



ROMANIA

Summary of qualitative study among Ukrainian refugees

Refugees need better health guidance

Behavioural insights on health service needs and access
May-October 2022



European Region

Key findings



 **80-90,000** Ukrainian refugees in Romania

 **74,203** refugees registered for Temporary Protection as of 16 October, 2022



At first it was a disaster for me. The children got sick, and I didn't know where to go. But now it's easier, and I know where to go.

Woman, age 50

EMERGING ISSUES

Vaccination services
Mental health services
Support to new mothers
Access to **dentistry**
Cost of prescription medication
Confusion about referral system



DRIVERS TO ACCESS SERVICES

Volunteers are key
Volunteers, landlords and neighbours play a crucial role in guiding refugees to health services and answering questions of all kinds. Their support is highly appreciated.

High quality health services
Romanian medical services are considered to be of high quality, and health care workers are friendly and trusted. Critical care, such as dialysis or cancer treatment are especially good.

Time eases access
Follow-up interviews indicate that refugees are more familiar with the system and more comfortable accessing services over time.



BARRIERS TO ACCESS SERVICES

Gaps in knowledge

While understanding of the health system has improved, there is often confusion about referrals to specialist care, where to get vaccinations and health insurance.



Fear of costs

Concerns about perceived costs of health services keep people from using them, especially dentists, even though all are free.



Language problems

Language is a significant barrier for many. It's hard to navigate the system and get the right medication without a common language.



BEHAVIOURS & ATTITUDES

People trust people

The most trusted sources of information are real people (refugees or volunteers) sharing their experiences either in person or online.

Travel to Ukraine

Some refugees consult Ukrainian doctors online or return to Ukraine to purchase medicines and receive health services due to familiarity and cost.

Refugee fatigue

Despite a warm welcome, several participants noted a change in attitudes towards refugees, including among doctors.

Background and next steps

BACKGROUND



Ongoing war drives people away

War in Ukraine has resulted in the largest movement of people across Europe since WW2. Neighbouring countries opened borders and offered services, but refugee perspectives are essential for planning appropriate interventions and policies.

METHOD

Qualitative study on perceived health service needs as well as drivers and barriers to access these services

25 in-depth online interviews:

- 20 were women and 5 were men
- 17 were caretakers and 8 were not

Recruitment via social media channels, personal networks, other community support networks, NGO staff and posters located in relevant places.

10 key informant interviews with officials and service providers conducted 13 May – 13 June 2022

Follow up interviews with 15 refugees in October to understand how their situation had changed.



PROPOSED ACTION

1

Praise volunteers and health workers to sustain motivation

Highlight the positive outcomes of the study, including welcoming atmosphere and quality of health services.



2

Provide clear and targeted information via trusted channels

Improve and target health system information and use trusted channels to disseminate it among refugees.



3

Explore opportunities to engage Ukrainian health workers in Romania e.g., as health mediators

Trust in Ukrainian doctors is a potential resource to help overcome language barriers and reduce burden on Romanian health system.



4

Engage cultural sector to improve mental health and wellbeing

Leverage the arts and other cultural and community assets to improve mental health and psychosocial support for both refugees and host communities.



“

In Ukraine, you know your doctors, but it is difficult for Ukrainians in Romania. You need to find information and figure out where to go, and whom to visit. When possible, I talk to Ukrainian doctors.

Woman, age 30

Read more

This briefing note is part of a qualitative study among Ukrainian refugees in Romania. For more information contact:

euinsights@who.int

Acknowledgements:

A special thanks to Polina Alpatova, Tatyana Zub, Yana Sazonova, Teodora Andreea Popescu, Oana Motea and Raluca Zaharia, Diana Paun, Alexandra Cucu, Adriana Galan, who made this study possible and who gave us invaluable advice and support.

Photo on the cover:

Marina is 15 weeks' pregnant and received an ultrasound test at the WHO clinic inside the Blue Dot Center, Galati, Romania.

© **WHO/Mihai von Eremia**

© World Health Organization 2023.

Some rights reserved.

This work is available under the CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo>).

The WHO Regional Office for Europe

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations created in 1948 with the primary responsibility for international health matters and public health. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is one of six regional offices throughout the world, each with its own programme geared to the particular health conditions of the countries it serves.

World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe

UN City, Marmorvej 51,
DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø, Denmark

Tel: +45 45 33 70 00

Fax: +45 45 33 70 01

Email: eurocontact@who.int

www.who.int/europe