

Crisis in Ukraine

Our response for those affected by the conflict



We help wherever people need us. Throughout last year, people affected by the crisis, in Ukraine, in the neighbouring countries and in Switzerland were able to count on us for help.

Crisis in Ukraine: Annual Report 2022

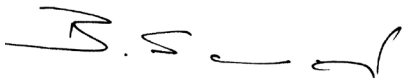
Thank you!

Dear Sir or Madam,

Last autumn, we issued our first report on our humanitarian assistance in the wake of the conflict in Ukraine. Since then, the situation in the country has unfortunately deteriorated. Humanitarian relief is still urgently needed, as is support for all those seeking protection in a foreign country.

You immediately showed great solidarity for the people affected by the crisis. We are very grateful for this extraordinary support. You enabled us to immediately respond to these people's needs and continue to expand our humanitarian response.

We all hope that the situation in Ukraine will soon improve. In the meantime, the Red Cross will stand by all those affected by it, thanks to your support.



Barbara Schmid-Federer

President, Swiss Red Cross



Cover page: This young woman and her daughter fled Ukraine and found protection at a shelter run by the Hungarian Red Cross. Thanks to Red Cross cash assistance, the mother was able to buy a warm coat for the winter.



The Swiss Red Cross is committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



Ternopil, western Ukraine: People driven from their homes by the conflict queue up to register for Red Cross cash assistance. The Swiss Red Cross supports the Ukrainian Red Cross humanitarian aid efforts in the western Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk oblasts, and Kirovohrad in the centre of the country.

© SRC, Remo Nageli

The SRC response in brief

Last year, the Swiss Red Cross (SRC) did its utmost to help the people in and outside Ukraine. As a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, it responded to sustained humanitarian needs.

The complex crisis required immediate assistance in a variety of sectors and over a large geographical area. Donations from countless long-standing partners and new supporters made this possible.

The response of the Red Cross Movement

By providing funding and emergency relief experts, the SRC helped to expand the aid of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: **1.1 million people** received **health-care**, medicines and psychosocial counselling. **1.2 million people** in particularly precarious circumstances received **cash assistance** so that they could buy themselves what they most urgently needed. ICRC ambulance crews **evacuated** more than **500 sick or wounded** people in conflict zones.

Joint SRC and URC assistance in central and western Ukraine

In three regions, the SRC worked with the local branches of the Ukrainian Red Cross (URCS) to provide rapid humanitarian aid for people displaced by the conflict. Almost **17,000 refugees** received the equivalent of **about CHF 75** to buy what they most urgently needed. The SRC and the URCS adapted **emergency shelters housing almost 4,000 refugees** to the cold weather conditions and provided them with kitchen appliances and washing machines.

The URCS expanded its home-based care service – social workers made 10,000 visits to **600 elderly people** who need assistance in their day-to-day lives. Many of them have been left on their own since the conflict escalated. The SRC reinforced the URCS teams with one-to-one **coaching** and advanced training in emergency relief.

Aid for those seeking protection outside Ukraine

The SRC's support enabled its sister societies in **Moldova**, **Poland** and **North Macedonia** and another partner organization in Moldova to maintain their assistance for Ukrainian refugees. Almost **600 people** who had fled to Moldova were able to speak to **psychologists** about their traumatic experiences and the difficulties of their situation in a new place and were given help with health and legal issues.

In North Macedonia, the Red Cross facilitated **emergency medical treatment** for **30 chronically ill refugees** who had not yet received asylum and were therefore not covered by health insurance.

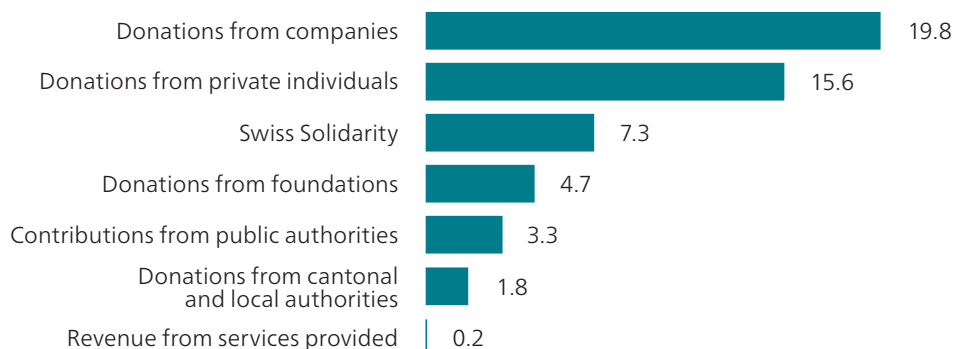
Support for refugees in Switzerland

People seeking protection in Switzerland also received support from the SRC. It provided answers to frequently asked questions, expanded its integration services and launched new projects. More than **20,000 people** received help in this way – with day-to-day issues, social integration or their job search. **1,300 volunteers** provided help and support for refugees from Ukraine. With its low-threshold services and awareness campaigns, the SRC managed to improve access to psychosocial counselling.

The crisis in Ukraine continues unabated and the situation of millions of people remains precarious. The SRC continues to stand by them – as long as necessary and wherever the need is greatest.

