



The possibilities and limits of a mid- and long-term housing program for refugees arriving from Ukraine to Hungary

Evaluation of the housing program run by From Streets to Homes Association and Habitat for Humanity Hungary



Research report

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Executive summary

Between March 2022 and March 2023, From Streets to Homes Association (ULE) and Habitat for Humanity Hungary (HFHH) jointly operated a medium and long-term housing program for refugees arriving to Hungary from Ukraine. In the first period of the program (March 2022 to summer 2022), it operated as a Solidarity Housing Program, linking homeowners offering their flats for free or at low cost with refugee families. ULE also provided intensive social work to the families. From the summer of 2022, the Solidarity Housing Program was gradually phased out, and a Rent Subsidy Program was introduced. Under this scheme, the rent payable to homeowners is partially covered (up to 50%). Landlords sign a rental contract directly with the refugee families, and have a separate contract with ULE for the subsidy portion. Under this scheme, families no longer received social work, but were assigned a contact person to contact in case of questions or difficulties. Some households were able to transfer from the first program to the next, which also meant that those who previously had a social worker continued to be accompanied in the Rent Subsidy Program. At the time of the evaluation, in March 2023, 7 households were still participating in the Solidarity Housing Program and 96 households were in the Rent Subsidy Program.

The main objective of both program components (referred to collectively hereafter as the ULE-HFHH program) was to provide longer-term and independent housing for refugees, complementing other, shorter-term housing programs of crisis intervention, which are usually provided in collective accommodation. This main objective was met. Among different programs responding to the housing needs of refugees arriving from Ukraine in 2022, there are only few that provide accommodation in independent rental housing. The ULE-HFHH program is one of these few, thus filling a gap. The possibility of independent housing provides greater autonomy for refugee families and better supports integration. The latter is reinforced by social work and job search support for some families. At the same time, it is important to underline that, compared to the largely free-of-charge housing options in collective accommodation, this scheme is relatively more accessible to refugee families with a more stable financial situation, as they have to cover at least half of the rent on their own. Even so, the ULE-HFHH program has been successful in engaging families in difficult financial circumstances, for whom it is assumed that additional support and social work will help them to maintain independent housing.

In this respect, the ULE-HFHH program for refugees from Ukraine demonstrates the legitimacy of the housing first methodology advocated by these organizations. This approach enables relatively more vulnerable households to live in independent housing and, in the case of refugees, also facilitates their integration and resettlement in Hungary. The fact that the two organizations originally work in the field of housing and include refugee families in this base work, as opposed to the primarily crisis intervention approach of refugee support organizations, is an advantage in terms of the integration impact of the program. These different forms of support (crisis intervention and long-term housing) can ideally build on each other and complement each other.

The program will continue to be managed by From Streets to Homes Association independently from April 2023 onwards. Based on our assessment, the following elements of the program could be improved and enhanced. Communication with homeowners should be improved and their long-term involvement should be

sought beyond the current crisis response. A survey among homeowners about their perspectives with the program and the minimum rent levels they would expect if participating in such a scheme in the longer term would be a good idea. In addition, we suggest better targeting rent subsidies to ensure a more efficient use of resources. In assessing the options for tenants, it is worthwhile to get a clearer picture of which households could really benefit from a temporary subsidy and what are their realistic options for moving on. And for households in need of permanent support, particularly those who are intending to settle in Hungary, it would be interesting to develop a framework that will ensure long-term affordability of housing.

In Hungary, in response to the crisis caused by the Russian war in Ukraine, subsidized housing schemes have been set up for which resources would otherwise not have been available. In addition, different support organizations have started to cooperate more intensively than before. It would be worthwhile to make good use of this situation and maintain its results from a housing perspective. Sustaining the housing programs established during 2022 and disseminating their experiences beyond the refugee support programs could potentially improve the general situation of housing provision in Hungary.

Housing programs for refugees from Ukraine in Hungary

Housing services available for refugees from Ukraine

In December 2022, 10 months after the start of the full-scale invasion against Ukraine, the UNHCR estimated the number of refugees from Ukraine in Hungary at 150-160 thousand. The number of refugees under temporary protection was 34 thousand in February 2023.¹ There is no recent data on the exact number of persons for whom the Hungarian state provided accommodation during their stay in Hungary. Until 26 September 2022, the National Directorate General for Disaster Management helped to accommodate 13,000 refugees from Ukraine. This state coordination task was taken over by the county defense committees.² However, some of these refugees were not accommodated through the disaster management and county defense committees.

Even before the full-scale war against Ukraine,³ the Hungarian state did not provide targeted public housing solutions and housing programs for refugees and beneficiaries of international protection. Since 2018, there have been no significant housing programs for refugees in Hungary.⁴ There has been no substantial change in the public provision of housing for refugees since the start of the Russian war against Ukraine; the responses provided by the Hungarian state were only on the level of immediate, low-threshold crisis intervention. Accommodation and housing programs for refugees fleeing from Ukraine are mainly provided by charitable organizations and NGOs in Hungary. Institutional accommodation has been opened by municipalities and different public authorities since March 2022, especially in the first months of the war. However, there are no well-structured exit routes for refugees from institutional accommodation towards independent housing. This is a general shortcoming of the Hungarian social care system, which also affects Hungarian citizens in different kinds of social shelters.⁵

¹ On the estimated number of refugees, see the compilation by Lakmusz: Neuberger, Eszter (2022): [Élősködőknek állítja be az ukrán menekülteket egy gyorsan terjedő videó, de hadilábon áll a tényekkel](#). Lakmusz, december 16. On current numbers of refugees registered for temporary protection status, see [the website of UNHCR](#).

² Neuberger, Eszter (2022): [Élősködőknek állítja be az ukrán menekülteket egy gyorsan terjedő videó, de hadilábon áll a tényekkel](#). Lakmusz, december 16.

³ We identify the outbreak of the war with 24 February 2022, the time of the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia. We do not address the effects of the Russian military actions which had been ongoing on the territory of Ukraine since 2014. The reason for this is that it is only in 2022 that refugees started to come to Hungary in large numbers as a result of the Russian war against Ukraine.

⁴ Pósfai, Zsuzsanna, Szabó, Linda (2021): [Policy analysis and proposal for the improvement of the housing of beneficiaries of international protection in Hungary](#). Institute of Public Affairs, Menedék-Migránsokat Segítő Egyesület, Budapest, Warszawa.

⁵ See in detail: Pósfai, Zsuzsanna (2018): [Annual Report on Housing Poverty in Hungary 2018: English Summary](#). Habitat for Humanity Hungary, Budapest; and also: Dés, Fanni, Pósfai, Zsuzsanna (2021): [Nők és lakhatás: A nők speciális szükségleteire válaszoló lakhatási megoldások](#). Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Budapest.

The majority of those fleeing the Russian war in Ukraine arrived in medium-size and larger Hungarian cities, where rental housing was already in short supply before the outbreak of the war. Thus, Ukrainian refugees faced difficulties in finding permanent accommodation and longer-term rentals. With the temporary increase in solidarity among the population of Hungary in the first months of the war, access to housing became easier, as private landlords were more willing to rent out their apartments to families fleeing from Ukraine, and there were therefore many free or very cheap housing options available. In the early days, many NGOs also helped to organize temporary housing for refugees. The situation of refugees from Ukraine was thus temporarily better than that of refugees in Hungary in general. However, these opportunities were mostly not available in the long term.

The central state (disaster management) and the local state (municipalities) provided temporary accommodation for refugees from Ukraine who could not find housing elsewhere. These state and municipality-run temporary shelters are often overcrowded, inadequate for a winter stay and located in poorly accessible parts of municipalities, or far from jobs and services. At the same time, for the poorest refugee families, these temporary accommodations offered better housing conditions than their permanent residence in Ukraine. It was a specificity of the wave of refugees coming from Ukraine to Hungary, that families from the region of Transcarpathia (next to the Hungarian border) were over-represented, because their mother tongue is Hungarian, and many have Hungarian dual citizenship. Many of these families lived under poor social conditions in Ukraine as well, and many of them were of Roma ethnicity. Most of the poor Roma families from Transcarpathia were placed in institutional housing through the mediation of activist groups.⁶ Refugees, including those with temporary protection status or dual citizenship from Ukraine, have a negligible chance of being able to enter the municipally owned social housing sector in Hungary, because of its marginal size (2.6% nationally).

Housing programs of various NGOs and charitable organizations are located between institutional forms of housing and the private rental market, and these represent the majority of subsidized housing program available to refugees. A comparative analysis of a few selected NGO housing programs is presented in the first part of the report. In terms of their form, these programs differ: some support refugees in institutional accommodation, but on a longer-term basis, with families accommodated separately; while other programs place refugees in “independent” private housing. In all of these programs, complementary services and support are usually available for refugees beyond housing. This combination of services helps families in their settlement and integration process in Hungary.

Workers’ hostels are one of the forms of private accommodation which are widely used by refugees. Some Ukrainians already working in Hungary and living in workers’ hostels reunited with their families after the outbreak of the war. Family members living in Ukraine moved to Hungary; many workers’ hostels allowed family members to move in. After the outbreak of the war, the Hungarian government also launched a subsidy program

⁶ Tóth, Judit, Bernát, Anikó (2022): [Menekültválság 2022-ben. Az Ukrajna elleni orosz agresszió menekülteinek magyarországi fogad\(tat\)ása](#). In: Kolosi, Tamás, Szelényi, Iván, Tóth, István György (szerk.): Társadalmi Riport 2022. TÁRKI, Budapest, 347-367. Eredics, Lilla (2022): [The situation of Transcarpathian Romani families fleeing from Ukraine to Hungary](#). Romaversitas Foundation, Budapest.

for companies to employ and accommodate people from Ukraine. Employers can apply for housing and travel allowances of up to HUF 60,000 (cc EUR 160) per month per employee (and an additional HUF 12,000 (cc EUR 12) for each child), up to 50% or 100% of the rental costs, depending on location, for a period of 12 months. The subsidy can be extended for a further 12 months on request. Since the allowance is paid to the employer and not to the employee, the housing of the employed person is linked to the employment contract, which means a strongly dependent relationship.⁷

In addition to the scarcity of the private rental sector in Hungary, housing affordability is a widespread difficulty for refugee households.⁸ Especially in medium-size and larger Hungarian cities, rents have risen sharply in recent years. There are no generally available housing subsidies for Hungarian citizens, and such support has not been available for refugees either. An exception is the monthly cash subsidy of HUF 22,800 (EUR 61) (HUF 13,700 (EUR 36) for children) for those obtaining temporary protection status. The amount of the subsidy does not cover living costs.

An international comparative analysis of housing programs for refugees in Ukraine was carried out by the Metropolitan Research Institute for Habitat for Humanity's regional office (HFH EME).⁹ Therefore, we will only focus on the comparison of a few selected housing programs in Hungary, and will not undertake an international comparison. Following that, we will evaluate the joint program run by From Streets to Homes Association (Utcáról Lakásból Egyesület, ULE) and Habitat for Humanity Hungary (HFHH). This program will be referred to as the ULE-HFHH program hereinafter.

The research was based on the following methods:

- Literature review,
- Interviews (with implementers of housing programs for refugees and with homeowners offering their flats to refugees),
- Questionnaire survey among refugee households participating in the ULE-HFHH program.

Characteristics of housing programs for refugees in Hungary

For the current report, four housing programs for refugees were analyzed, in addition to the program implemented by ULE and HFHH. The primary source of information for the programs beyond ULE-HFHH was interviews (4 in total) with program implementers. We selected programs that were comparable with the joint ULE-HFHH program. This meant that we focused on longer-term housing programs, accommodating people for at least a few months, and not on crisis intervention accommodation. This distinction is not entirely clear-cut, as

⁷ See [Government Decree 96/2022. \(III.10.\)](#), and the [website of the program](#).

⁸ On housing affordability, see: Csepregi, Dóra Fanni (2022): [Fordulópontoz érkezünk: a lakhatás megfizethetőségének alakulása](#). In: Vankó, Lili (ed.): Éves jelentés a lakhatási szegénységről 2022. Habitat for Humanity Magyarország, Budapest, 5-16.

