



Activities of The United Methodist Church in the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe with/for Refugees from Ukraine *Summary of May 27, 2022*



Little Change – Continuing Help

Over the course of the past two weeks, there were no reports from the countries directly or indirectly neighboring to Ukraine indicating that there would be major changes of the general situation. This does, unfortunately, also mean that the prayers for peace in Ukraine have not yet been answered and that the suffering goes on. There are, however, still some developments:

- According to **Luca Bírtalan**, coordinator of the work with/for refugees in **Hungary**, the number of refugees accommodated by the Church considerably decreased. The focus of the activities, therefore, shifted to sending humanitarian aid transports to various places in Hungary and in Ukraine.
- District Superintendent **Rares Calugar** from **Romania** reported that the transport of medicines and medical equipment to Ukraine might become more difficult because of restrictions of the Romanian State. The Romanian leaders will further explore this situation as they are eager to continue sending this much-needed material to a hospital in the south of Ukraine.
- The number of internally displaced people living in the **western part of Ukraine** is decreasing, as well. People either go back to the places they have come from, or they try to find refuge in Western Europe. However, the needs of food, medical articles (e.g. for wound treatment), shoes or vests are increasing in Ukraine – and many things can no longer be purchased within the country. This has also become visible in a social media post of leaders of Kielce UMC in **Poland**: "Already the fourth delivery to Ukraine – or perhaps only the fourth? Because the need is much, much greater. "
- While, according to **Jana Křížova**, coordinator of the work with/for refugees in **Czechia**, people in Czech society are still welcoming and willing to help, **Karel Nyerges**, director of Diakonia UMC pointed to the fact that "predictions of social discontent are slowly but surely beginning to come true". This discontent is mirrored in questions such as "Why does the government cares for people from Ukraine but not for us?" or "Why do people from Ukraine receive help – and we do not receive anything?" and in spreading fake news. **Jana Křížova**, however, underlined that she would pray that people in society remain resilient to rumors – and that she would trust that there are still enough people with common sense.

Activities with and for Refugees from Ukraine

Czechia

- **Karel Nyerges**, director of Diakonia UMC, recently wrote: "I see this war crisis as an opportunity to realize the value of human life and to help those who need it most at this moment." He expressed his thankfulness because of the fact that the centers accommodating Ukrainian refugees on a long-term base are functioning. "People here are safe and have all the basics for a pretty good life." However, he added: "But otherwise they are still the ones who are in a mess. Even though they have a place to live, they are constantly dealing with internal insecurity, anxiety and fear. Maybe they don't show it so much yet, because it's their only defense."
- **Libuše Hajčiarová** from Jihlava UMC informed that a new Humanitarian Aid Center is being prepared in Jihlava. It will not only be for people from Ukraine but also for single-parent families from Jihlava region. The leaders also see this as a contribution towards alleviating unnecessary social tensions that sometimes arise.
- Part of the humanitarian aid transports organized by the Russian-speaking UMC in Prague go to Sumy region in the northeastern part of Ukraine, on the border with Ukraine. A pastor and chaplain serving prisons in this area provides prisoners with food, medicines and hygienic supplies.

Hungary

- The UMC in Hungary recently brought a food donation to kind of a social kitchen in Ukraine, where food for 60 to 70 people is cooked three times a week, as **Luca Birtalan** reported.
- Another transport was carried out to Mezőkaszony in Ukraine (clothes, diapers, baby food, food) and shared with about 15 families in urgent need.
- The Dorcas refugee center in Debrecen (Hungary) was once again supported with a food donation.
- A refugee family from this camp joined the United Methodist congregation in Debrecen.

Romania

- The UMC in Romania continues taking care of orphans from Ukraine, of elderly people accommodated in an Orthodox monastery near Cluj-Napoca, and of other "guests" from Ukraine living in a variety of places.
- They also continue trying to integrate these "guests" in the regular groups, camps, etc. According to **Sarah Putman**, coordinator of the work with/for refugees in Romania, "there is a positive feedback from the Ukrainians – they are interested in doing that".

May 27, 2022 / Urs Schweizer
(based on reports from CZ, HU, PL, RO, and UA)