Sources of funding and expenditure at 31 December 2022 CHF million

Income (CHF 52.7 million)



Use of funds



By the end of December 2022, the SRC had received CHF 52.7 million in donations to its assistance during the crisis in Ukraine. The donations were received from companies, foundations, public authorities, private individuals, Swiss Solidarity and the federal government. Another CHF 200,000 was revenue from services provided.

By the end of December 2022, the SRC had used CHF 32.9 million for the benefit of people affected by the crisis – two-thirds in Ukraine and the neighbouring countries, and one-third for its multifaceted work in Switzerland.

The remaining CHF 19.8 million will enable it to continue helping in the months and years to come. Of that amount, CHF 8.7 million has been earmarked in accordance with the donors' wishes for activities in Ukraine and its neighbouring countries.



Viktor Shgofenko receives a voucher from the Ukrainian Red Cross. He fled his home to Ivano-Frankivsk in western Ukraine. The SRC and the Ukrainian Red Cross help people like Viktor Shgofenko to meet their most urgent needs.

© SRC Remo Naegeli

Ukraine and neighbouring countries

Protection for all those displaced or otherwise affected by the conflict

Since February last year, the national Red Cross societies have been providing humanitarian relief, protection and support for the refugees. The SRC has helped to expand the coordinated international aid in the region and supported its sister societies in Ukraine, Moldova, Poland and North Macedonia.

In February last year, the **armed conflict** between Russia and Ukraine **escalated**. Millions of people in Ukraine have had to endure the terrible consequences ever since. Many of them have been affected by the conflict since 2014. The violence and destruction are forcing people from their homes. More than 13 million – roughly a third of the population – have either been **displaced within the country** or have **escaped to safety across the border**. The dramatic situation in Ukraine and the huge number of refugees have required immediate **humanitarian assistance**.

This response is possible thanks to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. **Fifty-eight national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** contribute funding, expertise and supplies. Their staff and **volunteers** help in the regions affected by the conflict and anywhere people are seeking protection.

Our support for Ukraine and its neighbouring countries, at 31 December 2022:

 **1.2 million people** received cash assistance from the Red Cross Movement to cover their most urgent needs.

 **1.1 million people** received healthcare, medicines and psychosocial support thanks to the Red Cross Movement.

 **4,000 people** received safe accommodation in one of the 45 shelters equipped by the SRC and the URCS in western Ukraine.

 **10,000 visits** by URCS home-based care staff provided day-to-day support for almost 600 elderly people.

Besides emergency assistance, we also focus on **psychosocial support**. Worries about relatives or memories of terrible experiences are a mental burden on many refugees.

In the field, the SRC supports its sister societies, first and foremost the **Ukrainian Red Cross (URCS)**, and is involved in the **relief efforts** coordinated by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

During the first few weeks, the SRC deployed **specialists** to organize the relief operation for the people affected in Ukraine and its neighbouring countries. At the request of the URCS, the SRC worked with Red Cross branches in **Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk and Kirovohrad** to set up and expand the assistance for internally displaced persons and the local population. The SRC also supported the relief programmes run by its sister societies in neighbouring countries Moldova and Poland and in North Macedonia.

SRC working hand in hand with the Red Cross Movement

As a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the SRC makes an essential contribution to the **coordinated response** for the people affected by the conflict, whether in Ukraine or elsewhere. The Red Cross Movement combines **expertise** and **financial resources** to support the humanitarian work of the national societies. Thanks to the commitment of the volunteers and staff of the **Ukrainian Red Cross** and the expertise, funding and staff of **57 other Red Cross and Red Crescent societies**, those affected received protection and assistance.

Red Cross Movement response in 2022:

- Shelter, host families, rehabilitation assistance for 1.8 million people
- Safe water, hygiene products for 10.6 million people
- Almost CHF 200 million in cash assistance for 1.2 million people
- Healthcare, medicines, psychosocial support for 1.1 million people
- Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, child-friendly spaces, information about missing relatives for 250,000 people
- Humanitarian aid at 460 service points along the migration routes, assistance with evacuations and transport, help with official procedures for 800,000 people



The Hungarian Red Cross emergency healthcare unit helped Ukrainian refugees as they crossed the border, including many children and pregnant women. Many were suffering from exhaustion, stress or chronic diseases.

From its office in Budapest, the **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** coordinates the **complex logistics** required to deliver relief supplies to Ukraine and its neighbouring countries. It also provides support in Russia, where many people have fled over the border from the conflict zones in Luhansk and Donetsk. The **SRC** gave the IFRC financial support and deployed 11 experts from its **emergency response pool**. The experts were stationed in Ukraine or in neighbouring countries to help **quickly set up** supply chains to Ukraine.

The **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** concentrated its efforts on the **conflict zone itself**. The **SRC** contributed financially to this work. ICRC teams evacuated more than 500 sick and wounded and helped to ensure that more than 1.3 million people in the Kyiv, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv and Chernihiv regions had functioning heating systems. It also provided 170 healthcare facilities with medicines and medical supplies.