⁹ Housing of Ukrainian Refugees in Europe: <https://www.habitat.org/emea/housing-ukrainian-refugees-europe>

many housing solutions for refugees arriving in Hungary were initially intended to be temporary, in response to the immediate crisis situation which developed as a result of the Russian invasion against Ukraine. However, over time and in practice, with the prolongation of the war, many accommodation solutions became long-term by necessity. Yet, in the case of the programs analyzed, longer-term housing provision has consciously been a central element. The following four organizations were interviewed in March 2023:

- Evangelical Lutheran Diakonia (Integration Service);
- Migration Aid (their accommodation in the city of Győr);
- Hungarian Red Cross (Disaster Management Group);
- Dorcas Ministries.

In addition to the above organizations, we have also identified longer-term housing programs for refugees at the following organizations: the Hungarian Baptist Aid, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, the Hungarian Interchurch Aid, and Kalunba (a small organization assisting refugees and migrants arriving in Hungary). Unfortunately, we were not able to interview these organizations for various reasons, mainly due to the lack of capacity of the service provider staff.

Table 1 compares the main features of the long-term housing programs for Ukrainian refugees implemented by ULE-HFHH and by the four organizations mentioned above.

Table 1: Comparison of housing programs for refugees arriving to Hungary from Ukraine

Organization	Basic parameters and financing	Form of housing and housing support	Number of beneficiaries, target groups	Enrollment into the program	Additional services	Options for moving out
ULE-HFHH program	<p>In the initial period (March 2022 – summer 2022), the program operated as a Solidarity Housing Program, with homeowners offering their apartments free of charge or at a discounted price. This phase was financed by funds provided by the HFH EME regional office. From summer 2022, a second phase started, which was a Rent Subsidy Program, financially aiding refugees on the private rental market. In this phase, most beneficiaries found an apartment to rent on their own, signing rental contracts directly with landlords. ULE has a contract with the landlords on the rent subsidy provided by the organization. ULE also manages contacts both with landlords and with refugee tenants. HFHH provides logistical and communication elements. The Rent Subsidy Program has been largely funded by grants from UNHCR and EPIM. The HFH EME regional office also provided funding, primarily funds of SHO (Samenwerkende Hulporganisaties).</p>	<p>The form of support is a rent subsidy, which can be up to 50% of the housing costs, but typically covered only about a 25%. In addition, between March and summer 2022, a Solidarity Housing Program was providing matchmaking between landlords who offer their flats for free or at low cost and refugee families. Intensive social work was also provided for this group.</p>	<p>At the time of the survey, there were 103 families in the program, 7 of whom in the Solidarity Housing Program and the vast majority, 96 families, in the Rent Subsidy Program. The 103 families represent 323 persons, of which 133 are children, 117 women and 72 men. About half of the clients are coming from Transcarpathia (they speak Hungarian, and are mostly of Roma ethnicity), and the other half of beneficiaries are Ukrainian or Russian-speaking families from Kyiv or Eastern Ukraine.</p>	<p>Two main considerations were taken into account: firstly, the family must be able to cover its share of the housing costs and it must be likely to be able to stay in the home on its own after the relatively long-term, but temporary support provided by the funding scheme. This meant that families were expected to have some level of financial stability. On the other hand, among those who met the above criteria, priority was given to families in greater need. With the support of the Rent Subsidy Program, some people have become tenants in housing previously offered on a solidarity basis.</p>	<p>In the Rent Subsidy Program, tenants have contact with a dedicated ULE staff member, but there is no intensive social work in the traditional sense. In the Solidarity Housing Program, tenants were accompanied by more intensive social work. From January 2023, clients can also go to the weekly office hours for advice / support. Material support: hygiene products and household textiles, furniture, and household appliances were provided to the families. This element of the program was largely managed and funded by HFHH, and supplemented by donations from ULE.</p>	<p>According to the selection criteria (households must be able to pay at least half of the rental costs), the expectation is that after the subsidized period, the majority of the supported families will be able to pay their rent on their own, as households become economically stronger, find employment, etc. Moving out is particularly problematic for single-earner, single parent households. Since ULE also runs a social rental agency program, it is a future possibility that some of the apartments and tenants could be integrated into that.</p>

Organization	Basic parameters and financing	Form of housing and housing support	Number of beneficiaries, target groups	Enrollment into the program	Additional services	Options for moving out
Evangelical Lutheran Diakonia	<p>The program is primarily funded by international church funds and has been running relatively unchanged since 2016. This is the only program reviewed here that was not set up in early 2022 in response to the Ukrainian crisis. The main housing program is the provision of a rent subsidy to refugee families and individuals in private rental housing, for up to 3 months. Refugees sign a contract directly with the landlords (or hostels), and the Diakonia provides the cash assistance directly to the refugee families. In addition, there are two flats that the organization rents and then sublets to refugee families.</p>	<p>The maximum amount of the subsidy is HUF 120,000 (EUR 320) per month for families and HUF 80,000 (EUR 213) for singles. This can cover the entire rent, but utility costs only if the rental contract includes a fixed amount. The subsidy is only available for three months. The program is extremely flexible and can be used to cover a wide range of housing solutions. The primary form of housing is private rental housing, and occasionally workers' hostels. In addition to the organization's main program, they also mediated between private landlords and refugees during the first wave of refugees arriving from Ukraine in early 2022.</p>	<p>Between March 2022 and March 2023, a total of 400 families were supported, 90% of whom were refugees from Ukraine. (The program remained open to other refugees during this period.) 70-80% of their Ukrainian clients are from Transcarpathia, the majority of whom are Roma families. Poor health conditions of refugees and access to health services are a particular problem.</p>	<p>An important aim is for supported families to be able to maintain their housing after the subsidized period, so the program was only able to enroll people who have some income. Households need to be able to find a home and sign a contract independently. They can apply for support after signing a rental contract, which requires a greater degree of independence. Within the target group, preference is given to more vulnerable families (e.g. single parents, Ukrainian or Russian speakers, people with poor health conditions). Many of their clients come from some form of temporary accommodation, and clients sent by other organizations are always welcomed.</p>	<p>In addition to housing, families are given a living allowance (previously vouchers, then cash) and an allowance for buying medication. Medication support is also available to people who are not in the housing program. Those in the housing program also receive intensive social work with regular contact. Progress on the targets set together with the social worker is a prerequisite for receiving the next monthly housing subsidy.</p>	<p>It is planned to extend the rent subsidy over time, so that it does not cover 100% of housing costs during the subsidized period, as currently (but thus allowing the supported period to be longer). This is expected to increase the proportion of people who are able to keep the rented accommodation after the subsidy period is over. At present, about half of the clients are able to keep the rented flat, and about a quarter move to another apartment. The last 25% have either left the country or have been unable to stay in their apartment and have been placed in institutional accommodation (the organization provides support to arrange an entrance into institutional accommodation). In their experience, the majority of people from Transcarpathia want to stay in Hungary.</p>

Organization	Basic parameters and financing	Form of housing and housing support	Number of beneficiaries, target groups	Enrollment into the program	Additional services	Options for moving out
Migration Aid (Győr shelter)	<p>The program was financed mainly from private donations during 2022. Since the beginning of 2023, the program has run on state funds, received on a normative basis based on the number of beneficiaries. Migration Aid operates two shelters for refugees from Ukraine, the Győr shelter being the one for long-term accommodation. The organization rents one floor of a privately-owned workers' hostel, and the refugee families and individuals are signing a contract with Migration Aid.</p>	<p>The workers' hostel has a common kitchen and a men's and a women's bathroom. Rooms are equipped with 3-4 beds, one family is accommodated per room. Singles are accommodated together. Refugee families and individuals can live here for free, with Migration Aid paying rent to the owner of the hostel.</p>	<p>There are 20 rooms in total, with around 60 residents. The vast majority of residents are from Eastern Ukraine, Ukrainian or Russian speakers, of "medium" class status (mostly blue-collar workers, employees). 80% are single women with children; they are prioritized for admission. There are some two-parent households and a few single women in addition.</p>	<p>In the first period, when most people arrived at the hostel, most of the residents came from Migration Aid's temporary accommodation in Budapest. Afterwards, newcomers were informed through friends, and eventually some arrived who were already in Hungary but had lost their previous accommodation. Adults must look for work and children must be enrolled in school. The organization also provides assistance in finding jobs and schools.</p>	<p>In addition to the bedrooms, there are 2 study and play rooms for children. Free food is provided for the residents (in the form of base ingredients, and they cook independently), and help to access external services (e.g. healthcare) and help in administrative issues is also provided. Services are available during specific periods of the day. Outside of office hours, the staff can be reached by telephone.</p>	<p>Most of the inhabitants want to return home when the war is over. Some want to settle in Hungary and have been helped to join the Maltese Charities' integration program in Győr, allowing them to move to independent private rental housing. During the life of the program so far, about 20% of the residents have returned to Ukraine and 15-20% have traveled on to Western Europe. It is planned to operate the hostel unchanged until the end of summer 2023, after which the operation will depend on the circumstances.</p>

Organization	Basic parameters and financing	Form of housing and housing support	Number of beneficiaries, target groups	Enrollment into the program	Additional services	Options for moving out
Hungarian Red Cross	<p>The Hungarian Red Cross rents residential properties and accommodation from different landlords in 8 locations (Budapest, Dunaújváros, Győr and its surroundings, Szeged, Szentes, Miskolc, Salgótarján, Hódmezővásárhely). Refugee persons and families have an agreement with the Red Cross, and they can stay in the accommodations for free.</p> <p>The housing program was funded by UNHCR, but other sources of the Red Cross also funded some service components for refugees. There is no time limit for staying in the accommodation.</p>	<p>Everything is free for residents, with the Hungarian Red Cross paying rent to property-owners. Housing takes different forms, eg.: one floor of a hostel, workers' hostels, small-scale hotels, detached houses, municipal housing. In the majority of cases, the Hungarian Red Cross runs the accommodation with its own staff and volunteers. Exceptions are the accommodation in Budapest and the two sites where there is no collective accommodation, but only independent houses/apartments.</p>	<p>The accommodation capacity varies between 30 and 130 people, with 8 accommodation units accommodating a total of 550-600 people.</p> <p>In addition to this number, refugees have also received accommodation in various institutions of the Red Cross; in addition to the UNHCR program.</p> <p>In the beginning, there was more turnover among residents, especially in Budapest, now there is less.</p>	<p>The Defence Committee of the Disaster Management (state agency) sent the people, there was no selection by the Hungarian Red Cross. About two thirds of their clients are Hungarian-speaking Roma families, and one third are Ukrainian and Russian-speaking households. Because of their inherently disadvantaged situation, Roma families need more support.</p>	<p>In addition to housing, refugee families have access to a wide range of services within the Hungarian Red Cross: food, hygiene products, medicines, health services, training, social and psychological support, language training, cash assistance, etc. These services are covered by non-UNHCR sources.</p>	<p>It is an organizational decision to treat existing accommodation as permanent housing. Maintenance costs will be reduced by moving the program to more affordable (e.g. municipally-owned) rented properties where possible.</p> <p>For Roma families and families with young children, moving from collective accommodation to independent private rental housing is made more difficult by discrimination, lack of education and unemployment.</p> <p>In the future, the organization also plans to develop a housing program to support refugee families in independent rental housing.</p>

Organization	Basic parameters and financing	Form of housing and housing support	Number of beneficiaries, target groups	Enrollment into the program	Additional services	Options for moving out
<p>Dorcas Ministries</p>	<p>The only program among those reviewed, where the accommodation, which is a campsite, is owned by the organization implementing the program. The program was implemented with a combination of various sources: international church funding, government, UNHCR, individual donations. This is the first housing program of the organization.</p>	<p>Refugee families live in the Dorcas-owned campsite, near the city of Debrecen. Families are provided with free accommodation and other services. The program provides a complex integration service. Before the war, the campsite was used for camping disadvantaged children, and since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it has been completely switched to a long-term (minimum of a few weeks) housing service for families.</p>	<p>Dorcas specifically helps the worst-off families from Transcarpathia, 99% of whom are Roma, with low levels of education and living in poverty. The background explanation to this is that the organization has been helping Hungarians from Transcarpathia and Transylvania who are in difficult financial circumstances for 40 years. There are 25 houses and 15 container flats, currently 33 families and around 200 people live there.</p>	<p>In the first period, residents mainly came from large temporary shelters at the border (run by the police, emergency services, and charitable organizations). After that, the number of people coming through acquaintances increased. 30-40% of the residents are transient, the rest have been here since the beginning of the Russian invasion. They want to help families who want to settle in Hungary and who they can work with in the longer term. Another selection criterion is that they want to help the most disadvantaged families.</p>	<p>In addition to housing, Dorcas provides psychosocial support, runs an education program and faith-based programs, provides food aid and other donations. Skills development and an integration approach (employment, school attendance for children) are an important part of the program. There are permanent social workers who work closely with families.</p>	<p>The so-called “Moving On Program” is to be launched in the near future to help families find independent housing in surrounding villages, which could eventually become their own property. This program would be available to families who have been in the Dorcas integration program and wish to settle in Hungary. As this element of the program is not yet operational, those who have so far moved out of the program have moved to Western Europe or elsewhere in the country.</p>

In total, around 1,500 people found housing in the above-mentioned five programs. The total number of refugees in all the NGO and charity-run housing programs could be a few thousand, and another few thousand in shelters maintained by public actors. Altogether, this is still a tiny number compared to the 150-160 thousand people estimated by UNHCR to be in Hungary in December 2022. Thus, the vast majority of Ukrainian refugees in Hungary need to solve their housing situation on their own. As most housing programs do not have a time limit for staying in the housing program, those who have managed to get in are presumably in a much easier housing situation than those who had to find housing on the private rental market on their own and without financial assistance from organizations.

