



HEKS/EPER Humanitarian Aid

War on Ukraine

HEKS/EPER strategy, achievements, perspectives in Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, and Hungary.

Bucharest, February 25, 2023

Why & How HEKS/EPER Responds to The Ukraine Crises

Context of the Whole of Ukraine – Challenges

On February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation started a military operation in Ukraine after a severely worsening the security situation in at least eight oblasts and the already-conflicted eastern oblasts of Donetsk and Luhanska.

The intense military escalation has caused serious devastation and damage to infrastructure and residential housing, as well as casualties, injuries, and mass migration of civilians throughout Ukraine and to neighbouring countries. By the end of 2022, about 6 million Ukrainians were displaced internally, and more than 8 million fled the country.

Population movements into neighbouring countries have made this situation the fastest-growing refugee emergency, and movements remain unpredictable. Governments in all countries neighbouring Ukraine have generously kept their borders open. Local communities have welcomed refugees, other people of concern and third-country nationals and continue to provide this support without discrimination. In addition to UN Agencies and NGOs, local responders, including civil society organisations, faith-based institutions, refugee- and women-led organisations, academia, sports associations and the private sector, as well as private citizens, have played an important role in supporting and complementing state initiatives and efforts, at border reception points and in main urban centres.

With the influx, local and national authorities have established reception facilities at border crossing points to receive new arrivals. They provide life-saving assistance, including accommodation, food, and other basic needs, as well as onward transport for those seeking to reach urban centres. At these centres, information is provided on the asylum process, temporary protection, and the risks of trafficking. Access to basic rights and services, such as health, has been facilitated. Steps have been taken to foster protection and inclusion into national systems, such as health and education services.

Ukrainians fleeing the country



Ukraine - Romania border, March 2022.

Country	Refugees / IDPs
Ukraine	6'500'000
Romania	106'835
Hungary	33'603
Moldova	102'160

Referral services are being scaled up, especially on case management and protection of unaccompanied children and those evacuated from boarding schools, institutions and other alternative care arrangements, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), victims of trafficking, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.¹

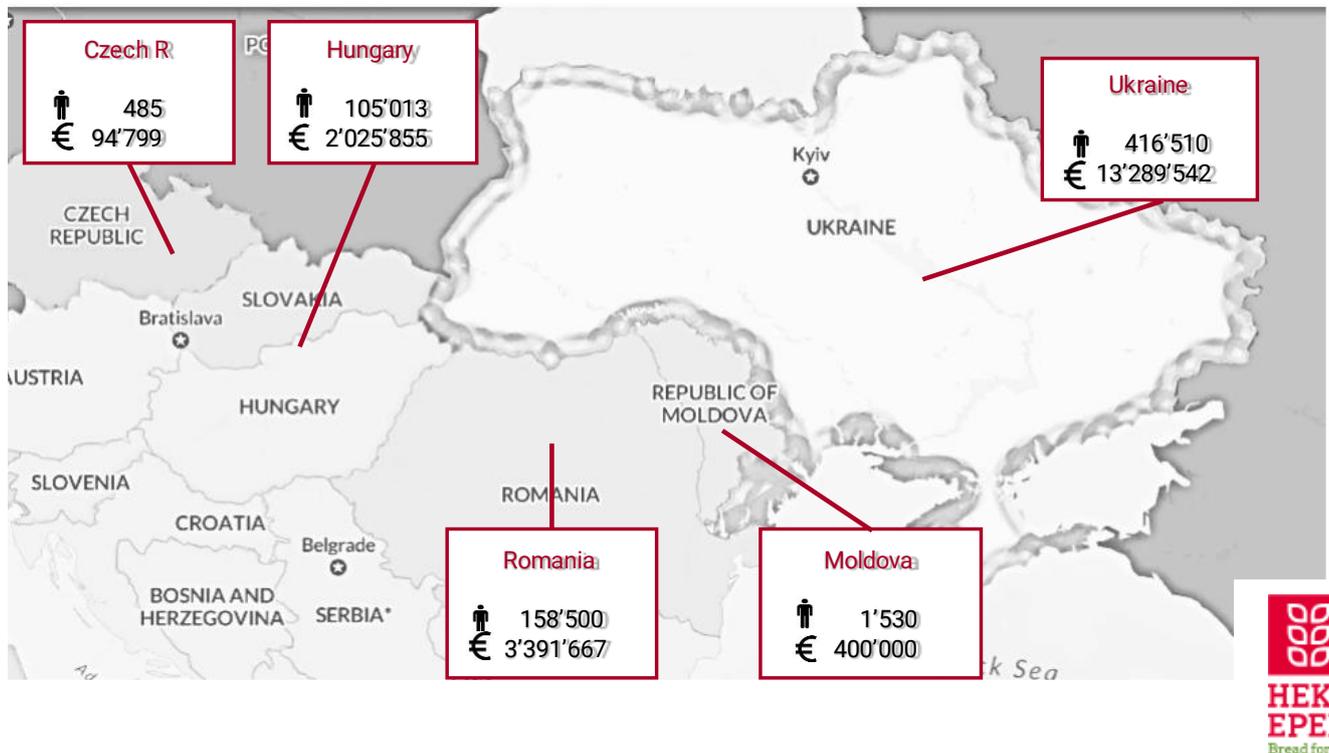
As of the end of 2022, the following number of refugees in bordering countries and IDPs in Ukraine² have been registered:

¹ UNHCR, Regional Refugee Response Plan 2022

² UNHCR information, December 2022

How HEKS/EPER responds – the Whole of Ukraine strategy and geographical coverage

HEKS/EPER responds to humanitarian crises caused by the war in Ukraine and its neighbouring countries through its existing long-term offices in **Romania** and **Moldova**, its long-standing church cooperation partners in Ukraine, **Hungary** and the **Czech Republic** as well as through its newly opened offices in Eastern **Ukraine**.



Regional Coordination Office

To respond to this crisis taking advantage of its long-term presence in the region, HEKS/EPER decided to roll out an important humanitarian aid operation to respond to the needs of the IDPs in Ukraine and the refugees in Romania, Moldova, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Due to the complex and big scale of the response, a Regional Coordination Office has been set up to act as the support office for all the regional operations (technical thematic, fundraising, knowledge sharing) and to facilitate the coordination and communication among the HEKS / EPER Country Offices, HQ and donor organisations. Given the complexity of the response, it was crucial that a coordinated planning and reporting system was established from the outset to help ensure the delivery of high-quality humanitarian projects with the Whole of the Ukraine region.

Ukraine

HEKS/EPER launched its operations in Ukraine shortly after the Russian invasion. Since the early days, it has established itself as a first-hand emergency responder providing critical life-saving assistance in frontline areas. By connecting with key local actors (community representatives, local civil society organisations, and local authorities), volunteer groups and citizen initiatives, HEKS/EPER Ukraine has quickly grown in size. It has built a team with local knowledge, assisted by a pool of international technical experts with years of experience, as well as a network of volunteers and national partners, operating along the conflict line across six different oblasts with multi-sectoral interventions assisting tens of thousands of people.

Romania

Starting from the 1st of March 2022, HEKS/EPER Romania developed a humanitarian response to the Ukrainian war crisis. Implementing the program through three different partners, the organisation managed to help over 160,000 refugees in North-Western and North-Eastern Romania and internally displaced people (IDPs) in Transcarpathia in 2022. These people received one or more aid forms: multipurpose unconditional cash support, non-food/ WASH items, food, shelter, medical support, transport, counselling, and information. Special attention is also given to enhancing the integration of Ukrainian refugees into the local labour market through language competencies, job mediation and access to governmental services.

Hungary

In Hungary, HEKS / EPER works through its long-term cooperation partner, the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid (HRCA), which concentrates its efforts on the major border crossing points along the Ukrainian- Hungarian border as well as in Budapest. In addition, a multi-purpose group cash approach – “microgrants that empower the community to find responses appropriate to their underserved needs” - supports local first responders to continue their support to refugees in Budapest as well as IDPs in Transcarpathian Ukraine. The amount can be anywhere around 5'000 euros and sufficient to ensure an impact of the intervention. They are usually unrestricted, meaning that groups or small local NGOs can apply in response to a call for proposal and suggest a micro-project relevant to their context and undefined in advance by the awarding organisation. The multisectoral emergency assistance also aimed to provide cash and to satisfy basic shelter and non-food items needs.

Moldova

HEKS/EPER Moldova re-launched its activities in August 2022 with a focus on humanitarian aid after having a development and cooperation presence of fourteen years in Moldova between 2005 – 2019. The support was done in collaboration with its long-standing partners from Moldova and together managed to assist more than 1500 Ukrainian refugees in the North part of Moldova, offering vouchers for food and non-food items as well as distributing wood briquettes to Moldovan families hosting Ukrainians.