Humanitarian response of the SRC and its sister society in Ukraine

Since the conflict escalated, the Ukrainian Red Cross (URCS) has been working tirelessly to help those affected and was quickly able to count on the SRC's support. The two organizations have been collaborating for **over five years**, particularly in providing support for elderly people. Since 2019, the SRC has also been helping the URCS to generate funds for its work. Thanks to this groundwork, the URCS was quickly able to set up an **online donation platform** in February 2022. More than CHF 18 million poured in from Ukraine and all over the world to fund the URCS's humanitarian work.

Support for three URCS branch offices

The URCS asked the SRC to support its two branches in the **western regions** of Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk, where many people have sought refuge from the conflict. It was a tremendous challenge for the URCS to cope with the huge scale of humanitarian needs. In coordination with the two branches, the SRC planned the relief measures and helped the teams build up the necessary competencies and capacities.

Last September, at the request of the URCS, the SRC expanded its assistance to the Kirovohrad region in **central Ukraine**. People are also fleeing to this region from the south and east of the country.

Improved living conditions

In preparation for the cold winter, and with the support of SRC specialists, the URCS **improved the emergency shelters** housing almost 4,000 refugees. In 45 shelters in the west and another 10 shelters in the centre of the country, it made repairs, improved heating systems, windows and insulation, and procured mobile beds, kitchen appliances and washing machines. It also made sure that the shelters were accessible to elderly people or those using wheelchairs.

Cash assistance for the most urgent needs

Thanks to **cash assistance and vouchers** from the SRC and the URCS, almost 17,000 refugees in Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk and Kirovohrad were able to buy what they most urgently needed, such as food, clothes, medicines or household articles. Selected according to specific criteria, the beneficiaries received the equivalent of about CHF 75 to spend in supermarkets or furniture stores.



“Our role is to support the work of the Ukrainian Red Cross. The URCS has the best understanding of the humanitarian needs and the social and cultural circumstances in the affected regions.”

Yvonne Affolter, SRC programme coordinator for cooperation with the URCS

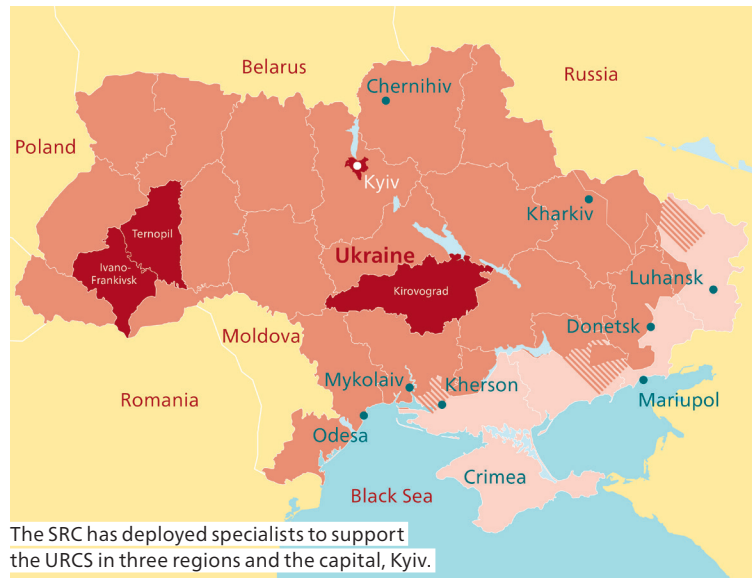
Healthcare for refugees and the elderly

In consultation with the URCS, the SRC procured **medical supplies** that were in short supply on the local market on behalf of hospitals in Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk. It provided emergency medicines and other medical devices such as wheelchairs and walking frames with a value of almost CHF 1.5 million.

The URCS expanded its **home-based care services**. Social workers made almost 10,000 visits to almost 600 elderly people or people with disabilities who needed daily care. With the younger population fleeing or on the front lines, these vulnerable people are more often left to fend for themselves and support is more important than ever. The home-based care workers cook meals, clean homes and brighten up the lives of lonely people. A **needs analysis** in Kirovohrad showed that home-based care services and psychosocial support are needed most urgently and there is a lack of medicines. The SRC helps the URCS branch to develop appropriate activities.

URCS teams empowered

The ongoing emergency response requires an extraordinary and exhausting commitment from the staff and volunteers of the three URCS branches and they have had to rethink their way of working. The SRC offered **one-to-one coaching** and training in finance, reporting, logistics, healthcare, cash assistance, management and shelter building, as well as **advanced training** in first aid and emergency relief. The SRC procured vehicles, renovated premises, rented warehouses and improved logistics procedures to make it easier for the URCS to expand its assistance.



Ivano-Frankivsk: improved shelters

Tatyana B., her children, Dominik and Sofia, and her parents had to flee from the conflict zone in Donetsk. They now live in an emergency shelter in Ivano-Frankivsk city in the eponymous region in western Ukraine. "We'd just like to go home. But that's impossible for now," says Tatyana B. For as long as the conflict lasts, her family and the many other refugees should be able to live in the best possible conditions under the circumstances. So, the SRC and the URCS have improved the building's facilities and even set up a playground where Dominik and Sofia can play.