In terms of the general framework the five programs can be grouped in three categories:

- In the programs run by ULE-HFHH and the Evangelical Lutheran Diakonia, refugees live in privately-owned apartments. Refugee households sign a contract directly with the owner, refugees pay rent to the landlord, to which the organizations provide financial support.
- In the programs run by Migration Aid and the Hungarian Red Cross, the organization rents larger accommodation facilities on the private rental market (workers' hostel, dormitory, hostel, etc.). The organization pays the rent to the owner, but provides free accommodation for refugee families.
- In the case of the Dorcas Ministries' program, refugees can also stay for free in the accommodation, but the property is owned by the organization.

In the initial period, enrollment into the programs was primarily through arrivals from larger organizations or through short-term crisis shelters. Over time, enrollment through acquaintances became more pronounced. In addition, longer-term housing programs are more likely to involve people who have been in Hungary for some time. One important reason for this is that many temporary housing options were available for refugees in the first months, but these have been discontinued, and families had to find other solutions of accommodation.

UNHCR is the main funding provider of the housing programs, which is a change compared to the previous refugee wave in 2015, when it did not have a significant role in providing funding for housing programs.¹⁰ In addition, church organizations' (especially international church organizations') funding is significant, which is similar to the situation in 2015.¹¹ Over time, public funding has also become available for some organizations, and funding from private donors has also been relatively significant. For some organizations, there are considerable amounts of European Union (European Programme for Integration and Migration, EPIM) funds, but in a much less pronounced way than in the post-2015 housing programs.¹² More marked than in the previous refugee wave is the unpredictability of how long and to what extent funds will be available to support

¹⁰ Pósfai, Zsuzsanna, Szabó, Linda (2021): [Policy analysis and proposal for the improvement of the housing of beneficiaries of international protection in Hungary](#). Institute of Public Affairs, Menedék-Migránsokat Segítő Egyesület, Budapest, Warszawa.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

housing programs run by NGOs and charitable organizations. The primary reason for this is the unpredictability of when the war might end. However, in the light of the geopolitical situation, it is clear that longer-term housing solutions are urgently needed, instead of the initial solutions of crisis intervention.

All schemes left the eligibility relatively broad, and accepted clients primarily on a first-come, first-served basis. The ULE-HFHH and the Evangelical Lutheran Diakonia programs were available to refugees from relatively more stable financial situations, as the programs require families to pay rent to the landlords and there is no permanent help available, as in a community accommodation. Focusing on this relatively more stable group was a conscious decision on the part of From Streets to Homes Association, as they found the criterion of stable income crucial to achieve long-term housing security. The idea of the NGO was that during the period when households receive a rent subsidy, they would be able to consolidate their lives in Hungary to the point where they could maintain independent housing without financial support. In the ULE-HFHH program, about half of the residents are from Eastern Ukraine or Kyiv (these are Ukrainian and Russian native speaker families) and half are from Transcarpathia (Hungarian native speakers), while in the program of the Evangelical Lutheran Diakonia, the proportions are 30% and 70%, respectively.

As for the other programs, the proportion of refugees from Transcarpathia and Eastern Ukraine are differing. While Dorcas only accepted Transcarpathian families living in extreme poverty, Migration Aid considers single mothers speaking Ukrainian or Russian as the most vulnerable group, due to language barriers. The shelters of the Hungarian Red Cross, also due to the size of the program, have a wide scope of refugee populations with different social backgrounds, but again, Transcarpathian families of low social status are over-represented. Ideally, different housing programs can complement each other by targeting different groups of refugee families arriving from Ukraine.

Main dilemmas of providing housing for refugees

From the analysis of the above programs, some general dilemmas have emerged in relation to housing programs for refugees currently arriving to Hungary, and for refugees in general. Two of these are highlighted below: firstly, the issue of the transitional character of the housing programs compared to settlement and integration of refugees. Secondly, the dilemma arises to which extent “refugee” housing schemes can provide solutions for people who were living in poverty and inadequate housing conditions in their permanent residence before fleeing to Hungary.

- **Transitional status vs. settlement and integration**

Hungary is not the final destination for many refugees. This was even more so in previous refugee waves, but also among refugees arriving from Ukraine, most families do not plan to settle permanently in Hungary. Over the past decade or more, there has been a central political will to discourage refugees and migrants from considering permanent settlement in Hungary. In addition, the funding of programs for refugees has been mostly project-based and of limited duration. There are hardly any housing and integration programs for refugees which

are implemented with central government funding. Most housing programs for refugees are temporary in nature. At the same time, the lack of long-term housing and integration programs is presumably a contributing factor to the fact that those who arrive in Hungary as refugees cannot imagine their integration and settlement in the country. In the absence of long-term housing options, a protracted military crisis may lead to the perpetuation of temporary solutions and living situations from which it is more difficult to move on. This leads to a deterioration of the living standards of families.

A decisive factor in the current wave of refugees starting after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was the initial confidence of all actors, including the refugees themselves, that they could return soon. Responses in housing provision were initially crisis interventionist in nature, with organizations gradually shifting to longer-term solutions. However, after a year, it is already evident that providing better housing conditions as well as longer-term housing opportunities can contribute to resettlement and integration.

The integration aspect through housing is stronger in Hungarian organizations whose main profile is housing (e.g. both ULE and HFHH) or social inclusion (e.g. Dorcas). Among organizations that focus primarily on refugee support, crisis intervention is more typical. It is also worth distinguishing between organizations that had a continuous housing program for refugees already in the years before the invasion of Ukraine (such as the Evangelical Lutheran Diakonia and Kalunba), and those organizations that built up their capacity in response to the current refugee crisis.

It is a positive development that an extensive network of organizations has been set up to respond to the large number of refugees arriving from Ukraine. This network also provides a wide range of housing solutions. If this network can be sustained despite current and future funding uncertainties, it would provide a more robust social and material infrastructure for the future, on which longer-term integration of immigrants can be built.

- Addressing complex social situations

What is new in the current refugee wave from Ukraine, compared to the 2015 migration wave is the high share of families who were in a marginalized social situation in their home country. These families' existing disadvantages were aggravated by moving to a foreign country, Hungary. This is particularly the case for Hungarian-speaking Roma families from Transcarpathia, who need complex support not only because of their refugee status but also because of their complex social problems and the discrimination they face. Based on the experience of our interviews, a housing program alone cannot solve the social problems of a very poor refugee family. Complex social services are needed, which can be more easily provided in institutional accommodation forms rather than in independent housing, such as in private rentals.

Currently, accommodation in temporary shelters and institutional accommodation are mostly available free of charge to refugees. However, financing these programs is only possible due to funds available due to the war situation, which makes the sustainability of the programs questionable. The crisis intervention logic is based on the assumption that the war will end in a foreseeable future and refugee families will be able to return home or become strong enough to be able to manage their housing independently in the market in Hungary. For families with complex social difficulties, returning home is a realistic option, although it is not expected to

improve their social situation. Managing independently on the private rental market in Hungary does not seem to be a realistic option for poor and disadvantaged families, given the current level of rental prices. We therefore believe that the long-term restructuring of the housing programs currently supporting poor refugee families should be a priority for the coming year. The Dorcas Ministries' program is a successful attempt to use the current crisis situation to improve the overall situation of marginalized families, with housing as a central element.

Gaps in refugee housing

The main gaps in housing programs for refugees are the same as for households in housing poverty in Hungary.

- Lack of opportunities to transition into more permanent housing

There are few channels to help people move from one form of supported housing to another, especially from institutional to private housing. For both the Hungarian housing poor and refugees, this manifests itself in the difficulty of exiting temporary accommodation institutions. Temporary accommodation becomes a long-term housing solution for many families due to the lack of affordable alternative housing solutions.

- Lack of long-term affordable housing

As a consequence, another important gap is the lack of long-term affordable housing. Most institutions and support organizations lack a vision of how to help the housing of refugee families in a persistently difficult economic situation (e.g. single mothers with children), after the current temporary programs are phased out.

- Independent housing combined with flexible support mechanisms is rare

Programs that provide social work alongside independent housing identify an important niche. These programs enable independent housing to be sustained for people who might otherwise be excluded from it. But these programs reach only a small number of refugee families.

Evaluation of the joint housing program by From Streets to Homes Association and Habitat for Humanity Hungary

From Streets to Homes Association (ULE) started looking for partners to organize a housing program for refugees from Ukraine a few days after the start of the war against Ukraine in February 2022. The initial program was set up in March 2022, in partnership with Habitat for Humanity Hungary (HFHH), with some initial help from the Hungarian housing activist group “The City is for All”. The aim was to provide medium-term to long-term housing for refugees from Ukraine, as existing solutions were largely short-term. In the first months, a Solidarity Housing Program was launched. This consisted of private homeowners offering their flats to refugees from Ukraine for free or well below market price, for a period of between 2 weeks and 6 months. On average, two-month contracts were arranged. The two organizations provided logistical support (HFHH) and social work (ULE) for the clients. The solidarity housing program ran intensively from roughly March to June 2022, with around 40 refugee households participating, and more than 40 flats were offered by homeowners to be utilized in the program. By early summer 2022, the solidarity housing program could not be continued as most of the homeowners could no longer provide the flat for a discounted rent or for free. At the same time, public communication in Hungary about the scheme became increasingly difficult due to the anti-refugee public sentiment of the pro-government media. By this time, the UNHCR’s funding scheme for housing programs had been set up and the two organizations applied to continue the program in a different form.

From the summer of 2022, the housing assistance for refugees from Ukraine could continue in a new form, as a Rent Subsidy Program. By early March 2023 (the time of the questionnaire survey), 96 households had been included in this program. Under this scheme, refugee families signed a rental contract with a private landlord, and ULE paid a rent subsidy (up to 50% of the rent) directly to the landlord. In addition to liaising with tenants and owners, ULE also took over the administrative tasks related to contracts and managing the rent subsidy funds. Unlike in the solidarity housing program phase, ULE no longer provided social work in the strict sense, but appointed a contact person for tenants who they could contact in case of questions or difficulties. Seven families who could stay in the solidarity housing program in the second phase, continued to receive social work. All beneficiaries in need received material support in the form of household textiles and cleaning products through ULE (these were donations from companies). HFHH, and also to some extent ULE provided support in furnishing the apartments, providing various household equipments, large household machines (eg. washing machine), and helping in other logistical matters. HFHH also supported the program with dedicated communications capacity. The partners’ communication on the program focused primarily on donor communication, given the hostile media environment.

By the end of summer 2022, HFHH had three staff members working on the program in the areas of coordination, logistics and communication, ULE had four staff members (coordination: 2 employees, social work:

2 employees) and in October a fifth person also joined the program management. Even though the majority of the employees work part-time on the program, this housing program meant a significant increase in the capacity and staff numbers in both of the organizations. In addition, until the summer of 2022, the heads of both organizations were intensively involved in the launch and day-to-day running of the program, which required a high level of commitment.