Implementation modalities

While in Ukraine, HEKS / EPER is more a direct implementer of the projects, in the neighbouring countries, it relies strongly on collaboration with local partner organisations:

Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FONSS, the federation of social NGOs and a lead organisation of the Social Platform of Romania, a coalition of the social federation representing more than 250 social NGOs present in 14 counties of Romania and providing more than 120 social and medico-social services. • Bucovina Institute, an experienced organisation in the domain of service delivery. • Diakonia Foundation manages several branches offering social and medical home care services, volunteer programmes, and programmes for children and adults with disabilities. • Openfields Foundation focuses on need-based development initiatives, also focusing on social integration of extreme hardship cases amongst vulnerable people (including Roma) into the labour market
Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hungarian Reformed Church Aid (HRCA) is an aid organisation with a Protestant background engaged in relief and development-related activities. HRCA is actively involved in the emergency response related to the war in Ukraine. • Kalunba Charity, the implementing partner - formerly of the Diaconal Office of RCH since 2017 in the field of integration, inclusion and empowerment of persons granted international protection status (refugee status, subsidiary protection status, persons authorised to stay)
Moldova	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CASMED NGO: The Public Association CASMED is a non-governmental, independent, non-profit organisation which aims to support the elderly and other disadvantaged people by developing and implementing social, educational, and health projects. • Pro Cooperare Regionala,

Promising Practices & Approaches

Networking & Alliances

ACT Alliance / ACT Appeal UKR 221 (Feb 2022 – Feb 2024)

ACT Alliance, through its ACT Europe Forum, developed the regional ACT Appeal UKR 221 early after the invasion of Ukraine, which includes five members, implementing programmes inside Ukraine, and the refugee-receiving countries: HEKS/EPER, Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania (AIDRom), Church World Service (CWS), Hungarian Inter-church Aid (HIA), and Lutheran World Federation (LWF). All requesting members have experience managing humanitarian programmes in line with CHS commitments in the countries of implementation.

HEKS / EPER and ACT Alliance members coordinate in each country of operations to ensure the activities' complementarity and avoid duplications. HEKS/EPER, through its Regional Office, attends regular coordination meetings and updates on the signs of progress from the field.

Working groups and coordination mechanisms in the countries of operations

HEKS/EPER implements humanitarian interventions coordinating with affected populations, host governments, and humanitarian actors, including the United Nations (UN), such as OCHA, and local and international NGOs. Coordination occurs through participation in clusters/platforms/assessment teams and regular information sharing at both the local and national levels to different clusters, as well as through participation in inter-agency reviews of needs and priorities. HEKS/EPER also actively participates in several Working Groups (Cash, Protection NFI, Child Protection). HEKS / EPER participates in all relevant thematic working groups and INGOs forums in all countries of operations : (i) INGOs forums and regular INGOs meetings; (ii) UNHCR working groups in cash, livelihoods and economic inclusion, protection and basis needs; (iii) relevant governmental meetings on various thematic.

In all countries of the Whole of Ukraine, HEKS/EPER coordinates all its humanitarian interventions closely with respective governments, local authorities, and humanitarian coordination bodies.

Promising practices

Cash and Vouchers Assistance

One particular approach that HEKS/EPER supports is Cash and Voucher assistance (CVA) in the form of Unconditional Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance, Unconditional or Conditional Voucher assistance To respond to context demands, HEKS/EPER adapts its activities, considering that unconditional cash support offers the highest level of autonomy in decision-making and ranking of needs by the beneficiaries themselves. CVA approaches are the first responses in all contexts that allow it.

The beneficiaries are the first respondents in the type of crisis and will likely be the last ones responding to their needs. As part of CVA, HEKS/EPER has been concentrating on putting in place micro-grants to support Survival Community Lead Responses (sclr). Sixty-nine communities and an estimated 11'400 people benefited from these community-led projects in Hungary during 2022. As most initiatives were carried out in the first part of 2022, they have responded to diverse urgent needs: food and accommodation support, refurbishment of accommodation centres, clothes, winterisation, etc. the success of the approach is measured in beneficiaries' satisfaction. The community microgrants are designed by the beneficiaries, responding to needs otherwise uncovered by other humanitarian interventions. They are treated as group cash grants, for which the community holds the main accountability during the entire cycle. One of HEKS/EPER's priorities is empowering affected communities and ensuring localisation.

