



Scouts Diary

A captivating collection of Scouts' personal experiences in their humanitarian response for Ukraine

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ABOUT UAct

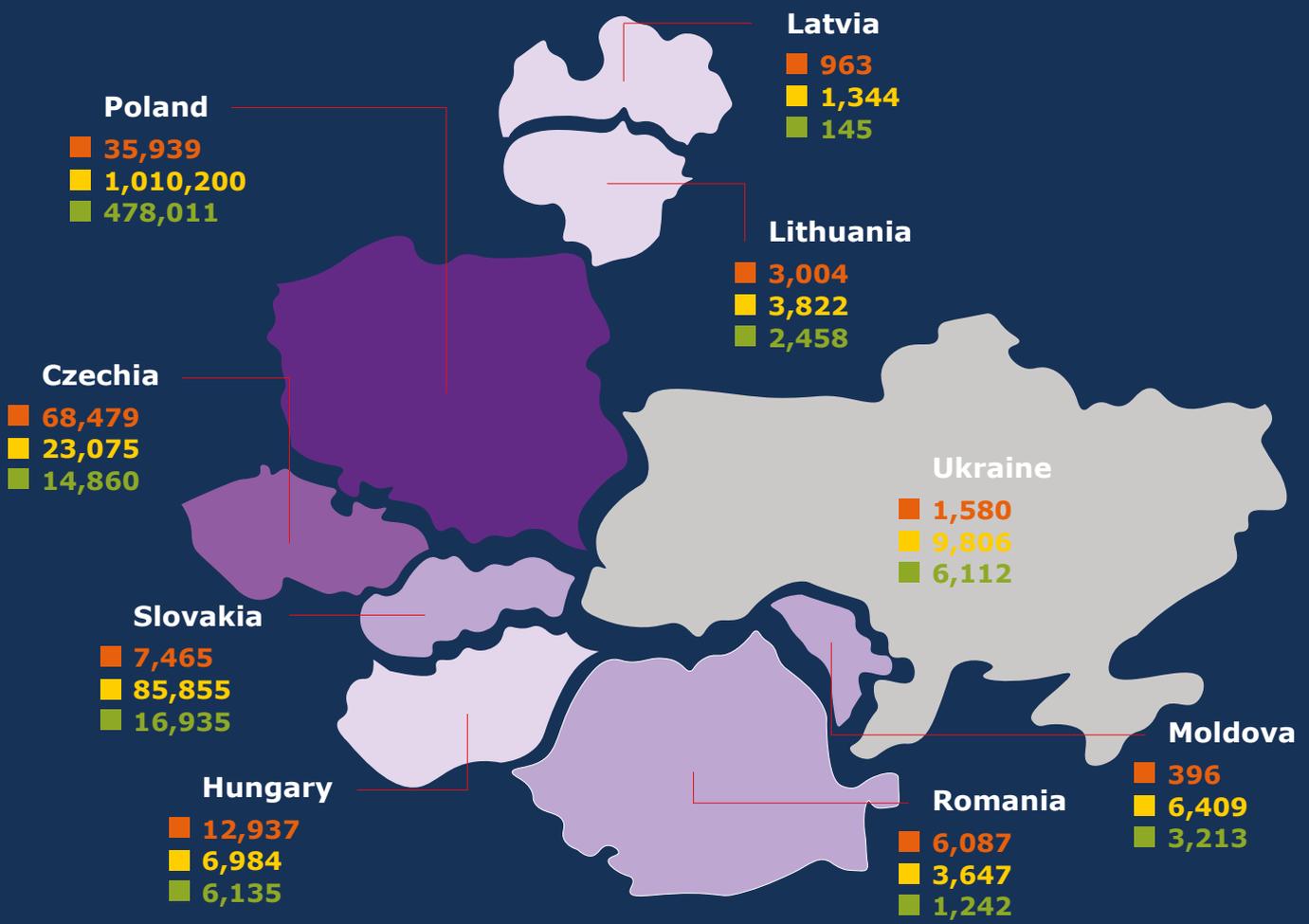
In April 2022, UNICEF and the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) launched a regional cooperation agreement mobilising young people to provide critical care and support to children and families fleeing the war in Ukraine.

The partnership, [UAct: Scouts in Humanitarian Response for Ukraine](#), was established to enable both organisations to scale up their responses to ensure those who are most in need of support can receive it. WOSM and UNICEF organised and delivered a joint response to address the urgent needs of Ukrainian refugee women and children in neighbouring countries: Poland, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, and Slovakia, as well as countries where refugees are continuing their

journey, including Czechia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Direct support has also been provided inside Ukraine where Scout groups in Ukraine are reaching internally displaced people (IDPs) seeking safety within the country.