The Solidarity Housing Program was initially funded mainly by grants from Habitat for Humanity International. The Rent Subsidy Program was funded in roughly equal proportions by EPIM and UNHCR, as well as by SHO (Samenwerkende Hulporganisaties) through Habitat for Humanity's office in the Netherlands. Material and logistical elements of the program were provided by Habitat for Humanity Hungary, using funds from Habitat for Humanity International. In addition, World Habitat and the ERSTE Stiftung provided major support. Smaller foundation grants, CSR corporate subsidies and private donations contributed to the financial backing of the program. By the end of 2022, the Rent Subsidy Program had met all its quantitative targets in terms of households involved and financial subsidies disbursed for families.

Research methodology

Evaluation of the joint program of From Streets to Homes Association (ULE) and Habitat for Humanity Hungary (HFHH) was carried out in two stages, with a mixed-method evaluation.

- In February 2023, an online questionnaire survey was carried out among households participating in the program (82 at that time, increasing to 103 by early March). The survey aimed at learning about the main characteristics of households, their experiences of the enrollment in the program and their experiences of participating in the program. The questionnaire was answered by 37 households. The responses are not representative of the total client population.
- In March 2023, three interviews were carried out with the program implementers and three interviews were conducted with landlords participating in the program.

The research methodology is described in more detail in the Methodological appendix. The purpose of the information collection was to gather experiences of the housing program for the two organizations, for donors, partner organizations providing similar housing programs for refugees from Ukraine, as well as for national and international policy-makers.

In this section we first look at the household characteristics of the clients. This is followed by an evaluation of entering the program from the perspective of the households and the implementing organizations. Finally, the experience of the program implementation is evaluated from the perspectives of the clients, the organizations and the landlords.

Characteristics of households in the housing program

Before this evaluation, no sociological survey of households participating in the ULE-HFHH program has been carried out. ULE has not been in regular contact with many of the clients participating in the Rent Subsidy Program, nor has it recorded detailed client profiles at the time of enrollment in the program. Thus, the questionnaire survey also aimed to draw a sociological profile of the households participating in the ULE-HFHH joint housing program.

At the beginning of March 2023, 103 households were participating in the program, with a total of 323 members. Since the launch of the program, a total of around 120-130 households have participated. During the second phase of the housing program, i.e. after the Solidarity Housing Program was phased out and the Rent Subsidy Program was introduced, the turnover of families was low. Most of the households that left the program moved on to another country or returned to Ukraine. Some families have decided to end their cooperation with ULE, but are likely to have remained in Hungary.

Households responding to the household questionnaire and participating in the ULE-HFHH program came from three regions of Ukraine, which roughly corresponds to the division according to native language (Hungarian or non-Hungarian) of the total clientele:

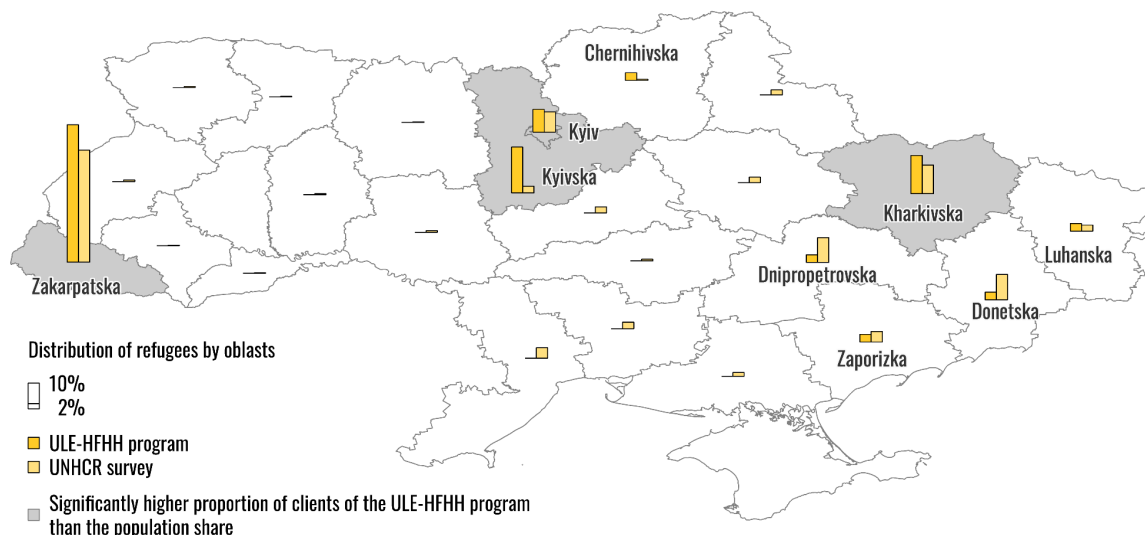
- 49% of respondents lived in Transcarpathia before the outbreak of the war,
- 24% came from Kyiv and Kyiv oblast,¹³
- 27% of respondents arrived from oblasts in the Eastern part of the country (of which the Kharkiv oblast stands out with 14%).

These proportions are broadly in line with the results of a larger survey of over 500 people conducted by UNHCR in Hungary.¹⁴ In the survey conducted by UNHCR, refugees from Transcarpathia also predominated (40%), with Kyiv and its surroundings and oblasts in Eastern Ukraine also standing out (Figure 1). Compared to the 2022 population shares by oblast, the ULE-HFHH program had a significantly higher proportion of clients from Transcarpathia (only 3% of the population of Ukraine lived in the area in 2022), Kyiv and Kyiv oblast (11% population share versus 24% client share) as well as Kharkiv oblast (6% population share versus 13% client share). Two thirds of respondents arrived to Hungary in February or March 2022, so they are part of the first wave of refugees. Almost all respondent families arriving from Transcarpathia speak Hungarian.

¹³ We use the term oblast, to describe administrative regions of Ukraine, consisting of 24 oblasts (regions), one autonomous republic (Crimea) and two administratively independent cities (Kyiv, Sevastopol).

¹⁴ UNHCR (2022): [Multi-sectoral needs assessment. Hungary. November 2022](#), and UNHCR (2022): [Multi-Sector Needs Assessment – Hungary, 2022](#). UNHCR Microdata Library. These are referred as UNHCR survey throughout this research report. The survey by UNHCR was conducted among refugees from Ukraine living in Hungary for a longer period of time.

Figure 1: Places of residence of ULE-HFHH clients and Ukrainian refugees in Hungary before 24 February 2022



Data source: questionnaire survey, UNHCR survey, citypopulation.de

Households completing the questionnaire have 3.3 members on average. Hungarian-speaking households are the largest, with an average household size of 3.7 members. Russian-speaking households have 3.6 members and Ukrainian-speaking households have 2.3 members on average. According to the UNHCR survey, Ukrainian refugee households in Hungary consist of 3.5 persons, while Ukrainian internally displaced families average 3.3 persons.¹⁵ Based on the similarity of household sizes in all surveys, it is assumed that the size of the overall housing stock in the ULE-HFHH program did not substantially limit access to the program, based on household composition.

83% of respondent households have children living with them, which is higher than the overall rate (72%) among refugees residing in Hungary, measured by UNHCR. On average, respondent households had 1.2 children. Four out of ten respondent households have no male adult household members currently, and one in six households has a single adult, in all cases a female person, living together with one or more children.

On average, respondent households have 1.0 room per household, which represents a significantly more crowded situation than an average household in Hungary, where the figure was 1.6 in 2021.¹⁶ The average number of rooms per person in Hungary was exceeded by only 2 out of 36 responding refugee households. Overcrowding among refugees renting a private apartment is also a significant problem according to other Hungarian surveys,

¹⁵ Data source: IOM (2023): [Ukraine internal displacement report. General population survey, Round 12, January 2023.](#)

¹⁶ According to the Eurostat methodology, kitchens larger than 4 square meters are also rooms. Data on the average in Hungary stems from the [Eurostat database.](#)

especially among Roma refugee families from Transcarpathia living in Budapest.¹⁷ Long-term housing programs for refugees should pay particular attention to reducing overcrowding. Overcrowding is likely to be related primarily to the level of housing costs: most households may not be able to afford the cost of a larger dwelling.

46% of the households responding to the questionnaire speak Hungarian in the family or among friends, 30% use Ukrainian, 22% use Russian, and one household uses another language. Of the non-Hungarian speaking households, only two have at least one household member who speaks Hungarian, which can be a limitation during their stay in Hungary. Compared to all refugees from Ukraine in Hungary, the ULE-HFHH program has a higher proportion of clients speaking Hungarian (the UNHCR survey found a 36% share) and a lower proportion of clients speaking Russian (28% in the UNHCR survey).

Almost all respondents who speak Hungarian at home also have Hungarian citizenship beside their Ukrainian citizenship, but do not have temporary protection status.¹⁸ Almost all respondents who speak Ukrainian at home have obtained temporary protection status. Those who speak Russian at home have a lower proportion of temporary protection status. The UNHCR survey found that 93% of refugees have temporary protection status, which is significantly higher than among respondent clients of the ULE-HFHH program.¹⁹ According to the program managers of ULE, among the households that received social work, all persons have either Hungarian-Ukrainian dual citizenship or have obtained temporary protection status. For households not receiving social work, ULE introduced in-person consultancy hours at the end of January. ULE plans to encourage and support the application for temporary protection status for their clients not having obtained this status previously.

The monthly disposable equivalised income per person is HUF 174 000 (EUR 462) among respondents.²⁰ The income distribution of respondent households is shown in Figure 2. By language spoken at home, the average value is the same for Ukrainian and Russian speakers, and slightly lower for Hungarian speakers (the latter being HUF 165 000, or EUR 438). The income of respondent households is slightly lower than the median monthly per capita income of households in Hungary (which was HUF 194 000, or EUR 515 in 2021). One in five responding

¹⁷ Eredics, Lilla (2022): [The situation of Transcarpathian Romani families fleeing from Ukraine to Hungary](#). Romaversitas Foundation, Budapest.

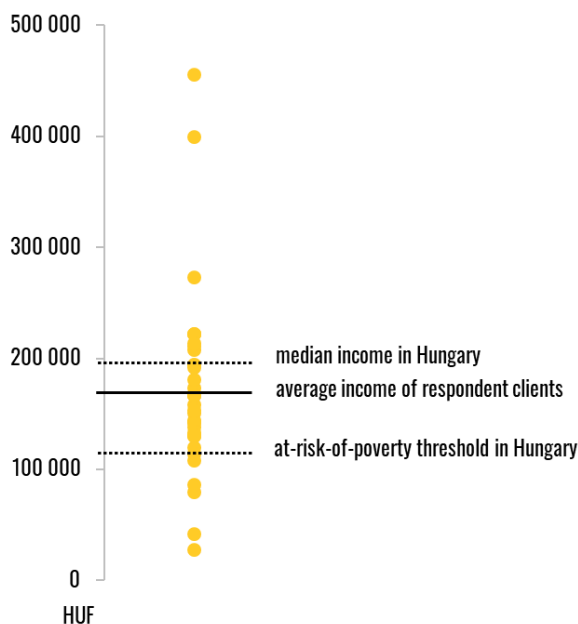
¹⁸ Temporary protection status was in the Member States of the European Union, available on request, for Ukrainian citizens and their family members who were living in Ukraine before 24 February 2022. Temporary protection status includes rights for accommodation, food, healthcare, employment, education for children, nursery and kindergarten care, and a monthly cash allowance. People with both Ukrainian and Hungarian citizenship (widespread among the Hungarian-speaking minority in Transcarpathia) are not entitled to the temporary protection status, but they receive the same benefits and help.

¹⁹ However, the UNHCR research report notes that as the survey was mostly conducted among people living in institutions that provide assistance in obtaining temporary protection status, the measured share is likely to be higher than among the overall refugee population from Ukraine in Hungary.

²⁰ Equivalised income, according to the OECD methodology is the following: the adult head of household is assumed as 1 unit, each additional adult household member is counted as 0.5 units, each child under 14 as 0.3 units. See the [Eurostat Glossary](#).

households live below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold which was HUF 116 000 (EUR 308) in 2021.²¹ Compared to the UNHCR survey among a larger group of refugees from Ukraine in Hungary, ULE-HFHH housing program clients have better income conditions. 76% of responding households in the ULE-HFHH program have a monthly disposable household income above the UNHCR’s median household income of HUF 214 000 (EUR 568). This better financial status may be due to the fact that the UNHCR survey respondents are mostly living in institutional forms of accommodation, where the average income of families is assumed to be lower than that of refugee households able to rent on the private rental market. In 86% of the households responding to the ULE-HFHH survey, at least one household member was working in the week prior to the survey. The income distribution among respondent refugee households also shows that a different amount of rent subsidy may be needed for different income groups.

