



Activities of The United Methodist Church in the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe with/for Refugees from Ukraine *Summary of June 14, 2022*



Because it is bright

Currently, daytime duration is still increasing – and this somehow makes a difference. Two participants of the recent online meeting focusing on the activities with/for refugees from Ukraine also referred to this reality: **Denis Kim**, who joined the meeting from Kyiv, described the situation in Ukraine's capital as "a little better" than one month ago. Although sirens can be heard regularly, "people do not seem to be so depressed anymore". He assumed that the warmth and the spring sunshine have a positive impact. And when **Jana Křížova**, pastor and coordinator of the work with/for refugees in **Czechia**, described some aspects of the situation in her country, she echoed this assumption: "The brightness of long days and the sunshine help people in their situation." This does not change anything of the fact that the cruel war and the suffering in Ukraine is continuing. That there is a shortage of salt in Ukraine, for instance, with prices skyrocketing. That the situation regarding gasoline is also terrible – which makes it difficult to drive to the border to pick-up humanitarian aid. Or to distribute humanitarian aid within the country. It does not change anything of the fact that whether or not leaving Ukraine is increasingly also an issue of rich and poor, as **Denis Kim** mentioned. Poor people more likely have no other choice than to stay and to face the current situation. And it does not change anything of the fact that in the countries neighboring to Ukraine, particularly those who did not (yet) decide to permanently stay in their host country but still hope to return to Ukraine one day, are living in a situation of very stressful uncertainty and difficult waiting. The brightness of the days with a long natural illumination from direct sunlight does not change these circumstances. But given the fact that the daytime duration will soon start to decrease again, it might serve as a reminder to those accompanying refugees from Ukraine how important it is not to grow weary of bringing a light of love and hope into the lives of these people. And this is what United Methodists in the countries directly or indirectly neighboring to Ukraine – and in Ukraine itself – are continuing to do.

Activities with and for Refugees from Ukraine

Czechia

- According to **Mária Kunstová**, members of Třeboň UMC have started an integration group for Ukrainian families in their premises that is open every weekday. The aim of this project, which was implemented in cooperation with the town of Třeboň, was to help mothers with young children with childcare, as the kindergartens in Třeboň do not have free capacity. In the meantime, Czech and Ukrainian mothers and their children regularly meet in the church premises and the integration group really deserves its name.
- In Tachov, distribution of clothing in the church, which had been uninterested for several week, is beginning to pick up again as the Red Cross is running low on supplies, said pastor **Jana Daněčková**.
- Pastor **Zdeněk Brož** shared about the ministry with a group of 12 refugees that has settled in Jablonné. A member of Jablonné UMC, for instance, is helping to start a vegetable garden around the church house, which will – at a later date – offer an opportunity to taste some Ukrainian specialties.

Hungary

- The UMC in Hungary continued to bring humanitarian aid (food donations) to both the UMC in Ukraine and to a refugee camp near Debrecen, where more than 170 people are living, as **Luca Birtalan** reported.
- The Church received 500 copies of a Ukrainian youth Bible. Some were passed on to refugees in Hungary, others will be brought to Ukraine.

Poland

- According to **Szarlota Kaminska**, coordinator of the work with/for refugees in Poland, people in Poland still have a friendly attitude towards the Ukrainian guests, and the willingness to help is still visible.
- Kielce UMC and Puławy UMC organized transports of food, clothes and medical supplies to Ukraine. Additionally, they are preparing a consignment for an orphanage in Poland with children from Ukraine.
- The UMC in Poland, together with other organizations, also helps people that would like to return to their houses in Ukraine with transportation.
- **Szarlota Kaminska** pointed to the challenge that sometimes, there are people and churches abroad that would like to express their solidarity with Ukrainian refugees by sending donations in kind – such as shawls or children’s blankets. As touching these expressions may be – the Church has to pay custom’s clearance and taxes for such parcels, and it is only possible to distribute the content within Poland.

Romania

- District Superintendent **Rares Calugar** reported that preparations for another transport of medicines and medical equipment to a hospital in the south of Ukraine can be continued – contrary to some doubts expressed in the last update (May 27), the door still seems to be open for such consignments.
- While in the first weeks of the war, the facilities of the UMC in Cluj-Napoca were used by people fleeing from Ukraine, there are now also Ukrainian women on their way back to their home country using the facilities as transitional stop to rest and restore before the final leg of their journey, as **Sarah Putman**, coordinator of the work with/for refugees in Romania, reported.
- A Ukrainian psychologist continues working with Ukrainian refugees in group therapy. She has one group and will start another.
- The Church Summer Camp 2022 will be multilingual with 30 Ukrainians from the regular worship services and the connections group having registered to attend – which is an impressive expression of the successful integration of the Ukrainian guests in the regular church activities.

Slovakia

- According to **Timotej Tagaj**, coordinator of the work with/for refugees in Slovakia, the UMC is continuing bringing humanitarian aid (mainly food, but also other items) to Ushhorod and Kamenica in Transcarpathia, where two United Methodist congregations serving internally displaced people are located. Additionally, consignments are brought to a children’s hospital in Mukachevo.
- A group of young Ukrainian students living in Kosiče (Slovakia) are supported by the Church, as well (scholarships, food and accommodation expenses).

While these activities often seem to be a drop in the ocean only, they do mean a lot to those people who are helped – and they continue to bring a light into their lives. Even if daytime duration is starting to decrease soon.

June 14, 2022 / Urs Schweizer
(based on reports from CZ, HU, PL, RO, SK, and UA)