Survey on 970+ people*, Fundația Comunitară Sibiu, Fundația Sus Inima, and Sibiu Ukrainian Center.

³ *Idem*

and intervene according to their capabilities, the ECR has also provided direct support and developed its own strategy for working with refugees during the six months of the refugee crisis. Beginning with a prior experience in refugee work, the church has sought to develop normative perspectives in dealing with the refugee crisis, cultivate a positive attitude among its members and society toward the need to offer support to these victims of war, also to act concretely and efficiently by hosting refugees in its own premises, responding to their basic needs - short, medium, or long term, as needed.

Providing shelter and food, as well as educational and recreational activities, and pastoral and psychological assistance is part of an immediate response. After this emergency intervention, however, the ECR is faced with the great and new challenge of continuing the necessary measures and, at the same time, further developing a strategy to be able to continue to help those seeking protection from Ukraine who has fled their homeland to escape the war, in the medium and long term.

The work for the refugees is responsible work, which is done with the cooperation of several actors (the Romanian state, public or private organizations, refugee centers, associations and companies, private persons, and partners). Without good cooperation and consultation, it would not be possible to carry out large and complex projects.

New challenges (linguistic, cultural, structural, psychological, social, religious) give rise to new needs. The Church's response to the challenges and risks posed by today's migratory phenomenon is on two levels: 1) to respond to grief and suffering, to show empathy, to build a culture of solidarity and welcome, to create hope and perspective for the future, to offer opportunities for integration; 2) to provide a response to basic needs (food, sleep, drink, clothing, medicine).

The process of detachment from the old social environment and integration into a new unknown environment is perceived by many as very painful. In all places of accommodation, there is material, informational, and emotional support (security, esteem, feeling of safety, access to social network) or spiritual support (church services, pastoral care, community). All these are resources provided to refugees, as aid for integration. A clear evolution in the refugee status can already be noticed: since the first days of the Ukraine crisis, the traumatic mode of escape has been replaced almightily by more stability. There are the first signs of possible integration. Hard work still needs to be done for this.

One faces the question of how the church, but also society in general, will continue to deal with migration - in terms of support for refugees. The experience of the ECR in refugee work has shown satisfactory results on the one hand, but also great challenges and inevitable shortcomings on the other. The challenges of refugee work still include the unpredictable development of the situation and ensuring medium- and long-term funding for refugee projects. In recent months, it has been possible to create guidelines necessary for a strategy of the church in refugee work. What was accomplished – is a unitary concept that not only takes

responsibility for individual refugees but also offers approaches to solutions at the societal level.

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