Figure 2: Average monthly equivalised per capita income of clients of the ULE-HFHH housing program (HUF)



Data source: questionnaire survey, [Eurostat](#).

The questionnaire survey also asked about the affordability of housing costs. A quarter of responding households have higher housing costs, rent and maintenance combined, than 40% of their household income. This group has housing affordability problems.²² The detailed impact of the rent subsidy and deposit support on housing affordability of the households is presented in the section evaluating the program implementation.

²¹ Monthly national income levels were calculated from yearly data in the [Eurostat database](#). At-risk-of-poverty threshold is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers, according to the methodology of Eurostat and the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. See the [Eurostat Glossary](#) in detail.

²² To measure housing affordability, we use the 40% threshold, also used by Eurostat and the Hungarian Central Statistical Office.

The subjective perception of respondents is that covering housing costs does not necessarily coincide with the objective 40%-of-income threshold of housing unaffordability. 62% of respondents said that housing costs are sometimes burdensome or very burdensome for them, even though the household spends less than 40% of its income on housing costs. The majority of households in this group are households experiencing in-work poverty, with an equivalised disposable income below the average disposable income of all respondents. Most of these households have two adult household members and children living with them and speak Hungarian at home. In other words, these households live in poverty, because their income is so low that, although they spend less than 40% of it on housing, they have difficulty living on the amount remaining after paying their rent and their utility costs.

Evaluation of enrollment in the housing program

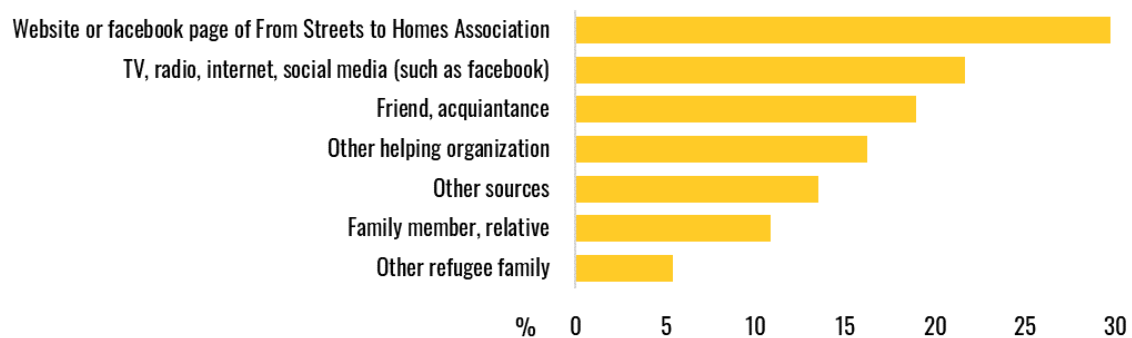
Enrollment in the ULE-HFHH program was assessed with the household questionnaire survey and interviews with ULE staff. In addition to objective indicators (e.g. length of time in the program, location of housing), clients' perceptions of the enrollment in the program was evaluated.

Two thirds of the respondent households have lived in their current rented dwelling for longer than they have been a client of ULE-HFHH. One moved into the current dwelling later than entering the Rent Subsidy Program. Among the respondents, the average time between their arrival in Hungary and enrollment in the ULE-HFHH program was three months, and half of the clients had already been living in Hungary for at least five months when they entered the ULE-HFHH program. This lag was due to the fact that the Rent Subsidy Program was launched in the summer of 2022, when many families had already been in Hungary for several months and were living in different a rented apartment. Based on the responses to the survey, the program was mainly able to help families who were already in Hungary in the summer of 2022 and had found private rental housing on their own. In the case of a few households, the previous accommodation offered on a solidarity basis could be "converted" into participation in the Rent Subsidy Program. 1 or 2 households are not offered rent subsidies but ULE provides them financial help to cover their utility costs. Out of the 103 households participating in the ULE-HFHH program at the beginning of March 2023, 96 households were part of the Rent Subsidy Program; the majority found the apartments they were renting on their own. The remaining 7 households are still part of the Solidarity Housing Program, since they are still living in a dwelling offered on a solidarity basis by its owner, and they have been in contact with ULE since spring 2022, when the organization started matchmaking activities between homeowners and refugees after the war broke out.

At the beginning of March 2023, the program included 103 apartments, 95% of which are located in Budapest or in the Budapest agglomeration. Respondent households were enrolled in the ULE-HFHH program between April 2022 and January 2023. Families living outside Budapest were enrolled between August 2022 and December 2022, and generally did not find housing through ULE, except for one family that moved from Budapest to the countryside.

Almost half of the respondents had heard about the ULE-HFHH housing program through media or social media. Almost a third of them obtained information on the program from the website of From Streets to Homes Association or their Facebook page. TV, radio, internet and social media were mentioned as information sources in more than a fifth of cases. Personal networks (family member, relative, friend, acquaintance) was mentioned as a source of information in a third of respondent households. Other organizations helping refugees were mentioned by only 16% of respondents (Figure 3). In sustaining the program in the long term, the use of media platforms and the creation of organizational capacity for communicating about the program at ULE seems to be justified and can be expanded. HFHH has a communication officer who also took over some communication tasks about the program. Potentially, links with other helping organizations could be strengthened beyond the relations currently in place, in order to reach out to a higher number of potential beneficiaries. By sharing experiences or developing formal partnerships, both From Streets to Homes Association and Habitat for Humanity Hungary can help facilitate that more people are able to move out from large shelters and institutional accommodation to independent housing in the upcoming period.

Figure 3: Source of information about the ULE-HFHH housing program



Note: Multiple responses were allowed.

Data source: questionnaire survey.

The survey could not measure how effective the dissemination of information about the Rent Subsidy Program was to the overall refugee target group. However, the results of the UNHCR survey have some comparable data about the effectiveness of communicating about services available for refugees arriving to Hungary from Ukraine. According to the UNHCR survey, half of the refugees in Hungary reported challenges in accessing information. 54% of those reporting difficulties do not know where to get information, 43% do not have access to information in a language they know, and 29% do not trust the source of information. This suggests that the ULE-HFHH program might be further developed by communicating the program in Hungarian and Ukrainian (possibly also in Russian). Efforts might be made to present From Streets to Homes Association as a trustworthy organization. For example, presenting the UNHCR and EPIM (European Program for Integration and

Migration) logos on the current association website is a good solution,²³ as these organizations may be perceived as trustworthy by the majority of prospective beneficiaries. In addition, ULE could also show on its website, for example, how its operations comply with the UNHCR's five partnership principles (equality, transparency, results-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity).²⁴

According to interviews with ULE staff, there was no strict selection system on which the entrance into the Rent Subsidy Program was assessed. Only those who were deemed unable to pay for a private rental, i.e. households without working-age household members, were rejected. Households were able to enroll on a first-come, first-served basis, until the program funding limits were not reached. Available funding will be exhausted around the end of March 2023. After that date, households will only be able to enroll in the Rent Subsidy Program to the extent of some households leaving the program.

Access to the ULE-HFHH program was rated on a five-point scale in the questionnaire survey. Respondents were generally positive in their assessment of the enrollment into the program. Three quarters of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that entry into the program was quick. Also three quarters of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that they had a clear understanding of the process of getting into the program. The accessibility of the ULE staff during the enrollment process was rated with the highest point by almost all respondents. 84% of respondents (including 70% of those with affordability problems even with the rent subsidy) also strongly agreed with the statement that their housing problems were solved by entering the Rent Subsidy Program. However, the latter response is worth comparing with the housing conditions presented earlier, which suggest that a proportion of clients have affordability and/or overcrowding problems. This contradicting perception may be due to the fact that these families had been living in poor housing conditions in their permanent place of residence in Ukraine, or that their previous institutional accommodation as refugees was more overcrowded than their current private rental. Compared to these previous housing conditions in Hungary, independent yet supported housing may appear to be a resolved housing situation, even if households are experiencing difficulties in certain aspects.

In the open-ended assessment of program enrollment ("If you could change one thing in the enrollment process, what would it be?"), one household would change the speed of decision-making, one household would provide "a little more help" during the process, and one household would provide more information about other services ULE provides for their clients. However, nearly three quarters of households who answered this question would not change anything about the enrollment into the program, and were satisfied with everything. However, we do not have a control group to assess subjective perceptions of enrollment, i.e. we do not know the assessment of clients who did not enroll in the program.

In our view, the importance of the "Housing First" principle is demonstrated by the fact that households perceive their housing situation as resolved despite their housing difficulties. We do not ask questions about the previous housing situation of refugee households, therefore it is possible that households at their permanent place of residence in Ukraine had struggled with affordability or overcrowding problems. After providing refugees

²³ <https://utcarollakasba.hu/program-ukraine/>

²⁴ See in detail in the [UNHCR brochure](#).

independent housing outside shelters and institutional arrangements, improving housing conditions should also be a goal in the further development of the program. This issue is also confirmed by the UNHCR survey: among Hungarian refugees in private rental, rising housing costs were cited as the most common possible reason for a household to leave their current place of residence in the future.

Evaluation of the program implementation

In evaluating the program implementation, we used information from the questionnaire survey among current clients and interviews with ULE staff and landlords participating in the program. Attention was paid to subjective perceptions of the services provided by ULE and HFHH, and to the eventual discrepancies between client needs and services provided by the two organizations. The rent subsidy was also evaluated in detail. We also explored what other supporting organizations the current clients were in contact with and which support they received from these other organizations. The analysis also outlines directions in which the program could be further developed to provide adequate housing and services to refugee households in the longer term.

Clients participating in the ULE-HFHH program can be divided into two major groups. For most households, participating in the Rent Subsidy Program, ULE assigned a contact person whom households could contact with their problems on demand. For the more vulnerable households of the Solidarity Housing Program, at the peak around 40 households, but decreasing in number during the phase-out, ULE also provided intensive social work. For these households, it was not up to them to decide whether they received help. Out of the 37 households responding to the questionnaire, 5 (three of them Hungarian-speaking families) had regular contact with a social worker. At the time of the questionnaire, there were only 7 families altogether who were still in the Solidarity Housing Program and therefore were receiving social work, so the responding rate was exceptionally high in this group. Based on interviews with ULE staff, social work will be restructured in the near future to provide less in-depth and less intensive support to a higher number of households.

Half of those respondent households who only had an assigned contact person (i.e., who did not receive social work) contacted the contact person less than once a month. A third of the respondents had contact with the dedicated ULE staff member at least once a month, and one tenth never contacted the appointed contact person after signing the rental contract. In the latter group we only find households with no housing affordability problems.

Attitudes regarding the contact person and the information they provided was measured on a five-point scale, using the same criteria as the UNHCR survey.²⁵ The subjective perception of service provision in the Rent Subsidy Program corresponds to the UNHCR-measured satisfaction of refugees living in private rental in Hungary. In the UNHCR survey, the vast majority of respondents (79% of those living in institutional accommodation and 96% of those living in private rental) were satisfied with the assistance they received from

²⁵ The UNHCR survey used negative statements (such as “assistance is not enough”) and respondents were asked whether they agree with the statements. Instead of yes/no questions of UNHCR we used a five-point scale during the evaluation of the ULE-HFHH program, to have a more detailed evaluation of clients’ attitudes.