SRC experts deployed

Since mid-March 2022, the SRC has deployed specialists to reinforce the capacity of its sister society. The URCS was therefore able to provide **large-scale humanitarian assistance** while maintaining its usual services and reacting to the population's needs. During the first few months, some 30 specialists in health, emergency shelter, logistics and financial assistance were deployed on **missions of 3 to 6 weeks**. Since then, the SRC has recruited Swiss, Ukrainian and international staff for longer missions. The **SRC delegation** comprises three offices.

- A **coordination office** in Kyiv manned by a country coordinator and specialists in home care, financial administration and funding issues.
- Two **regional offices**: one for Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil and one for Kirovohrad, each with a team leader, delegates for health, emergency shelters and cash assistance, drivers and specialists in financial administration and logistics

The SRC also helps the URCS to **coordinate** its work with the competent authorities, for example with the Ministries for Social Affairs & Health and Disaster Preparedness.

Help for people seeking protection outside Ukraine

The SRC helped its sister societies in the neighbouring countries to assist the many refugees.

Moldova: food, cash assistance and psychosocial support

The SRC is assisting Ukrainian refugees, host families and vulnerable households in Moldova through support for two long-standing partners, the Moldovan Red Cross (MRC) and CASMED. Moldova, which borders Ukraine, is one of the **poorest countries in Europe**. Nevertheless, it has taken in many refugees or helped those planning to travel on to other countries.

With the help of its volunteers, the **MRC** took on the distribution of the many relief supplies provided by its partners in the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. **CASMED** helps the elderly and other vulnerable people.

Thanks to the SRC's support, more than 3,000 refugees received **bed linen** and 2,000 people received **food parcels** and **hygiene products**, such as soap, washing powder and washing-up liquid. In many cases, **vouchers** help provide even more efficient and targeted help. More than 3,000 people, including many families with children, received CHF 65 in vouchers for food, day-to-day items and medicines. In a spirit of equality, 4,000 host families and vulnerable people in the local population also received food vouchers.

In a survey, the beneficiaries stated that the vouchers **made their lives easier** and reduced their stress so that they could develop **positive coping strategies**.

A team of psychologists held 1,700 **counselling sessions** in the shelters for almost 600 refugees and answered questions about legal and health issues. The psychologists were able to gauge the status and needs of these people over time and organize extra support if required.

The SRC has also been supporting the **blood transfusion service** in Moldova for nine years. The country's need for blood donations rose sharply, because many refugee women gave birth in Moldova and some refugees needed emergency treatment. To ensure the safety of the blood, the SRC provided the blood transfusion service with the supplies needed to produce blood products for a period of three months.



Bălți, Moldova: An IFRC worker gives her attention to a Ukrainian girl. The girl's family and the other shelter residents received aid parcels from the Moldovan Red Cross.

© Moldovan Red Cross, Egor Ietushhev

Poland: humanitarian aid and integration

Since the conflict escalated, almost **10 million people** have escaped across the border into Poland, and more than a million have stayed there. The Polish Red Cross (PRC) provides humanitarian assistance and helps the refugees integrate into local life. The SRC provided financial support for this work.

By the end of 2022, the PRC had distributed 1.3 million **food parcels** and more than 500,000 **hygiene kits** to a total of 1.2 million people. About 80,000 families received cash assistance or vouchers so that they could find accommodation and cover their most urgent needs. Special **health vouchers** enabled them to collect medicines from pharmacies. More than 100,000 people took part in the PRC's **integration activities**: meetings with the local population, summer camps for the children or Polish classes.

North Macedonia: winter aid, medical care and language classes

The North Macedonian Red Cross (RCRM) helped Ukrainian refugees at two border crossings and in two reception centres. Through daily contact, it identified their **most urgent needs** and responded with appropriate assistance, in coordination with the Ministry of Labour & Social Policy and other public authorities. The SRC has been working with the RCRM since 2017 to help refugees and migrants, and since 2022 it has also been supporting the assistance the country is providing for Ukrainian refugees.

By the end of the year, almost 150 refugees had been able to use the vouchers to buy **warm clothing** for the winter. On account of rising fuel prices, 35 host families received **cash assistance** towards heating costs.

The RCRM facilitated emergency medical treatment for 30 chronically ill refugees who had not yet received asylum and were therefore not covered by health insurance. It also advocated for **access to healthcare** for all refugees.

Red Cross volunteers looked after **refugee children**, while their parents took care of administrative matters or attended a doctor's appointment. They played games, did handicrafts, practised sport and learned about traditional North Macedonian customs. Volunteer psychologists offered **psychosocial support** to both children and adults.

The RCRM provided tablet computers for 20 children so that they could attend **online classes** with their Ukrainian teachers. It expanded its **language classes** so that as many Ukrainian children and adults as possible could quickly make themselves understood in Macedonian.



Moldova: Psychosocial support

When her mother could no longer find her epilepsy medication at the pharmacies in Odesa, psychologist Anna Antipova decided to leave Ukraine with her mother and fifteen-year-old son. The journey over the border was very difficult and they were grateful to be welcomed by the Moldovan Red Cross when they got there.

Months later, Anna made the acquaintance of two psychologists working with CASMED that receives support from the SRC. They offered her a position on the team and provide psychosocial support to other Ukrainians. The decision came easy to Anna, as she knows how desperate people who have fled the conflict are and how valuable this kind of help is.