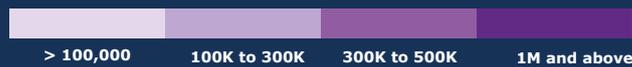
The partnership supported the ongoing efforts of National Scouts Organizations from the refugee-hosting countries, by linking Ukrainian refugees to services offered by public institutions. Through Scouting's educational approach, hundreds of refugee children have been integrated into local Scout groups, activities and supported by national youth programmes that have been adapted to fit their needs and to strengthen their resilience.

Through the UAct project, Scouts have worked with and supported over 1,151,000 Ukrainians.



as of 3 July 2023

- Number of members of the NSO
- Ukrainians reached with support
- Ukrainian children reached with support



*Data extracted on 6 June 2023 from the figure "Refugees from Ukraine recorded by country" available on <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

SCOUTS DIARY

Since the early days of the war in Ukraine, young people in Scouting mobilised immediately and volunteered around the clock. This helped ensure that Ukrainian families had access to basic necessities such as food, water, shelter, clothes, and protection after fleeing the war.

With **over 35,000 Scout volunteers actively supporting humanitarian efforts** in the nine countries, by providing services including accommodation, distributing essential items, and offering psychological first aid, UAct is a predominantly youth-led humanitarian response that has supported over 1,151,000 Ukrainians.

The Scouts Diary is a captivating collection of personal experiences shared by eight inspiring young Scouts, who are among the dedicated 35,000 Scouts that contributed their time and commitment to supporting Ukrainians fleeing to neighbouring countries, as well as those displaced inside Ukraine.

Told through the vivid perspectives of young Scouts, each Scouts Diary illuminates a particular aspect of the large-scale humanitarian response spearheaded by Scouts throughout the UAct project.



Czechia - Association of the Scouts and Guides of Czech Republic

FROM SCOUTING TO COMMUNITY BUILDING

CZECH SCOUTS EASE THE INTEGRATION OF UKRAINIANS AT PRAGUE COMMUNITY CENTRE

After being a Scout for most of her life, 25-year-old Mája joined the staff of the Svitlo Community Centre - which became a part of World Scouting and UNICEF's UAct project in 2023 - to work closely with Ukrainians who fled to her country, Czechia.

She has organised the programmes offered to Ukrainians at Svitlo Community Centre in Prague, run by the Czech Scouting Institute. Balancing her studies in community development and her work at the centre, Mája has been putting her passion and knowledge to practise and sharing her story