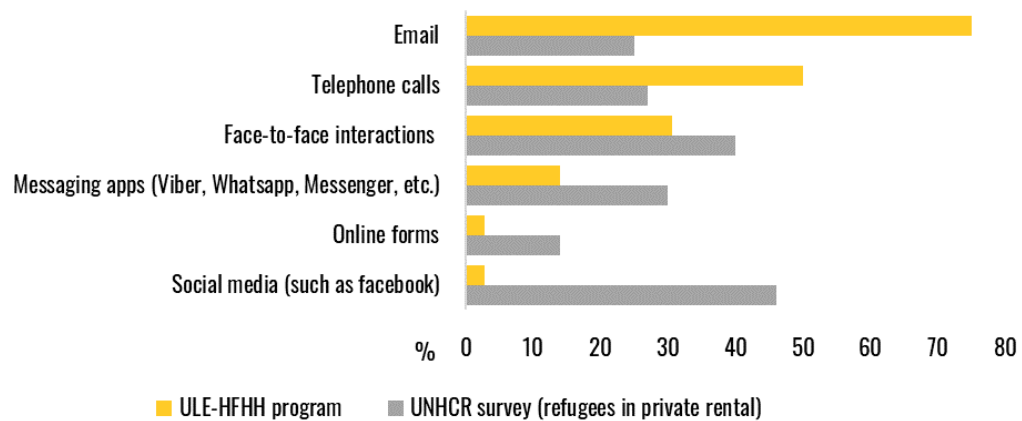
different organizations. For ULE-HFHH clients, nine out of ten gave the highest score to the amount of assistance which the two organizations provided for them. There were no negative opinions about the quality of help received from the contact person, nor about the contact person's availability. Almost all respondents were knowledgeable about the help they could get from the contact person employed by ULE. In the UNHCR survey, those living in private rental were mostly dissatisfied with the amount of help they received from different supporting organizations and to a lesser extent with the frequency of assistance they received.

In the open-ended question ("If you could change one thing about the services provided by From Streets to Homes Association, what would it be?"), the majority of respondents in the Rent Subsidy Program answered that they would not change anything at all. Some respondents, however, indicated that they would have liked to have received more information about other programs the association runs and also about different types of assistance they are able to provide. Based on the results of the questionnaire survey, we believe that for the vast majority of refugees from Ukraine, the designation of a contact person can significantly improve their subjective experience of being a refugee, in addition to providing concrete assistance. Thus, in the case of less vulnerable households it seems to be an appropriate solution to designate a contact person and clearly communicate which assistance clients can receive from this person.

The five responding households that received social work (are still in the Solidarity Housing Program) evaluated social work with the highest number on a five-point scale, whatever aspect was assessed. These results are outstanding compared to the UNHCR survey results. The UNHCR survey found that a fifth of the households living in institutional accommodation were dissatisfied with the assistance they received, with the most common criticisms being the amount (95% of dissatisfied respondents) and the frequency (half of dissatisfied respondents) of help. Respondents who received social work in the ULE-HFHH program would not change anything about the social work provided by From Streets to Homes Association, according to their answers to the open-ended question.

Clients contacted ULE staff mainly by email (three quarters of respondents) and telephone calls (half of the respondents) (Figure 4). Three out of ten responding households were in contact with the association in person, after the first meeting at the time of signing the contract. These communication channels were also compared with a similar question in the UNHCR survey on preferred channels of contact with organizations providing assistance for refugees. The UNHCR survey found that refugee households in private housing in Hungary prefer to be in contact with aid providers in person, through social media (e.g. Facebook) and messaging apps. Based on a comparison of the UNHCR findings and our survey, we recommend that ULE investigates whether the available channels of communication with ULE staff members have not restricted outreach from the part of some households.

Figure 4: Communication channels between ULE and clients, as well as preferred communication channels in the UNHCR survey



Data source: questionnaire survey, UNHCR.

Some refugee household members have also participated in meetings of different support groups run by From Streets to Homes Association, such as the job search group (Give Work!), the Women’s Support Group and the support group in which refugees from Ukraine were mentoring their peers. The opportunity to participate in support groups was only available to households living in Budapest and speaking Hungarian, as interpretation was not available. Only a few respondents of our survey participated in support groups, so their effectiveness could not be assessed on the basis of the questionnaire. Based on interviews with ULE staff, the Women’s Support Group and the Women’s Day organized by the association had the highest number of refugee participants, 8 female members in total. In addition, the mentoring program was also found successful by ULE staff. In the future, ULE would like to strengthen the involvement of refugee clients in ULE’s core services. They also want to organize more community programs for Ukrainian-speaking clients to reach out to clients not speaking Hungarian.

A central element of the joint housing program run by ULE and HFHH is the rent subsidy. The rent subsidy provided to households can amount to maximum 50% of monthly rental costs, but due to high rent levels, it typically only covers around 25-30%. The amount of the Rent Subsidy was HUF 60,000 (EUR 160) gross per month per household, with some minor deviations upward or downward, depending on the family’s financial and housing situation. The amount of the rent subsidy is known to households, but it is transferred directly to the landlords by ULE. Therefore, the subsidy is not part of the refugee families’ monthly disposable income, monthly housing costs and household expenses. Homeowners reported that they received the rent subsidy without any hindrance. This direct financial support was the central element of the program which in many cases enabled refugee families to live in private housing, in an independent way. In addition to the rent subsidy, 27 households received support to pay the deposit at the time of signing the rental contract. Relatively few families applied for deposit support, as many had already paid this amount by the time they entered the ULE-HFHH program.

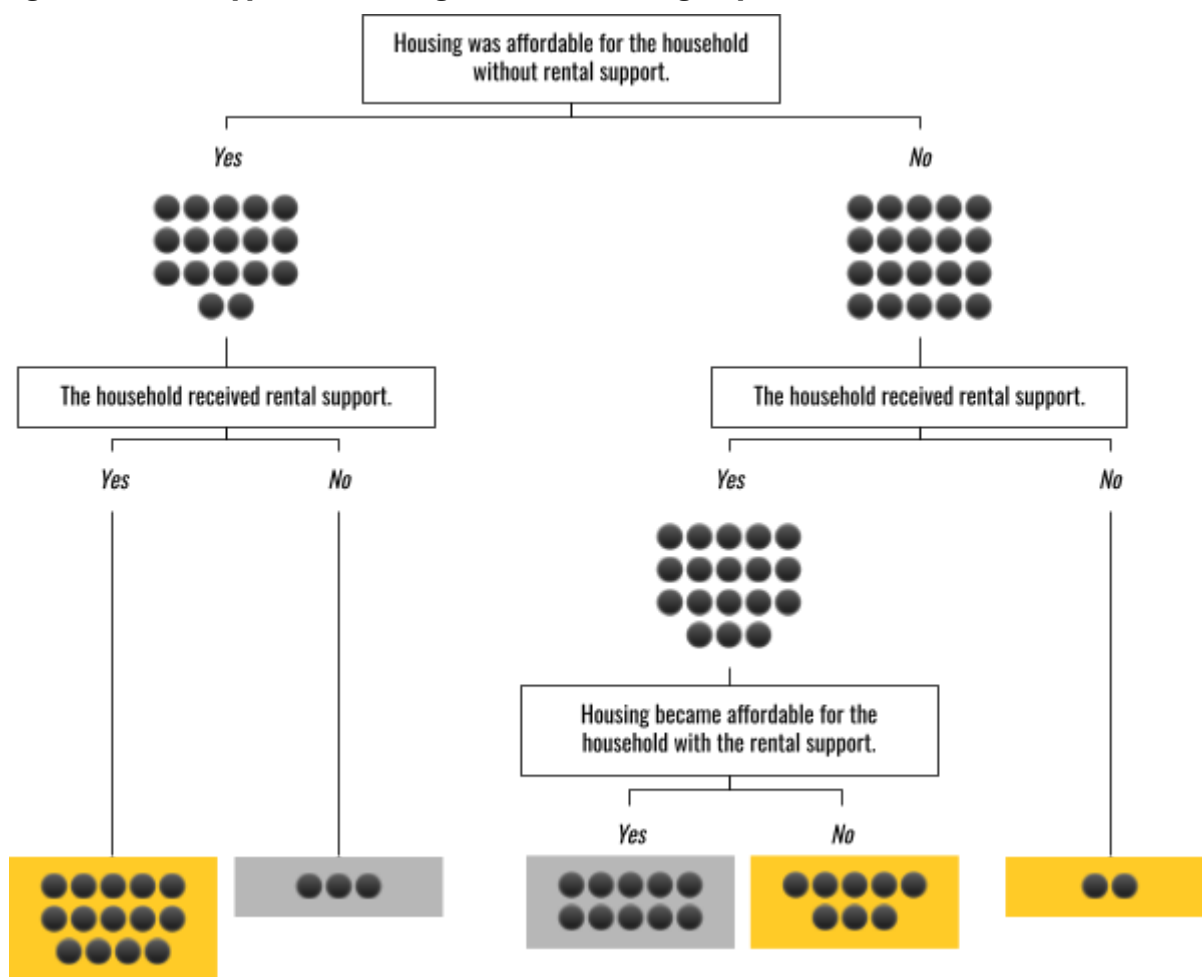
The survey data show that neither the rent subsidy nor the deposit support have been well targeted. These cash subsidies can be considered well-targeted, if they are more likely to reach households in housing

poverty and the amount of the subsidy is proportionate to the difficulty households have in covering housing costs. To test targeting, correlations were calculated between the amount of the rent subsidy as the dependent variable and independent variables reflecting household characteristics and their housing difficulties (equivalised household size, number of rooms in the flat, number of rooms per capita, subjective difficulties in covering housing costs, housing affordability with and without the rent subsidy, equivalised monthly income per capita). The correlation coefficients for all independent variables were between -0.1 and 0.1. This means that there is no statistically significant relationship between the amount of the rent subsidy and the distribution of the variables examined. One of the larger households in the survey also suggested that the program should be fine-tuned to allow larger households in need of a larger dwelling to receive higher subsidy amounts.

In the case of 24 out of 37 responding households, rent subsidies were found to be ill-targeted (Figure 5) when housing affordability is considered as an outcome.²⁶ For 17 households out of all respondents, housing was affordable already without the rent subsidy, but 14 of them nevertheless received this financial support. Two of the households with affordability problems did not receive the rent subsidy at all. Out of those 18 households which initially had problems of affordability *and* received the rent subsidy, 10 responded that together with the financial support, housing is now affordable for them. However, 8 of these households still had problems of affordability in spite of receiving the rent subsidy. Therefore, we suggest that a reconfiguration of the rent subsidy's allocation mechanism should be considered, in order to ensure the efficient use of resources. This is an adjustment that ULE is already planning to do based on the staff interviews. Suggestions for this reconfiguration are set out in the Recommendations section.

²⁶ According to the definition by Eurostat and the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, housing is affordable if housing costs (rent and utility costs combine) represent less than 40% of the disposable income of the household.

Figure 5: Rental support and housing affordability among respondent households



One dot represents one household. “Unfair” cases from the point of view of the distribution of resources are highlighted in yellow, and “fair” cases are highlighted in gray. In-line with the Eurostat definition, housing is considered affordable if the household spends less than 40% of its disposable income on housing costs.

Data source: questionnaire survey.