"First of all, I try to understand the level of their mental stress. Then, I help them adapt to their new lives," she explains. She also helps people cope with stress caused by the traumatic experiences in Ukraine or the everyday difficulties in their new home. She is pleased that, as a result of the sessions, some people start to volunteer or take up a creative hobby. "I'm amazed by their stories and their courage. Everyone can tap into their inner strength."



Inna und Volodymyr Krut and their children live in a refugee shelter in Ternopil. The SRC and the URCS improved the shelter's facilities. Safe accommodation remains the priority of our support for people driven from their homes by the conflict.

© SRC, Remo Naegeli

Outlook

The humanitarian crisis in Ukraine drags on and the situation is **getting worse**. Despite the considerable danger, some refugees have returned home. Others are now fleeing as the fighting comes closer. Many people have been displaced **for much longer than expected**. They had hoped, in vain, to return home after just a few weeks.

The **International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement** and the SRC continue to stand by those affected and those seeking protection. We reduce the challenges in their everyday lives and help them to cover their basic needs, stay healthy and integrate into society, no matter where they are.

In **Ukraine**, the SRC is continuing to collaborate with the URCS in Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk and Kirovohrad, constantly adapting its assistance to current requirements. The focus is still on health, safe accommodation, cash assistance and strengthening the URCS.

Psychosocial support is more and more important. The URCS can rely on its volunteer network and the experience and expertise of the Danish Red Cross to reach out to more people in need of support. The SRC helps provide **low-threshold services** in Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk and Kirovohrad, allowing refugees living in collective shelters to share their difficult experiences and receive support. The home-based care workers also play an important role. With an attentive ear and a hug, they can make a big difference.

Through its two partners in **Moldova**, the SRC continues to help Ukrainian refugees and Moldovans themselves who are suffering the consequences of the conflict. The MRC and CASMED provide **cash assistance** and facilitate the coexistence between the local population and the refugees. The SRC provides direct support for three MRC branch offices that previously did not have a cash assistance programme.

The SRC continues to collaborate closely with its sister societies along the **Balkan route**, where refugee assistance is embedded in their ongoing programmes to support migrants. Not all refugees are able or want to travel on to western Europe. The Red Cross helps them to participate in **social and cultural life** of the local community until they are able to return to their homes.



Thanks to the Graubünden Red Cross, refugees from Ukraine can establish contacts with local people, exchange ideas and receive help and advice on challenges in everyday life.

© SRC Graubünden

Switzerland





Immediate, long-term assistance for refugees throughout Switzerland

Within a few months in 2022, large numbers of people fled from the conflict in Ukraine to Switzerland – sometimes as many as 1,200 a day. Like all refugees, they needed help on arrival and with learning a national language, integrating, and finding a job. The SRC was able to provide support thanks to its many committed volunteers.

For the SRC and its partners – public authorities and other relief organizations – this huge influx of refugees from Ukraine caused various **challenges**. What can we do to ensure that all those seeking protection here can find safe accommodation and integrate into society? What is the mental health of all these people and can the psychosocial services cope?

The federal government launched the **S permit**, which grants protected status, and by the end of 2022 had awarded it to more than 70,000 Ukrainian refugees. They were then immediately allowed to work and met with great **solidarity**, especially at the outset. They were able to use public transport free of charge and many people signed up as host families or to make rooms available in their homes. However, refugees and their hosts were faced with administrative **hurdles** and, unlike in an

Our help through expanded services or new projects by 31 December 2022:

 <p>20,000 refugees from Ukraine received support</p>	 <p>1,300 volunteers assisted refugees and host families</p>
 <p>800 host families were given advice and assistance</p>	 <p>64 SRC projects and services provided support for refugees</p>

official asylum centre, the refugees have had to take care of many things for themselves.

The SRC provided support for the authorities and expanded its assistance for refugees. Committed Red Cross volunteers helped to welcome **new arrivals**, provide **language courses** and facilitate social integration in the new **meeting spaces**. The SRC expanded its low-threshold **psychosocial counselling** service for refugees and provided host families with training on migration and trauma.

We also met the enormous need for concise **information** about life in Switzerland, through local advice centres for refugees, host families and support persons and HELPFUL, the new online information platform. Many refugees from Ukraine are well-educated and computer literate and found it easier to adapt thanks to the information on the platform.

As the official auxiliary to the public authorities, the SRC played a **subsidiary** role, in support of the government's humanitarian efforts. Under the Fundamental Principle of **humanity**, the SRC helps to ensure refugees can lead safe, dignified lives. Its approach is categorically for all refugees to be **treated equally**.

Red Cross volunteers: standing by refugees

From March to December 2022, as many as 1,300 people volunteered with the SRC to support refugees from Ukraine. This included countless experienced Red Cross volunteers, including those from the Red Cross rescue organizations, and many others who were offering their services for the first time.

Immediate deployment

Every day in March and April, hundreds of people from Ukraine arrived at the **federal asylum centres**. The SRC and other humanitarian organizations helped the public authorities take care of those seeking protection. Red Cross volunteers and employees of our corporate partners handed out drinks, meals and clothes, and helped to register the new arrivals for the S permit. Volunteer interpreters provided support as needed.

