



Activities of The United Methodist Church in the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe with/for Refugees from Ukraine



Summary of June 27, 2022

Simultaneous Short and Long-Distance Running

Methodists in the countries directly or indirectly neighboring to Ukraine continue to provide refugees from Ukraine with emergency aid – shelter, food, pastoral care, support for refugee camp, assistance in regard to the onward journey, etc. The humanitarian aid transports from Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary as well as Romania to Transcarpathia (in the Western part of Ukraine) also continue. They are a crucial support for the Methodists in Ukraine trying to help internally displaced persons – and a children's hospital, as well.

Again and again, obstacles are placed on this path. When it is increasingly difficult to purchase gas/diesel, for instance, as **Yulia Starodubets** from Ukraine said recently. Or when internally displaced people who have found shelter in school buildings in Transcarpathia, need to leave because the schools will be used again for the purpose they have originally been built. And when they need to do it earlier than expected because it was recommended by the responsible bodies to bring forward the start of the new school year. This will allow for a longer break in winter when the rooms would have to be heated and heating materials might not be available.

Mid-term relief activities in the countries directly or indirectly neighboring to Ukraine also continue. This includes providing accommodation for those who want to stay permanently and not for a few nights only. Or assistance in regard to learning the language of the host country. And it is always a joy when people can be helped to find a job, as **Luca Bírtalan**, coordinator of the work with/for refugees in Hungary emphasized. This is an important step towards becoming more self-sustainable.

However, besides the short- and mid-term activities, the leaders in both Ukraine and neighboring countries also explore how to prepare for next winter. Regardless of whether or not there will be peace soon, there will be a great need for places to stay. According to **Yulia Starodubets**, there is, for instance, a vision to construct modular houses in Transcarpathia (Ukraine), where people could be accommodated, and where food, hygienic materials and other items could be stored. There are a number of conversations going on in this regard, and implementing this vision would certainly be a tremendous opportunity to help people. It will, however, be a challenge to implement this project fast enough...

Ivana Procházková, Superintendent of the UMC in Czechia, shared an appeal encouraging people in the local churches to "dream bigger" and to develop ideas both locally and in an ecumenical cooperation (or even in a cooperation with non-church related NGOs). Some first ideas have already been developed. There are, for instance, highly qualified people from Ukraine (e.g. medical doctors) who would need high quality language courses. Or it has been discerned that there are great needs regarding people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. – The idea of this appeal is actually rooted in history – immediately after the UMC in then Czechoslovakia came into existence, orphanages and elderly people's homes were founded to help people in need.

Üllas Tankler, Executive Secretary of Mission Relationships in Europe and North Africa for Global Ministries, said in a recent ZOOM meeting, emphasizing how generous people have donated: "The money is there – and if we only could buy peace, it would be great." But as long as this is not possible, men and women in both Ukraine and neighboring countries remain committed to help people in need. Even if this means running a short and a long-distance race simultaneously.

June 27, 2022 / Urs Schweizer
(based on a recent online meeting with participants from BG, CZ, EE, HU, PL, and UA)