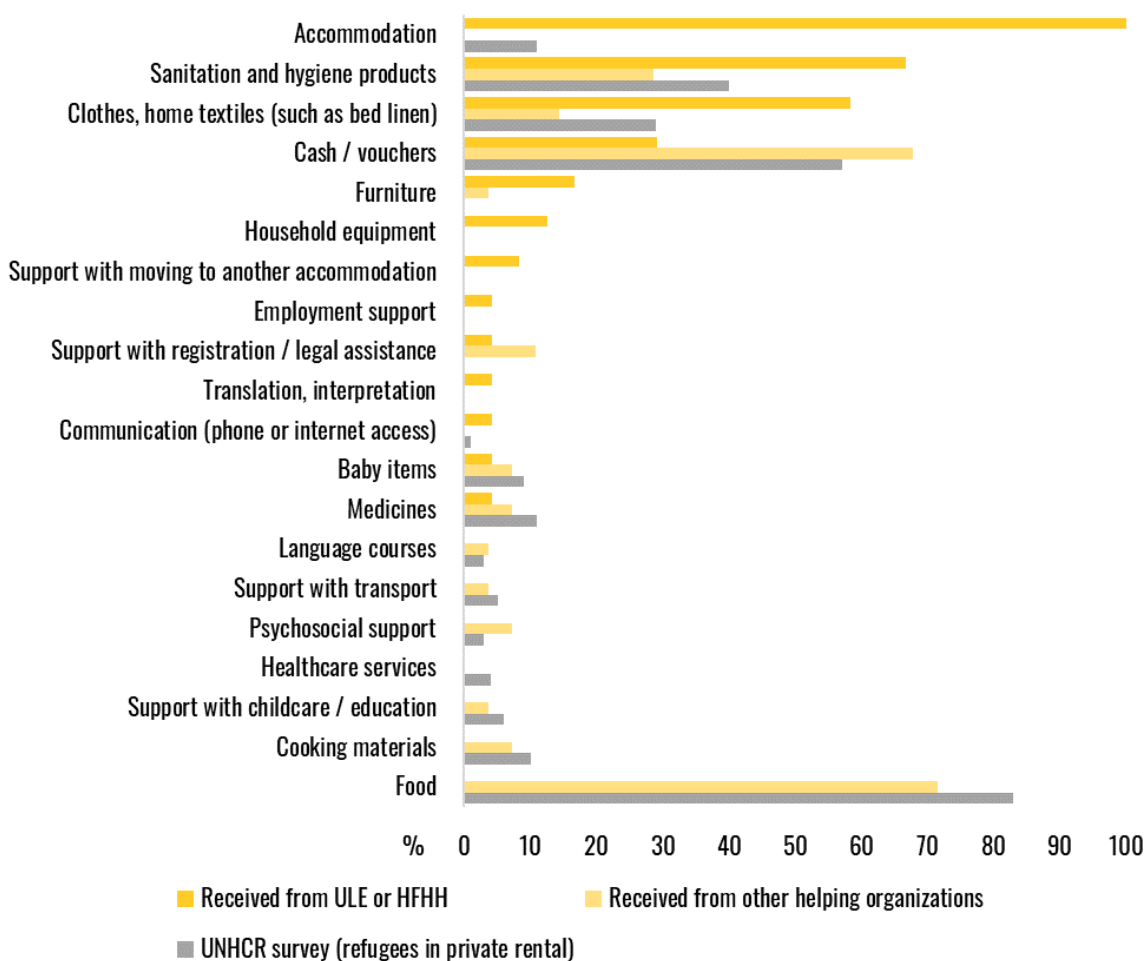
Hungarian organizations aiding refugees from Ukraine provide different types of assistance. UNHCR has carried out a comprehensive survey of these, with separate data available for those living in private rental. We compare this group to that of ULE-HFHH beneficiaries below. Beneficiaries of the ULE-HFHH program have also accessed different forms of support from other organizations beyond ULE and HFHH.

In the program run by From Streets to Homes Association and Habitat for Humanity Hungary, all clients had access to accommodation due to the specificities of the program, while only 11% of all refugees surveyed by UNHCR and living in private rental in Hungary had access to housing through aid organizations. Compared to the broader group of refugees living in private rental housing in Hungary, the beneficiaries of the ULE-HFHH program received sanitation and hygiene products, as well as clothing and household textiles to a higher extent. These were provided primarily by HFHH and ULE, rather than by other “external” assistance organizations among our respondents (Figure 6). Receiving pieces of furniture, household appliances and transportation help with moving

suggests that these were niche services of the ULE-HFHH program, and rarely provided to other refugee clients residing in private rental housing in Hungary. 57% of refugees living in private rental housing in Hungary received cash and vouchers from different organizations. Cash and vouchers were largely received by ULE-HFHH beneficiaries from other assistance organizations, as this type of support was not included in the profile of the program. (Except for the rent subsidy and the deposit support, which almost all ULE-HFHH beneficiaries received as part of the core program.) Food was not provided to households in the ULE-HFHH program, but was received by households from other assistance organizations at a similar rate to all refugees living in private rental housing in Hungary.

When beneficiaries of the ULE-HFHH program had needs of services not covered in the framework of the program, they were referred to other organizations / institutions by ULE and HFHH staff. Needs of families regarding furniture and household appliances were collected by ULE staff when contacting clients. The logistics officer at HFHH used this information to deliver equipment to clients, and this person also proactively suggested the purchase of certain equipment in consultation with HFHH, if a shortage was identified.

Figure 6: Assistance provided to clients in the ULE-HFHH program, and to the broader group of refugees living in private rental in Hungary



Data source: questionnaire survey, UNHCR.

Households were also asked in the survey about what other types of assistance they would need to live in Hungary. The items mentioned by a large share of respondents were cash and vouchers (83%), food (62%), sanitation and hygiene products (55%), medicine (45%), household equipment (41%), cooking materials (34%) and furniture (34%). Cash and vouchers were also identified as a need by 59% of households without housing affordability problems. However, this high share may be because this type of support is quite common among other refugee support organizations, producing an expectation among beneficiaries. Further analysis would be needed to see how acute the needs identified by the household survey are, and to what extent they reflect a lack of provision. Needs for household appliances and furniture could probably have been met by Habitat for Humanity Hungary. Thus, it is possible that when respondents indicated this kind of unresolved need, it was in fact a problem of communication between beneficiaries and the two organizations.

Clients filling out the questionnaire could allow ULE to link their answers regarding unresolved needs to their identity, in order to contact them and provide support. This questionnaire technique helps ULE's work by providing feedback on needs broken down by household, but could have also encouraged respondents to indicate needs beyond the most pressing issues. One household also indicated in the questionnaire that the different sources of assistance received by beneficiaries should be checked. Such coordination could serve a more equal distribution of scarce resources, but would require additional organizational capacity by the two organizations running the program.

After arriving in Hungary, ULE-HFHH clients were in contact with various support organizations. To better explore the division of labor between different support organizations and the organizational links of the ULE-HFHH program, clients were also asked about which assistance they received from other organizations in Hungary. Among the mentions, charitable organizations were standing out, particularly the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta (42% of respondents mentioning) and the Hungarian Red Cross (33%). One sixth of respondents mentioned the Hungarian Baptist Aid and the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid. Other organizations mentioned by more than 10% of respondent households were Menedék – Hungarian Association for Migrants and Mandák House (“Dévai Inn”, a relief hub run by a Lutheran congregation in Budapest). One or two responding households received help from Caritas, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Migration Aid, Next Step Association, Vamos Foundation, the Ukrainian community in Hungary, the Jewish community in Hungary and a food bank.

According to interviews with ULE and HFHH staff, existing contacts with other support organizations were not a decisive factor in who could enter the ULE-HFHH program. Although the initial idea was that the social workers of the organizations running temporary shelters and providing institutional accommodation would assist families to enroll in the housing program run by ULE and HFHH, in the end this was only implemented in a few cases. In addition, information about the program spread among the refugees themselves, and there was no need to strengthen institutional links to reach the targeted household number in the program. The method of referral through personal networks made the pool of applicants to the program relatively random, but it also opened the possibility for people already in private rental housing to enter the program. The staff of From Streets

to Homes Association found that they had good cooperation with many support organizations providing housing and other assistance for refugees, and that refugee support organizations were helping their clients to access various available subsidies. ULE has a closer relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Diakonia, the charity service of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hungary. In some cases they have helped clients to pay for increased utility costs, and ULE has made donations to the Diakonia and have held office hours for clients at the Diakonia premises. There has been no meaningful contact with state actors during the implementation of the program, despite the fact that in the spring of 2022, HFHH, together with other organizations, actively sought to communicate with the government.

Habitat for Humanity Hungary has closer links with several organizations, but not necessarily connected to the program run jointly with ULE. The main profile of HFHH in terms of refugee assistance has become logistical support, such as the provision of large household appliances and furniture, and in this field it has formal cooperation with several organizations assisting refugees. An important aspect of these partnerships was to ensure that the clients supported by HFHH with furniture and household equipment could receive social work from other organizations.

During the research for the evaluation, we also interviewed three homeowners providing their apartments for the program, either in the Solidarity Housing Program or the Rent Subsidy Program. One interviewed landlord only participated in the Solidarity Housing Program during spring 2022, while the two other interviewees initially rented out their apartment to refugees from Ukraine on a solidarity basis independently from the ULE-HFHH program. Both of them registered for the ULE-HFHH Rent Subsidy Program during summer 2022 as the war was prolonged, since they felt that they would benefit both from the management and the financial support provided by the program.

From a financial point of view, the scheme has been a clear success for homeowners: the Rent Subsidy Program has allowed them to rent their flats to Ukrainian refugees beyond the initial solidarity period, and there have been no reported problems with the payment of the subsidy by ULE. One interviewee mentioned that ULE did not communicate clearly beforehand that taxes paid after the subsidy part would be deducted from the agreed amount of rent, thus reducing the sum the landlord receives.

According to the interviewed homeowners, the level of assistance in management and communication could have been more intensive in some situations. Some homeowners had higher expectations beforehand concerning the extent to which From Streets to Homes Association would take on the responsibility of communicating with refugee tenants. The interviews showed that in case the program would be further developed, landlords would welcome more support in the following areas: support in communication with tenants, particularly with Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking tenants; taking over the management of maintenance (eg. communicating with external professionals in case something needs to be fixed in the apartment); greater responsibility taken on for damages in the dwelling and for emptying the dwelling (if there would be cases when tenants do not want to move out - although this was so far only hypothetical); and possibly support with renovation (before tenants move in). Homeowner interviewees also suggested for ULE to collect information on

the family's plans to stay or move and share it with them so that they can plan with the utilization of their property. Homeowners also do not have information on the availability of rent subsidy and the financial status of the program, i.e. how long the support scheme is guaranteed. These pieces of information would be important for them in order to be able to plan ahead. One interviewee felt that the family living in their property would need more help from the social worker of From Streets to Homes Association.

Landlords and tenants directly signed a contract with each other (as opposed to ULE subletting to the refugee beneficiaries, which could have been another model), and the landlord and ULE only had a contract for the subsidy element. This arrangement seemed natural to most homeowners, as in many cases the landlord and the refugee tenant household had already entered a rental agreement before receiving support from the Rent Subsidy Program. One landlord indicated that they would have preferred to sign a contract for the entire rental agreement with ULE directly, so that the intermediary organization takes legal responsibility, but the current contractual scheme is also acceptable to them. It can be considered that for attracting new homeowners (in case the program would be expanded), it perhaps creates more trust if the landlord is in a contractual relationship with the intermediary organization rather than with the refugee family. This arrangement can demonstrate larger responsibility and accountability from the part of the organization towards the property owners. Interviewed landlords also mentioned that finding information before entering the Rent Subsidy Program was difficult for them, which would also hinder some interested property owners from offering their empty dwelling for the program. To this end, it would be worthwhile to communicate more about the program on various public platforms. This is also advisable for other organizations running a housing program in privately rented dwellings, not only for ULE and HFHH.

Some homeowners mentioned that an important benefit of the program is that refugee families can build relationships through contact with From the Streets to Homes Association, and become part of a community. They would support more efforts of this nature from the association, while also acknowledging that this is not the program's main profile.

Despite some suggestions for improvement, homeowners were generally positive about the joint housing program run by ULE and HFHH, and reported a good experience and helpfulness from ULE staff. Without the program and the financial support provided by it, none of them would still be renting their flats to refugees from Ukraine.

Recommendations

The Russian war against Ukraine has been going on for more than a year, so many refugee families have also been residing in Hungary for more than a year. As the war drags on, a shift towards long-term housing solutions and the implementation of complex housing programs will become necessary. Support organizations experience that the needs of refugees are increasing in the area of housing. Funding remains available for the time being, but available funding from international sources might decrease as the war is prolonged. Attitude surveys show that 73% of Hungarians think that the nation state and local authorities should be the main providers of medium-term and long-term housing for refugees, 13% of Hungarians think that NGOs should carry these programs, and 9% of the population thinks that it is the duties of churches and large aid organizations.²⁷ However, the Hungarian state and Hungarian municipalities do not provide long-term housing solutions for large numbers of people (neither for refugees, nor for Hungarian citizens) and, as far as we know, do not intend to launch such programs.

The share of institutional accommodation in housing people having fled from Ukraine should definitely be reduced, as these are only temporary housing solutions in the social care system and other institutions. Exiting from temporary institutions is particularly difficult for certain groups of refugees: poorer families, non-Hungarian speakers, and households without a breadwinner. For example, only a minority of Roma families from Transcarpathia could afford to rent a private flat, even with a rent subsidy. Leaving institutional forms of housing is also difficult for them, because of the discrimination towards Roma families in the private rental market.²⁸ In addition, many poor and Roma families need complex social support that is more easily provided in institutional forms of accommodation. Experience from abroad suggests that refugee families may become more vulnerable when leaving institutional housing, because they lose their close social networks in the accommodation, which has provided them with information and resources.²⁹ Social work and social services may be needed to replace the safety net for those moving into independent housing solutions. In this respect, the ULE-HFHH program is an important positive example among housing programs run for refugees from Ukraine, as about half of the clients are refugees of lower social status who are thus able to sustain private rental housing thanks to the financial and social support of the program.