Events happened in quick succession. Coordinating the volunteers and planning their work was **complex** and needed to be done **quickly**. Thanks to experienced SRC staff and the volunteers' flexibility, we were able to put them to good use quickly and **effectively** to help the refugees.



In April and May, Red Cross volunteers at Basel railway station answered the new arrivals' most urgent questions. The Basel-Stadt Red Cross provided this service on behalf of the cantonal authorities.

Everyday support

Refugee families and individuals found apartments or host families or were housed in a shelter. Having found a place to stay, they were faced with new challenges: They needed to start learning a Swiss national language so that they could cope with everyday life, get their children into school and look for a job. The paperwork was also a challenge. Thanks to the determination of its volunteers, the SRC helped with **language classes** and provided meeting spaces for **social interaction**. Various examples of this assistance throughout Switzerland can be found on p. 12.

Psychosocial support to help cope with stress

Thanks to the SRC, refugees have received the help they need to cope with the **trauma** they have experienced. While refugees in Switzerland have access to the regular public healthcare system, the regular psychiatric care network and the five specialized outpatient clinics for victims of torture and war, which treat children and adults, were already very busy even before the crisis in Ukraine.

The SRC filled the **gaps in the psychosocial support chain** by providing information, **raising awareness** and offering **low-threshold services**. It used its knowledge and experience to provide supplementary support for the activities and services of partner organizations and the authorities.

The SRC Tracing Service also helped to alleviate some of the mental stress experienced by the Ukrainian refugees, by helping them to search for missing relatives. Because it is stressful not only being **separated** from a family member, but also **not knowing** where that person is or even if they are still alive. A **Russian-speaking specialist** was recruited to handle tracing requests in Ukraine.

Well informed about the trauma of displaced persons

What is trauma? How can I deal with the stress factors I experience as a refugee in Switzerland? What is the best way to help a refugee? The SRC provides **answers** to these questions on its **online platforms** and on **social media** – now also in Ukrainian and Russian. This was a way for the growing Ukrainian community in Switzerland to help refugees from Ukraine.

The information was very well received. By the end of the year, our brochure '**When you just can't forget**' was downloaded or ordered almost 5,000 times in German, more than 2,000 times in Ukrainian, just under 1,000 times in English and almost 700 times in Russian.

In various episodes of our new SRK Aktuell **podcast**, the SRC explained about the mental trauma that people from conflict zones find difficult to overcome, even once they have got used to a new day-to-day life. The two most popular episodes talk about teaching traumatized refugee children and the experience of host families. By the end of 2022, they had each been listened to almost 300 times.



"Thanks to generous donations, the SRC volunteers and staff could provide more low-threshold psychosocial counselling services. These stabilize traumatized refugees and help to improve their physical and mental health. They can then face everyday life despite stress."

Martine Scholer, 'Psychosocial support for refugees from Ukraine' project manager, SRC Headquarters

Empowering teachers and people supporting refugees

The SRC has made **training on refugees and trauma** available to a broader audience. Seventeen new course leaders from six SRC cantonal associations attended training and can now run courses. By the end of 2022, the six cantonal associations had held 31 courses on how to support traumatized adults and 12 courses on teaching traumatized children and teenagers.

These courses enable participants to understand the circumstances of people who have experienced war, persecution and displacement. By means of films, discussions and simple exercises, the participants gain **confidence** in dealing with people experiencing trauma. Thanks to generous donations, volunteers, host families and teachers can attend the courses **free of charge**. **Volunteers** who can act as support persons are particularly important to the refugees' mental health. Their presence and their willingness to listen to the refugees' stories or worries have a reassuring and stabilizing effect.

Direct support for refugees

The SRC helped to quickly **expand** well-established **low-threshold support services**. Specialists at the SRC Headquarters and the SRC Outpatient Clinic for Victims of Torture & War provided support and training for the cantonal associations and other organizations.

- **START** group sessions help refugee **children and teenagers** to recognize and work through their emotional stress and trauma. Fifty-two teachers, social workers and psychologists were trained to run START groups, including seven Ukrainian specialists. Five sessions were held.
- **SPIRIT** trains refugees and migrants to provide low-threshold psychological counselling for refugees from the same country in a **one-on-one** setting and refer those with severe trauma symptoms to specialized facilities. Four cantonal associations recruited 'helpers' and ran the first courses. Two of these cantonal associations also run **EASE**, a similar programme for children and teenagers.
- **Femmes-Tische** and Männer-Tische are moderated round table discussion groups for either women or men in various languages. The participants talk about issues of family, health and integration, and strengthen their personal resources and their social network. The Verein Femmes-Tische extended its services throughout the country, also through Red Cross cantonal associations.



“The great thing about the START method is that it works like a mosaic. While the goals of each session are clearly defined, we can use a variety of different tools to achieve those goals, depending on the group dynamic.”

Psychologist Elena Oks from the association 'From migration to integration' trained to be a START group leader to help traumatized children and teenagers.

Low demand at the SRC Outpatient Clinic

The SRC Outpatient Clinic for Victims of Torture & War in Bern offered **telephone counselling** sessions for non-medical personnel, but few people actually called in. At the end of 2022, there were only a few Ukrainian patients in treatment at the SRC Outpatient Clinic. Many refugees find support in the rapidly growing **Ukrainian community** in Switzerland. In addition, many people take **time** after their traumatic experiences before they can start to deal with their mental health. And in countries of the **former eastern bloc**, psychology and psychiatry are often associated with the 're-education of political dissidents', so they do not realize how much it can help them.



