

# VOICES OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS IN ROMANIA

MAY 2023

## What is this document about?

Hello! In this document, we will talk about what children and teenagers from Ukraine told a team of researchers about their life in Romania. The war in Ukraine made life dangerous and difficult for many people. Because of this, many children and their families in Ukraine decided to go to other places, where they are safe. Being in a new place can be difficult, but it also has some good parts. Many adults helping young Ukrainians who came to Romania would like to know how they can best support them.

**IMPACT INITIATIVES IS AN ORGANISATION THAT ASKS PEOPLE LIVING IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS ALL AROUND THE WORLD WHAT OTHER ORGANISATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS CAN HELP THEM TO LIVE BETTER LIVES.**

**SAVE THE CHILDREN IS AN ORGANISATION HELPING CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES, SO THAT CHILDREN CAN FEEL SAFE, GROW UP HEALTHY, AND LEARN.**

IMPACT Initiatives and Save the Children believe it is important to listen to children and teenagers, to hear from you how you feel and what you need. That way, we understand what your lives are like and we can give better support to you. In December 2022 and January 2023, we spoke with girls and boys from Ukraine between 8 and 17 years old, like you, about their lives in Romania. 114 young Ukrainians were part of these discussions, including 50 girls and 64 boys, who live in Bucharest, Galati and Suceava. We asked them about:

- what makes them happy or unhappy;
- what activities they do and who supports them;
- what they need most urgently;
- what adults can do to help get what they need.

## What did young Ukrainians tell us?



**Family and friends support children and teenagers the most**

**"I TRUST MY FRIEND WITH SECRETS AND TALK ABOUT MY SMALL PROBLEMS. BUT I TALK TO MOM ABOUT SERIOUS PROBLEMS." - GIRL, 8-11 YEARS OLD**

Children and teenagers told us that they talk to parents, siblings or friends when they have a problem. Many said that they go to their moms first. Some girls said that there are times when it's difficult to talk to their parents about their troubles. They said they feel like their parents don't understand them and that they argue. Older children told us they know about the problems of their families. Many teenagers, both boys and girls, said they help parents in the house and that they look after younger siblings. Many teenagers also said parents listen to their opinion when making decisions, which made them feel good and listened to.



**PARENTS AND PEOPLE HELPING UKRAINIANS COULD GIVE CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS THE CHANCE TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS ON DECISIONS THAT CONCERN THEM.**



**Young Ukrainians miss home and the people they love**

**"I AM WORRIED WHETHER WE WILL BE ABLE TO RETURN TO UKRAINE TO MY DAD AND MY KITTEN." - GIRL, 8-11 YEARS OLD**

Children told us that they miss their family, friends and pets who are still in Ukraine. Some younger children said that they miss home or that they want to go back. Some children (mostly boys) mentioned that they follow the news about what happens in Ukraine. They also said this makes them worried.



**ADULTS COULD HELP CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS STAY IN CONTACT WITH THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN UKRAINE.**



Save the Children


**IMPACT**

Shaping practices  
Influencing policies  
Impacting lives

## Most young Ukrainians feel safe in Romania

"I TOO FEEL SAFE AT HOME AND OUTSIDE."  
- BOY, 8-11 YEARS OLD

Most of the young people from Ukraine we talked to said that they feel safe in Romania. Some of them mentioned they are comfortable everywhere, while others told us they are comfortable in places that they know: at home, in school, or in parks. Young Ukrainians also shared that there are situations in which they feel unsafe. These could be noises like fireworks scaring them because they remind them of the conflict in Ukraine. Some also said that being in a place they don't know can be scary, or in places where people were mean to them, such as when travelling inside the city.

 **PARENTS AND PEOPLE HELPING UKRAINIANS COULD MAKE SURE THAT CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS CAN TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS, WHO CAN MAKE THEM FEEL SAFE AND NOT WORRY ABOUT THE PAST.**

## Not speaking Romanian makes life difficult

"ONCE I GOT LOST AND COULDN'T EXPLAIN TO ANYONE THAT I WAS LOST." - BOY, 12-14 YEARS OLD


Children and teenagers said that not understanding and not speaking Romanian is what is one of the most difficult things for them in Romania. They said that this makes it difficult for them to ask for help or to do things by themselves. Few young people from Ukraine also mentioned they wanted to go to a Romanian school, but this was not possible because they could not understand the language. Language was also mentioned as the main problem for parents and other adults when they are trying to find a job.

 **PEOPLE HELPING UKRAINIANS COULD MAKE EASIER ROMANIAN CLASSES THAT CAN HELP UKRAINIAN CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS LEARN FASTER AND BE ABLE TO MANAGE BY THEMSELVES.**

## Children said that most Romanians are kind to them, but children can be mean

"THE PEOPLE HERE ARE FUN AND KIND"  
- GIRL, 12-14 YEARS OLD

Most young Ukrainians said they felt welcome in Romania and that Romanians have been kind to them. They talked about hearing positive, encouraging things from locals, and sometimes even receiving gifts and help. Many children and teenagers said they would ask for help from any adult or from Romanian people they know. However, children and teenagers also talked about how sometimes Romanian children and adults could be mean. They shared that some Romanian children said insulting things about Ukraine or that they do not let them play on the playground. Boys also mentioned that Romanian children got into fights with them.