Organizations that run short-term and medium-term housing programs are trying to channel their clients towards long-term housing solutions. As they do not receive public funding to run long-term housing programs, most of them rely on international and private donor funding for this. One of the most prominent of these financial resources is the housing support framework of UNHCR, which is provided for refugees through

²⁷ Tóth, Judit, Bernát, Anikó (2022): [Menekültválság 2022-ben. Az Ukrajna elleni orosz agresszió menekültjeinek magyarországi fogad\(tat\)ása](#). In: Kolosi, Tamás, Széleányi, Iván, Tóth, István György (eds.): Társadalmi Riport 2022. TÁRKI, Budapest, 347-367.

²⁸ Eredics, Lilla (2022): [The situation of Transcarpathian Romani families fleeing from Ukraine to Hungary](#). Romaversitas Foundation, Budapest.

²⁹ See in detail: Dutchak, Oksana (2023): [Together we stand: Enforced single motherhood and Ukrainian refugees' care networks](#). LeftEast, January 19.

NGOs and charitable organizations. In 2023, UNHCR will reduce funding for these housing programs, which will lead to a reallocation of resources in several programs run by NGOs in Hungary.³⁰

Outside Hungary, there are several programs where homeowners receive support from municipalities, from international organizations (eg. International Organization for Migration, IOM), or from online platforms (such as Airbnb) when renting their apartments to refugees from Ukraine.³¹ However, this does not provide a long-term solution, as the international financial support may cease and thus the interest of homeowners in renting out their apartments to refugees may also be lost.

Arrangements where NGOs are in an intermediary position between homeowners and refugee tenants are also common. In some cases, housing is accompanied by a social integration program; other programs are run in a rental agency model, where the NGO signs a contract with the homeowner.³² These programs can only be sustained in the long run if NGOs implementing them have access to stable public funding. In addition, stronger coordination between different organizations and a more specific targeting of different refugee groups between specialized programs would be welcome.

The study done by the Metropolitan Research Institute distinguished between a landlord-based model, a tenant-based model and an intermediary-based model of long-term solutions. In the first case, financial subsidies are given to landlords which leads to an increase in the housing stock available for refugee families. In the second case, housing or rental subsidies are given to refugee households. In the third case, some kind of intermediary organization is located between the landlord and the refugee tenant.³³ The rent subsidy element of the ULE-HFHH program belongs to the first group, while other support and services partially also make it part of the third group. Intermediary organizations can increase the security of housing for refugee families, provide social services and also act as housing developers. The participation of the intermediary organizations in the program is also an important safeguard for homeowners, even if the organization does not contractually stand between the tenant and the landlord.

After March 2023, the joint ULE-HFHH program will be continued by ULE only. HFHH will continue to support a number of organizations providing housing for refugees from Ukraine, as it has done so far, and will potentially also launch its own program. ULE is considering the possibilities to better integrate its housing program for refugees with the other programs of the organization (such as the social rental agency program, employment support and community programs).

³⁰ Kiss, Adrienn, Hegedüs, József, Somogyi, Eszter (2023): [Housing of Ukrainian refugees in Europe. Options for long-term solutions. Country case study Hungary](#). Metropolitan Research Institute, Budapest.

³¹ Hegedüs, József, Somogyi, Eszter, Teller, Nóra, Kiss, Adrienn, Barbu, Simona, Wetzstein, Steffen, Tamás, Kiss, Jahanpour, Nura Milewska-Wilk Hanna (2023): [Housing of Ukrainian refugees in Europe. Options for long-term solutions. Comparative study](#). Metropolitan Research Institute, Budapest.

³² Hegedüs, József, Somogyi, Eszter, Teller, Nóra, Kiss, Adrienn, Barbu, Simona, Wetzstein, Steffen, Tamás, Kiss, Jahanpour, Nura Milewska-Wilk Hanna (2023): [Housing of Ukrainian refugees in Europe. Options for long-term solutions. Comparative study](#). Metropolitan Research Institute, Budapest.

³³ Hegedüs, József, Somogyi, Eszter, Teller, Nóra, Kiss, Adrienn, Barbu, Simona, Wetzstein, Steffen, Tamás, Kiss, Jahanpour, Nura Milewska-Wilk Hanna (2023): [Housing of Ukrainian refugees in Europe. Options for long-term solutions. Comparative study](#). Metropolitan Research Institute, Budapest.

In the further development of the ULE-HFHH program, recommendations stemming from the evaluation are the following.

We propose a means-tested reform of the Rent Subsidy Program. The amount of subsidy received could be more differentiated than it currently is. This need for differentiation is justified by the differences in household income levels revealed by the questionnaire survey. Housing affordability should be taken into account when determining eligibility for and amounts of Rent Subsidy. The development and maintenance of a reformed subsidy scheme may require additional capacity on the part of ULE, as regularly updated client profiles are needed to operate such a system. As a minimum, the following up-to-date data on households should be available:

- total net monthly household income (including transfers),
- monthly housing costs,
- household composition (we recommend using the OECD-modified scale to calculate household members and per capita income levels).³⁴

Further model calculations would be needed to calculate an income threshold and to develop rent subsidy bands. Available funding for the Rent Subsidy Program also limits how much money might be distributed among program participants by ULE. Further investigation would also be needed about the client household group with objectively affordable housing (i.e., less than 40% of their disposable income is spent on housing) but with subjective difficulties to cover their housing costs.

Homeowners interviewed during the evaluation provide their dwelling at a lower price than the market rent. Rental fees were partly covered by the Rent Subsidy Program and partly paid by the refugee families. For the program as a whole, the majority of the dwellings are rented at market prices. The landlords interviewed also stressed that they would not have been able to rent their flats permanently at a price which would have been affordable for the refugee families without the subsidy. Nevertheless, the interviewed landlords could accept rental incomes 30-40% lower than the market average, even for longer periods. In planning the long-term transformation of the current program, it seems important to survey all landlords currently participating in the Rent Subsidy Program to better understand what rent levels they would envisage for a longer-term contract. The homeowners we spoke with would stay in a social rental agency scheme similar to the current scheme for the long term (and even recommend it to others), if they can receive at least around 70% of the market rent in total. It should be verified what rate would be acceptable for the whole group of owners.

Clarifying communication tasks and protocols is essential as the program continues. As the Rent Subsidy Program will be run solely by From Streets to Homes Association, this will lead to more clarity in the division of tasks between the organization and HFHH. HFHH and ULE will have the same cooperation contract as HFHH has with other organizations it supports with material donations. With a clearer separation of competences and responsibilities, the lines of authority for communicating about the program can also be clarified and the

³⁴ The OECD-modified scale counts the first adult with the weight of 1, each additional adult member with a weight of 0.5, children below 14 with a weight of 0.3. See the [OECD note](#) on equivalence scales.

communication tasks and protocols can be set. Communication with homeowners should be improved and strengthened, as their commitment is one of the main conditions for the program's success. Services provided by ULE should be communicated clearly and in advance to both homeowners and refugee households. In situations where the landlord is facing difficulties, eg. in drafting contracts, managing maintenance or communicating with tenants, it would be worthwhile for ULE to play a greater role than it currently does. If these proposed developments are undertaken, it is likely that additional housing units could be included in the scheme. This would also lead to a more secure housing provision for existing refugee tenants.

With the planned end of the joint program management by ULE and HFHH, responsibilities may also become clearer. The current rent subsidy program could become a pure ULE program, while HFHH could support the organization with material donations, as it supports other organizations.

Both ULE and HFHH are primarily housing organizations, which can strengthen the integration aspect of their programs, as opposed to other organizations helping refugees which primarily have a migration focus. The accumulated experience in housing by both ULE and HFHH is worth sharing with other organizations who are now launching housing programs in the wake of the war, but have less prior knowledge in the field of housing.

Methodological appendix

Methodological description of the questionnaire survey among clients

We conducted a questionnaire survey among the clients of the joint housing program run by From Street to Homes Association and Habitat for Humanity Hungary. When compiling the questionnaire, we collected the needs and proposals of both organizations. We aimed to construct a questionnaire which is comparable to other, larger sample surveys on the social situation of refugees from Ukraine and with standard Hungarian surveys (mainly the EU statistics on income and living conditions, EU-SILC³⁵) which is conducted by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office in Hungary. The final questionnaire was sent back for approval to both organizations to ensure that the questions are appropriate for evaluating the implementation of the program. Both the Hungarian and the Ukrainian version of the questionnaire was pre-tested by the staff of Periféria Policy and Research Center.

The questionnaire could be answered in Hungarian or Ukrainian. The [EUSurvey](#) interface was used for the survey. During the implementation, compliance with Regulation 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council (General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR) and the [Privacy and Data Protection Policy of From Streets to Homes Association](#) was ensured. Periféria Policy and Research Center did not process any personal data during the data collection. The survey was anonymous. For one question (“What other help would you need during your stay in Hungary?”) respondents were asked whether they allow their answers to be linked to their identities, so that From Streets to Homes Association can reach out to the household for discussing further assistance.

Individual links were sent to each household participating in the program in early February 2023, ensuring that each household completes the survey only once. Households were able to fill the questionnaire out online between 2 February and 10 February 2023.

The questionnaire links were sent out to 45 Ukrainian-speaking and 37 Hungarian-speaking households by From Streets to Homes Association, using their up-to-date email address list. Among the beneficiaries, there is one household where nobody speaks neither Hungarian nor Ukrainian. This household was not included in the initial sample. A total of 37 households completed the questionnaire, 18 were filled out in Ukrainian and 19 in Hungarian. This means a response rate of 45% among the whole group of beneficiaries. Respondents are not representative of the entire clientele.

³⁵ See the [Eurostat website](#) for details.

Lists of interviews

Organization	Date
Evangelical Lutheran Diakonia	8 March 2023
Hungarian Red Cross	9 March 2023
Dorcas Ministries	9 March 2023
Migration Aid	16 March 2023
Homeowner 1	8 March 2023
Homeowner 2	10 March 2023
Homeowner 3	13 March 2023
From Streets to Homes Association	8 March 2023
From Streets to Homes Association	17 March 2023
Habitat for Humanity Hungary	13 March 2023

Interview outline

Interviews with organizations

- How was the housing program set up?
 - Who owns the housing units where the refugee families live?
 - How is the program funded?
 - How and who runs the program?
 - Who are the refugee families in contract with?
 - Was there previously any housing program run by the organization? Was there any previous housing program specifically for refugees?
- How many households are in the program? What are the current and total numbers? What is the turnover rate?
 - How many housing units or places are there in the scheme?
- Conditions for entering the program
 - Are they able to facilitate transitioning from temporary accommodation?
 - Where do the residents come from?
 - What criteria are used to decide who is accepted?
- Conditions of being in the program

- Who are the main target groups?
- Which social groups do families belong to?
- How much do families have to pay for accommodation?
- How often do you contact the residents?
- Which difficulties did you have to provide adequate housing conditions?
- What are the difficulties faced by clients?
- What services are provided in addition to housing?
- Options for moving out
 - On average, how long do families stay in the accommodation?
 - How was the moving out originally designed? What are the differences compared to the plans?
 - Where do the families move if they exit the program?
 - What is the maximum time frame families can stay in the program?
- What is the organization's perspective on the continuation of the housing program?
 - Do you have the funding to take this project forward in the longer term?

Interviews with homeowners

- How did you hear about the program, how did you get involved?
- How much did it matter to you that there was an intermediary organization between the owners and the refugee tenants?
- Was it an appropriate arrangement for you to sign a contract directly with the refugee family?
- Did you receive the rent subsidy from ULE on time?
- Were there any interruptions in the communication with ULE?
- What services and what guarantees did you expect from ULE?
- How could the scheme be improved from the homeowners' point of view?
- How long do you want to utilize the flat in this way? What could be done to encourage people to utilize their flats in the longer term through an intermediary organization; either for refugee or Hungarian families?
- Would you rent out the flat in this way in the future, regardless of the current war against Ukraine?