Solothurn: SRC infobus

The mobile SRC infobus enables the Solothurn Red Cross to bring its services closer to the people, for example in remote asylum centres, where volunteers spend time with the residents. Last year, the SRC infobus visited additional places to give Ukrainian refugees opportunities for social interaction.

Zurich: Job prospects

Volunteer mentors help recognized refugees and temporarily admitted persons to look for training or a job. The Zurich Red Cross has opened the service to people with an S permit and has recruited new volunteers.

Fribourg: Language and integration workshops

The Fribourg Red Cross offered additional German and French courses. Trained volunteers run the classes to make communication easier for migrants with little or no knowledge of the languages as they go about their everyday lives.



Graubünden: meeting_ground

Since September 2022, the Graubünden Red Cross has been organizing a weekly get-together for refugees from Ukraine to meet outgoing locals. meeting_ground enables people to meet each other, exchange ideas and ask questions about everyday life in Graubünden. Volunteers run the event and organize activities for the children.

Geneva: Seniors d'ici et d'ailleurs

The Geneva Red Cross programme 'Seniors d'ici et d'ailleurs' (senior citizens from here and elsewhere) provides support for people over 55 with and without a migration background who are lonely and have trouble taking part in social life. The programme includes language practice, but also excursions and creative workshops. The Red Cross has expanded the service to allow for the participation of elderly refugees from Ukraine.

Integration projects

The SRC provides a broad range of services for refugees throughout Switzerland. As many asylum-seekers from Ukraine arrived in Switzerland within a short period of time, the demand for integration help increased. Thanks to generous donations, between March and December 2022 the cantonal associations were able to **launch or expand 64 services and projects** for Ukrainian refugees. The SRC was able to reach at least **20,000 refugees** and provide support for more than **800 host families**. Many cantonal associations set up services on behalf of the cantonal authorities or in cooperation with other relief organizations.

As the number of refugees rose, the SRC constantly reacted to the new challenges they faced. The cantonal associations quickly set up additional **language courses** and created new **meeting spaces** and social activities. They recruited extra volunteers to help the refugees deal with administrative issues, learn a local language, **find a job** and get used to the cultural realities of Switzerland. Professional support for the refugees was also expanded, such as with social and health counselling, a counselling centre to promote life-skills or projects to provide psychosocial support.

Information about life in Switzerland

From the very beginning, the SRC helped the refugees with answers to their most **urgent questions**. In some cantons, staff and volunteers manned booths at train stations on behalf of the public authorities. Soon afterwards, the SRC also ran telephone and online information services.

Because they were allowed to work in Switzerland thanks to the launch of the new S permit, Ukrainian refugees quickly had to familiarize themselves with the **health and education systems, administrative procedures** and the **job market**. The Swiss federal system was an enormous challenge for the refugees, as much of life in Ukraine is organized centrally.

In particular, the many people in **private accommodation** needed information in **Ukrainian** so that they could go about their everyday lives in their towns and cantons. The SRC's quick reaction helped to reduce the stress caused by a lack of information.

- The SRC translated into Ukrainian and Russian **brochures** and other information on **health** that were already available in various languages on the [migesplus](#) platform. These are intended for the refugees themselves, but also for specialists and other people working with them. They make access to the healthcare system easier and help protect the refugees' physical and mental health. By the end of 2022, the Health Guide to Switzerland had been downloaded over 3,000 times in Ukrainian and almost 4,000 times in Russian.
- The SRC launched the [HELPFUL](#) information platform with verified information on **relevant topics** in Ukrainian and Russian. An optional geo-tracking function directs visitors to **services in their vicinity**. The platform includes a Telegram chat room. By the end of the year, Red Cross volunteers had answered about 450 **specific questions**. The SRC recruited two Ukrainians to moderate the chat and publicize the platform among the **Ukrainian community**. The platform clocked up more than 148,000 visits by roughly 35,000 people, mainly in Ukrainian and Russian. The most important topics were **food, residence status, financial assistance** and **employment**.

The SRC also used its new SRK Aktuell podcast to broadcast information on topics such as displacement, trauma and integration. This raises awareness among the **population** and provides information about support services – for example for **host families** who have taken in refugees.