68,479

NSO
members



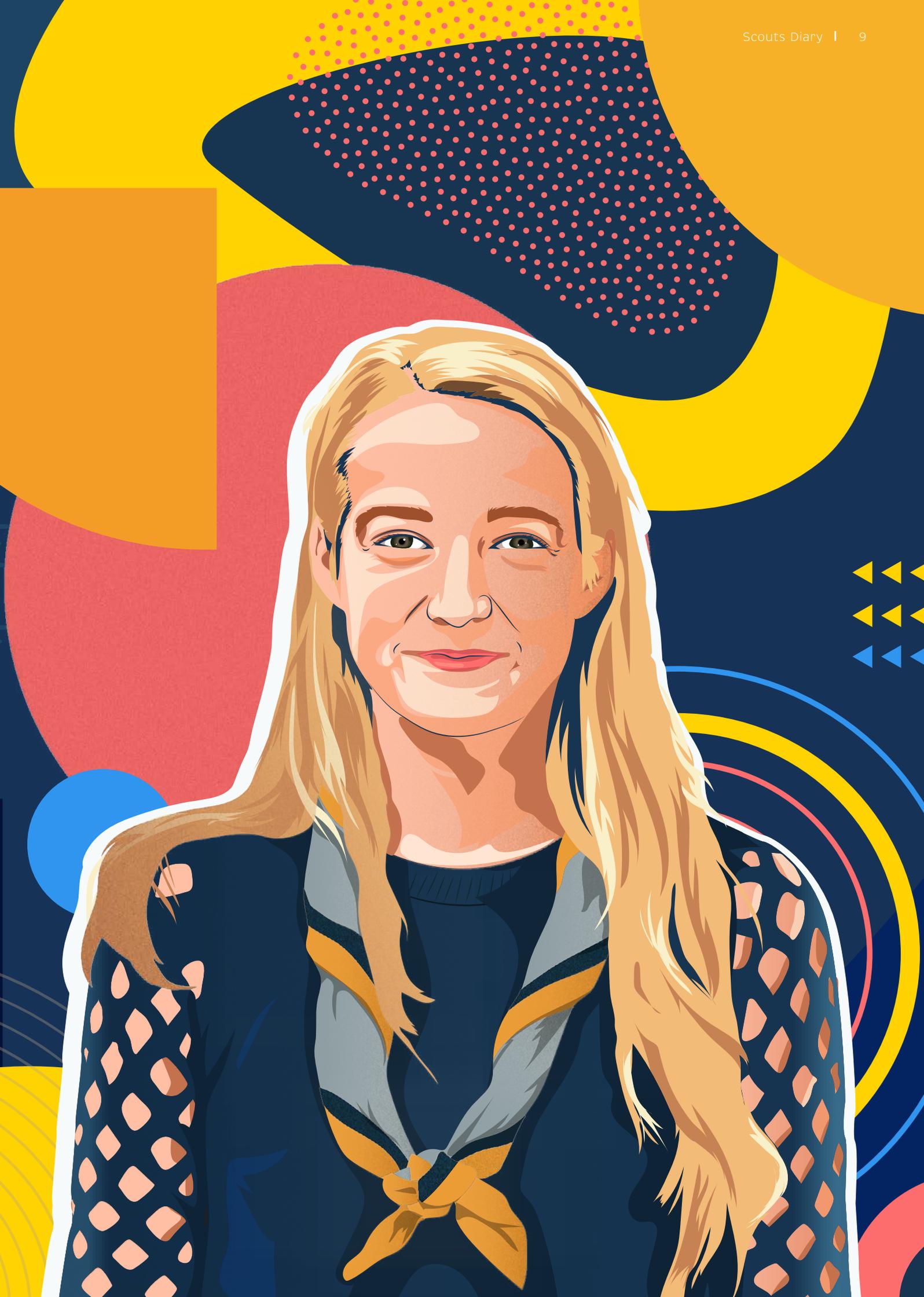
23,075

Ukrainians
supported



14,860

Ukrainian young
people supported





**“
My passion is
learning and
working in
community
development.”**

I've been a Scout since the first grade. I followed in the footsteps of my older siblings. Last year, I came to Prague for university, where I'm now studying for my Master's Degree in Social Geography and Regional Development.

My passion is learning and working in community development, so I jumped at the opportunity to join Czech Scouts in supporting Ukrainian refugees. I'm now part of the team which is coordinating all the activities that take place at the community centre here in Prague. The Scouting Institute founded the community centre, and we're now running the activities within the same complex of buildings as the Scouting Institute.

After considerable renovations, we've been running the centre since April 2022 to welcome Ukrainian refugees under this project. The centre is enormous, having 15 different rooms provided by the Prague municipality. We cooperate with many other organisations that offer various

services to Ukrainian refugees. It's been my dream role at this point in my life. I help to coordinate the daily timetables of activities and rooms, and I'm communicating with the different organisations and lecturers and helping to organise educational or community events.



One of the most unique and successful things about this project is how we've partnered with other organisations that specialise in different areas and offer various services to Ukrainian refugees under one roof. Ukrainians come here for language courses, psychological support, legal services, health consultations, children's programmes, etc.

Every day, 150-200 Ukrainians come through our doors, and we run seven programmes simultaneously. We focus on making it easier for families to transition and feel secure and comfortable in their new lives here in Czechia.

For example, one of our recent workshops was led by a Ukrainian lawyer who has been living in Czechia for years. She talked to refugees about their legal rights in the country, giving them a much better understanding of what they're entitled to and how the laws protect them. We also started a Czech-speaking club, where Ukrainians meet each week to practise their Czech language skills with Czech volunteers and connect with one another over discussion topics like culture, food and family. For youth, we launched a group therapy programme two weeks ago specifically for ages 12-15, in addition to another organisation that organises a youth club with movie nights, themed parties or game nights. These are very successful because they help them make friends and spend their time in a good way.



**“
It’s incredible
to see how
much of an
impact we can
make in their
lives. ”**

Even within the centre, the Ukrainians have formed their little community here, and I love that the centre has played a part in creating that. We have about 15 Ukrainian lecturers, many of whom started different free time activities as volunteers. There are lectures of Zumba, bachata, yoga or art and music sessions, all provided by the Ukrainian lecturers who came here after the war started. It’s impressive to see this and see that they are trying to make the best of this challenging time.