Protection

As a response to the Ukrainian crisis, HEKS/EPER has invested in the capacity building of partners regarding protection, gender-based violence prevention and responses, and mental health and psychosocial support. This approach complements others, ensuring the coverage of basic physical needs of shelter, food, hygiene, etc. Protection needs are covered by country teams and in support of governmental structures. Support for hospitals is also considered, especially regarding sensitisation and capacity building in treating GBV-affected people.

The neighbouring countries of Ukraine have generously welcomed hundreds of thousands of people since the beginning of the war. Some people choose to remain in these countries and adapt to new cultures, contexts, and, most of all, a new status. To support both governments and the people themselves, HEKS is engaging in legal and social support ranging from awareness raising, information dissemination and training of the legal framework of refugees. Understanding the new rights and responsibilities, but also the available assistance, is an empowering endeavour fully supported by HEKS/EPER.

Achievements & Perspectives

Key figures 2022

During ten months of response, HEKS / EPER managed to assist **more than 652'000 Ukrainians** both as refugees in **Romania, Hungary, Czech Republic** and **Moldova** as well as internally displaced people in **Ukraine**. The focus was on the most urgent relief and life-saving services through multi-sectoral support such as food security, protection, wash, shelter, and MPCA.

A total number of **431'990** people have been offered food in the form of dry food kits and hot meals through kitchen-on-the-go, and a total number of **108'196** Ukrainians have received protection services. **60'387** people have benefitted from WASH through non-food-item kits distributions. As part of winterisation interventions, **more than 50'000** people have received various support, such as sealing off kits, stoves, briquettes, winter clothes, sleeping bags and power banks for electronic devices. Moreover, HEKS/EPER provided Ukrainian refugees and IDPs in Ukraine with need-based 'mental health and psychosocial support' and enhanced their inclusion into neighbouring countries through professional social service support, case management and counselling. Special attention was given to enhancing the integration of Ukrainian refugees into the local labour market by improving their language competencies and access to governmental services. All countries have assisted a large number of refugees as follows ...

Services per sector	
Sector	Services delivered
Food security	431,990
Protection	108,196
WASH	65,387
Shelter	39,965
MPCA	13,172
Winterization	7,708
Livelihoods	100
Total	666,518

Country	Type of support	People reached
Ukraine	MPCA – multi-purpose cash; Food security – dry food kits and hot meals; WASH - Distribution of individual hygiene kits; Shelter / Winterisation - distribution of stoves & briquettes, Winter Clothes kits, sleeping bags, power banks, sealing off kits	416'510
Hungary	MPCA – multi-purpose cash, vouchers and group cash; Food security, Shelter; MHPSS - psychosocial assistance, advice, and counselling	105'013
Romania	MPCA – multi-purpose cash, vouchers and group cash, Food security; Shelter; WASH - Distribution of individual hygiene kits, livelihoods – job mediation and labour market integration	158'500
Moldova	MPCA – digital cash vouchers, winter kits for women, briquettes	1'530
Czech Rep	Emergency assistance, shelter, food security	485

Perspectives 2023 onwards

Response strategy for Ukraine

- Ensure consolidated emergency response at the front line: cover the basic needs of the most vulnerable conflict-affected people along the front line, in the hard-to reach-areas (where there is a lack of humanitarian assistance)
- Prepare for immediate assistance in case of massive displacement.
- Expand cash assistance for IDPs.
- Support for the returnees: follow up closely the return of Ukrainians and assist with house rehabilitation and development of income-generating activities.

Sectors of intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPCA • Food security • WASH • Shelter • MHPSS
Regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South (Odesa, Kherson, Mykolaev) • South East (Zaporizhzhia, Kramatorsk, Kharkiv) • Zakarpatska (Uzhorod, Berehove) • Chernivtsy
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-implementing with local partners for better access to affected communities • Local authorities on oblast, town and village levels

Response strategy for neighbouring countries: Moldova, Romania, and Hungary

- Transitioning the response towards social integration of Ukrainians and the host communities while focusing on emergency response in case of an increasing inflow of refugees (cash, food, etc.)
- Developing interventions based on Triple Nexus (development – humanitarian – peace)
- Close coordination and synergising with local NGOs, INGOs, Government, and relevant state institutions

Moldova
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sectors: MPCA, MHPSS, legal advice, education, winterisation • Regions: nation wide

Romania
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sectors: MPCA, education, job mediation and integration, sclr • Regions: North, North-East and Central parts of the country

Hungary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sectors: complex integration assistance, MPCA, sclr • Regions: Budapest and regions bordering with Ukraine



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