 **PEOPLE HELPING UKRAINIANS COULD CREATE MORE JOINT ACTIVITIES FOR UKRAINIAN AND ROMANIAN CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS, SO THAT THEY HAVE THE CHANCE TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER BETTER AND BECOME FRIENDS.**

## Young Ukrainians like being in nature or parks

"NATURE AND MOUNTAINS MAKE YOU FEEL SAFE."  
- GIRL, 12-14 YEARS OLD

Mountains, lakes, forests and parks seem to be the places young Ukrainians like the most in Romania. They also mentioned they often go on walks with their family and friends. Most children said that taking walks in parks and nature makes them happy and that it is important for them.

 **ADULTS COULD CONTINUE TO GIVE CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENJOY PARKS AND NATURE, AND FEEL SAFE THERE.**





## Most young Ukrainians attend online classes

"I LIKE THAT THERE IS A UKRAINIAN SCHOOL. IT IS BORING TO BE ONLINE WITHOUT FRIENDS." - GIRL, 8-11 YEARS OLD

Most children and teenagers learn online with their class from Ukraine. But they often told us that they don't learn much from these classes because the internet connection is bad and because it's difficult for the teachers in Ukraine to teach online during the conflict. Some go to Ukrainian hubs in Romania, and some who speak Romanian go to local schools. Those who went to Ukrainian hubs often said they were happy that they could have classes in Ukrainian. Children were also happy they could meet friends there. Those who attend both online classes and school in Romania often complained that they don't have enough free time for other activities.

! PEOPLE HELPING UKRAINIANS COULD GIVE UKRAINIAN CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS THE OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY IN CLASS, SO THAT THEY CAN LEARN WELL AND MAKE FRIENDS.



## Young Ukrainians miss the activities they used to do in Ukraine

"I PLAYED FOOTBALL AND PRACTICED KARATE IN UKRAINE. I DON'T HAVE SUCH OPPORTUNITIES HERE." - BOY, 15-17 YEARS OLD

Outside of school, children go for walks, meet friends outside or in activity clubs. They also play sports, draw or read. Many children said that they used to do more sports or dancing in Ukraine, but that in Romania they cannot do that because there are no places to go or because it's too expensive. Children asked for organisations to give them space for playing sports or dancing or to allow children to go without paying money.

! PEOPLE HELPING UKRAINIANS COULD GIVE YOUNG UKRAINIANS MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO DO FUN ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL, IF POSSIBLE FOR FREE.



## Most children and teenagers got basic medical help when they were sick

"I HAD A FEVER. I TOOK MEDICAL TESTS AND THEY TREATED ME IN A HOSPITAL." - BOY, 12-14 YEARS OLD

Many children said they went to the doctor in Romania when they were unwell. Some children were happy because it made them feel better. Other children said they needed to wait a long time or that they needed a lot of money for this. Few children also said that they got medicine from their parents or people they know and did not go to the doctor. Most children said that they are less healthy, or the same as in Ukraine. They told us this is because they don't do sports anymore. Some girls also said they would like to talk to a psychologist about their worries.

! PEOPLE HELPING UKRAINIANS COULD PROVIDE BETTER INFORMATION TO UKRAINIAN FAMILIES ABOUT HOW THEY CAN RECEIVE CARE WITHOUT HAVING TO PAY, AND GIVE AID TO HELP THEM RECEIVE DENTAL CARE.



## Young Ukrainians suggested these solutions for improving their lives:

### CHILDREN'S IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS ABOUT WHAT ADULTS CAN DO TO SUPPORT THEM:

- TO RESPECT CHILDREN, TO LISTEN TO THEM AND SUPPORT THEM.
- TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR UKRAINIAN CHILDREN TO GO TO SCHOOL IN ROMANIA AND LEARN IN UKRAINIAN.
- TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR THEM TO PLAY SPORTS AND DO OTHER ACTIVITIES IN UKRAINIAN.
- TO SUPPORT THEIR PARENTS AND FAMILY IN FINDING THE JOBS THEY HAVE EXPERIENCE IN.
- TO SPEND TIME WITH CHILDREN AND SHOW THEM LOVE.

### CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS' IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS ABOUT WHAT THEY CAN DO TO HELP OTHERS:

- TRUST AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER WHEN THEY ARE SAD.
- PROTECT EACH OTHER FROM MEAN PEOPLE.
- GO OUT MORE.
- SUPPORT YOUNGER SIBLINGS AND THEIR PARENTS, EVEN WHEN THEY DON'T SUCCEED IN SOMETHING.
- SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES AND INFORMATION WITH EACH OTHER AND ADULTS.
- GIVE HELP TO PEOPLE WHO NEED IT AND ASK FOR HELP FOR THEMSELVES WHEN THEY NEED IT.
- TELL OTHERS: "YOU CAN DO IT!"