There are still a lot of challenges the refugees are facing. Since working at the centre, I also see the patterns in the challenges they face and try to adapt to their needs.

At the start, the struggles were more short-term and urgent, while now the effort of finding employment is very

apparent since the war is still ongoing for over one year. It takes work to find jobs, especially with the language barrier.

Still, we're trying to help them acquire new skills, learn the Czech language and provide counselling for finding jobs that match their qualifications. Many of them have university degrees and have good jobs in Ukraine. We had courses on online jobs or software testing, and we've even been running high school entrance exam preparation courses for youth.

My role is demanding, for sure, but it's also gratifying. I've learned so much about myself and my abilities through this experience, and I've formed many meaningful connections with the Ukrainian refugees I work with.

It's taught me the importance of setting healthy boundaries and listening to people's stories and struggles. The most rewarding part is seeing the community and connections that the refugees have been able to build for themselves here at the centre. I know that will persist even if the community centre ends.

It's incredible to see how much of an impact we can make in their lives. I hope this centre continues to operate and thrive because it's making a difference for these families.

Hungary - Hungarian Scout Association

APPLYING MY STRENGTHS TO GIVE REFUGEE CHILDREN A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Marci Hajdu, 26-years old, is a Scout leader in Hungary, who was among the first responders at a railway station, assisting newly arrived refugee families from Ukraine. Marci holds a degree in psychology and has been actively involved in the UAct project. Building on his experience and knowledge in both psychology

and Scouting, Marci created the “Friendship Book”, a child-friendly activity book that the National Scout Organization (NSO) in Hungary has published and distributed to over 100 Ukrainian young people for the booklet’s reflective and peacebuilding nature. This story is narrated by Marci.



12,937

NSO members



6,984

Ukrainians supported



6,135

Ukrainian young people supported



**BARA'
TSAG
FÜZE**



**“
I know we’re
creating a
special bond
with them that
helps them
adapt and
become more
resilient.”**

It was an emotional time for all of us volunteering at the railway station. I was there with my Scout friends. Many women and children were arriving, carrying little belongings and unsure of what is next for them. They were leaving their whole life behind just to be somewhere safe. We helped them with things they urgently needed and gave them important information. Honestly, it was heartbreaking but at the same time humbling and uplifting to see such kindness and humanity around us, because everyone there was genuinely helping.

I later became involved in the UAct project, where I was trained on psychological first aid, communication and working with children affected by conflict. Each week I visited a day care centre that the Hungary NSO set up for Ukrainian children, and Zubeta refugee shelter in Budapest, where around 90 Ukrainians are living.

There are several families sharing a room in this shelter and the children speak mostly Hungarian as they are from Ukraine’s Transcarpathian region, on the borders with Hungary. The war forced them to move into Hungary and find shelter and protection here. During my time at the day care, as well as at the shelter, I was noticing the sense of community that these activities were giving the refugees. This reassured the parents because they could leave their children in this safe environment while they are busy with job search and registration matters.

At the shelter, myself and another Scout play games with the children, we lead arts and crafts activities, build with Legos, sing together and sometimes play an animation movie for the children. When I began to understand their needs, I wanted them to have a tool that helps their knowledge and overall wellbeing.



As a Scout, I believe it's important to help my community and in front of me were children who needed help integrating into a new life that they didn't quite understand. Children need special attention during crisis, because they are also experiencing grief.

I created the Friendship Book. It is full of short activities and tasks for children that teach them emotional intelligence, finding creative solutions, Scouting values, how to be a good friend and a lot more.

I created two versions of the book that are suitable to different age groups, so it can help all refugee children. I worked with my NSO to finish the book and translate it into Ukrainian before we distributed it to children.

My proudest moment was seeing the Friendship Book printed and watching the children at the shelters excited as they flipped through the pages and immediately started coloring in it. I find it very rewarding that the children wait for us each week. I know we're creating a special bond with them that helps them adapt and become more resilient.

This also motivates me to want to become a trainer and help other young people to do this work. I plan to progress in my psychology work and focus on child protection, because I think that's very important to provide.



Lithuania - Lithuania Scouts Association

GIVING MY SCOUT PROMISE MILES AWAY FROM HOME

Kira, 12-years-old, was forced to leave Ukraine in February and find safety in neighbouring Lithuania. As part of the UAct Project, carried out in partnership with UNICEF, Kira was

able to join the Lithuanian Scouts' summer camps and be invited to the Baltic Jamboree, where she met a familiar face from home.



