

## Ukrainian minority in Sibiu

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Most of the Ukrainian minority came to Sibiu fleeing from the war, after 24.02.2022.

### **Initial challenges for refugees were:**

- Lack of all types of information (paperwork, legal status, rights, restrictions, etc.);
- Unclear way how to find accommodation, even for transit;
- Lack of experience with long trips, including difficult weather conditions;
- The need to become a decision-maker (more than 80% were women with children).

On the other hand, there was a prompt response from NGOs and private volunteers. Before the government stepped in. They were present at the border crossing points, trying to help as much as possible. In all main cities, collection centers were created.

### **Later in March other problems have been revealed:**

1. Legal status. Since 3<sup>rd</sup> March the Directive for temporary protection on the territory of the EU took force. However local migration offices didn't have any procedures on how to issue those residence permits. And therefore, Ukrainians who were ready e.g. to begin working weren't able to obtain CNP for some significant time.

2. Education for children. Kindergartens, schools, universities. The educational system wasn't ready to accept these children. First of all, because of the language barrier they can be recognized in schools only as visitors, but not the pupils. While for kindergarten there are almost no Ukrainian-speaking educators, which causes too high stress for kids and parents refuse to enroll them in a state kindergarten.

3. Medical service. For urgent cases, any refugee could contact an ambulance or emergency hospital. But for more complex cases, which require further medical investigations, there were no clear procedures. And even now, 7 months later, a significant part of family doctors doesn't have any proper information about procedures for Ukrainians.

Same time, local authorities have stepped in and offered support. To evaluate the needs of the Ukrainian community, a few representatives of the minority have also been invited to the meeting of the County Council of Sibiu and NGOs.

After those meetings, Sibiu Ukrainian Center was created. The main goal was to redirect all efforts in a proper way, which corresponds the best to the real needs of the minority. One of the biggest and most important events took place on 4<sup>th</sup> May. The representatives of all key authorities in Sibiu have introduced clear procedures on each aspect (migration, accommodation, work, education, medicine, rights protection, financial support, etc.) and answered numerous extra questions. The meeting was attended by the representatives of 120+ families, who later spread the information among other community members.

**Further main activities of Sibiu Ukrainian Center** (June-August) are described in a separate report (see *Sibiu Ukrainian Center.zip*)

In parallel, a significant part of the efforts of Ukrainian community activists was spent on the establishment of the Ukrainian school in Sibiu. Please see a description of this project in a separate file *Ukrainian school in Sibiu.docx*

By so far, the primary school has already started. Since 3<sup>rd</sup> October, for 80 children of 1-4 grades. <https://stirileprotv.ro/educatie/o-scoala-ucraineana-s-a-deschis-la-sibiu-copiii-vor-invata-in-limba-materna-dar-si-in-romana.html>  
And we're still working on a school for 5-11 grades.

### **Present challenges and future goals**

Paying that much attention to the school project during the last several months was reasonable, as it resolves several aspects same time:

- 1) Education itself. The real academic knowledge.
- 2) Socialization for children. After 2 years of the pandemic, another year of online classes would have a terrifying impact on their ability to communicate with other people and their skills in teamwork.
- 3) Psychological difficulties of family members. Early wake-up, breakfast, public transport, homework - diving into a daily routine creates the feeling, that normal life is still possible. This helps to eliminate some fears and concerns even without a visit to psychology specialists.
- 4) Time for parents. Full-day school finally opens to the parent's ability to be hired for a full-time job. To become less dependent on financial support from the government or NGOs. And to start building more relevant connections with Romanian society.

And therefore, we expect, the next important goal will be supported to job seekers. Not only for low-skill jobs, but also support to high-educated specialists:

- Support with language classes (both Romanian and English);
- Support with equalization of Ukrainian diplomas;
- Classes for those who are open to obtaining new skills.

### **Immigration**

Temporary protection gives wide rights to Ukrainians, which cover all main aspects of staying in Romania during the war. For now, there are some promising activities, but still, no clear signs, that the conflict will be finished soon. Some families would like to start deeper integration.

And it was revealed that temporary protection beneficiaries are not considered Romanian residents. E.g., there is no way to buy a car in Romania and obtain license plates for it. People with disabilities cannot rely on any support from a state. Those who start a business here will still be asked to leave the country immediately once the war will finish. Etc. Legal advice and clear procedures are still needed in this aspect.

### **Teenagers**

There were no activities specially focused on a group of 12-17 years old children. They are not kids anymore, and not yet adults. All of them are individuals, but still need love and mentors. For the nearest months development of activities for this age group will receive higher priority.

### **Seniors**

There is a quite similar situation for people over 60 years old They can't work anymore, mostly due to health conditions. And don't feel the ability to learn any new language to integrate. And we shall help them to create their own sub-community, not to feel lonely and forgotten.

### **Sharing experience with other minorities**

By now there were just a few short discussions with the representative of the Arab community in Sibiu regarding their experience of integration.

## **Cultural events**

Representatives of the Ukrainian minority took part in several exhibitions (trade fairs) and invited a singer on Ukraine Independence Day as a part of the Focus in the Park festival. Cultural events shall be more intensified. For both – for Ukrainians to know more about Romanian culture and history, and for Romanians to know more about Ukraine. We have much in common in food, traditional clothing, and religion, but also there are some significant differences. And common cultural events may create new bridges between our nations. Including events with other minorities in Sibiu.

For a better understanding of the needs and challenges, and to see some numbers, I'm also sharing the results of our survey conducted during August. See the file *Survey Ukrainians Aug 2022.pdf*