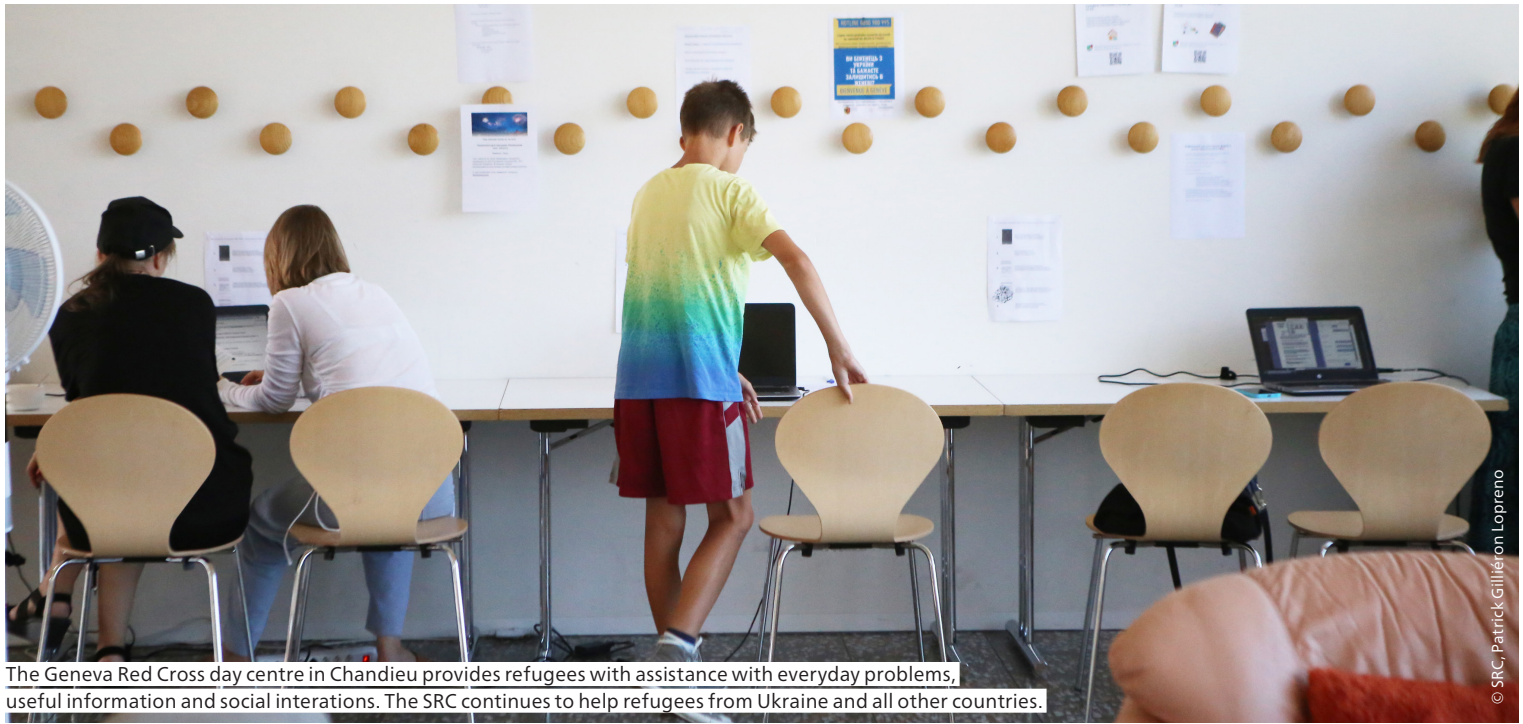


“The most common questions are about finding a job, whether professional qualifications are recognized and where to find cheaper food and clothes. Many things function differently in Switzerland.”

Anastasiia Masliukovska,
moderator on the HELPFUL information platform

Listen to the SRK Aktuell podcast
(in German)





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Help in financial difficulties

The conflict in Ukraine has an impact on the **prices** and **energy bills** in Switzerland. This has consequences for people and households living on or below the poverty line. Various cantonal associations therefore run a fund especially for people who have found themselves in financial straits because of an unexpected event.

The SRC has also set up the **SRC financial aid fund**, currently in its pilot phase, to provide help all over the country. The SRC only provides support when all other possibilities have been exhausted. Ukrainian refugees with an S permit are eligible for support. Between April and December 2022, the SRC approved more than 700 applications, thereby helping almost **1,900 people**.

Shopping vouchers for people in poverty

Coop, our official partner, donated CHF 500,000 in shopping vouchers, which the SRC cantonal associations distributed to refugees from Ukraine. These vouchers **bridge the financial gap** between their arrival and when they are eligible for some social benefits. The SRC ensures that **everyone is treated equally**. Thanks to the SRC Humanitarian Foundation, it was able to provide an equal amount of emergency funding for other groups.

Outlook

The many people from Ukraine seeking safety in Switzerland **still** need our help. We stand by them – just as we stand by all people in precarious circumstances. Our activities are aimed at promoting and strengthening **equality** and **solidarity** in society.

The more stability refugees find in Switzerland, the more likely they are to deal with their **mental health**. Over the past year, the SRC has increased its support for refugees with mental health issues – thanks to the great solidarity of its donors. It has made knowledge about displacement and trauma more widely accessible and helped to set up support services. The SRC plans to continue developing the all-important help for this very vulnerable group and anchoring the topic of psychosocial support in an internal coordination office at SRC Headquarters. The aim is to make the fundamentals and practical experiences available within the Red Cross.

The SRC is now shifting to a **longer-term commitment** to help refugees from Ukraine. It has integrated the coordination committee that is responsible for allocating project funds and ensures the flow of information into the Social Integration and Migration Division at SRC Headquarters and disbanded the temporary crisis structures at the end of March. The most important tools – low-threshold exchange and regular newsletters on the topic – will remain in place and continue to enable a rapid response to crises in the future.

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Thank you for your solidarity.

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