3,004

NSO
members



3,822

Ukrainians
supported



2,458

Ukrainian young
people supported





**“
Scouting gives
me the hope to
create a better
life”**

I was about to give my Scout promise and officially receive my neckerchief in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine. But the war broke out, and my mom and I immediately decided to leave the country. I was very excited to continue my journey in Scouting and felt extremely sad to think it wouldn't have been possible anymore. I loved Scouting.

We arrived in Lithuania and settled in the city of Šiauliai in April. My mom began looking for work, and I started going to school. But one thought kept coming back to my mind: visiting the Scouts in Lithuania. I like games, hiking, and being in nature, so I was determined to take part in all their activities.

I felt a little nervous at my first Scout meeting because I don't speak Lithuanian. However, the leaders really helped me and one of them spoke Russian - which I also speak - making it a lot easier for me. I told them I wanted to join the group, so the Scout Leaders talked to my mom. I was excited to start and when my mom registered me in a weekend camp, I was thrilled!

Even though it rained during the whole time I was in the camp, we had a lot of fun. I met other Ukrainians and when we had to leave, we were pretty sad that our time together ended. Then, I received the best news: the Leaders asked me if I wanted to go to the Baltic Jamboree in the Czech Republic! Of course, my answer was an immediate “YES!”

Everything at the Baltic Jamboree felt like a dream. I made new friends and met 20 people who were also from Dnepropetrovsk. I spoke to them in Ukrainian and we shared nice memories from home. We played and learned a lot together during the camp.

The best and most unforgettable moment was when I found my old Scout Leader from Ukraine. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw her there. We were thousands of kilometers away from home and, among 650 Scouts, we found each other. I yelled her name and ran to give her the biggest hug in the world. We hugged and smiled and were full of tears. I couldn't believe my eyes. With her there, I felt like I was home again.

I decided with my leader that it was the perfect place for me to make my Scout promise and receive my neckerchief, just as it was planned right before the war. She initiated the ceremony for me and it was all done the way we do it in Ukrainian Scouting. It was a very sentimental moment.

It was amazing to meet people from Ukraine. They are older than I am and became my mentors whom I trust and I still communicate with.

I am now attending school and Scout meetings in Lithuania. I participate in hikes and short camps over the weekend.

Scouting has an even more special place in my heart now. It is the only thing that helped me feel safe again. Because it is familiar, it feels like home. I'm grateful to be able to join Lithuanian Scouting because it helped me become braver. The children are friendly and understanding, and the Scout Leaders are always ready to help. Scouting here helps me to forget all the bad things I've been through.

Scouting gives me the hope to create a better life in Lithuania and make more friends. I love Scouting so I want to learn as much as I can. One day I will return to Ukraine and continue Scouting there.

Moldova - National Scout Organization of Moldova

DOOR-TO-DOOR SUPPORT, A LIFELINE TO MANY

Young, passionate, and giving, Anisia is a 24-year-old Scout in Moldova who plays a pivotal role in supporting the Ukrainian refugees who fled to her small village in Moldova since the start of the war in Ukraine. A medical school graduate, Anisia has previously helped families overcome drastic challenges

that the COVID-19 pandemic brought in 2020 and is now working closely with young people and families who escaped the war to find safety in her country, by visiting families, listening to their struggles and providing them with what they need.



396

NSO
members



6,409

Ukrainians
supported



3,213

Ukrainian young
people supported





**“
The only thing
I want is for
the war to
end.”**

For as far back as I can remember, my parents always helped people around the village. Whether it was clothes donations or fixing a problem for someone in need, I witnessed this in my home growing up all the time.

Scouting is the place that strengthened the love I have for helping my community. Earlier last year when the war broke out in Ukraine, thousands of Ukrainians escaped and entered Moldova to find a safer place for their families. Many already had relatives in Moldova, and traveled long hours by bus to get here.

In the beginning, only women and children were fleeing Ukraine and into Moldova and my village. Their situation was heartbreaking. They came with basic belongings and they were vulnerable economically, which was very hard to see.

My whole life I read books about wars and stories from wars, but never in my 24 years did I imagine that war would be right next door. It's sad and frightening to know that this war is so close.

I went with my parents to visit the new families in our village and we listened to their detailed stories, and current needs, in order to help in the best way. We went door to door and spoke to them. It was very emotional to see people in their most vulnerable states.

The first story I remember was this little boy who was 7-years-old, who fled with his mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. He was asking his grandma to bake him his favorite cake but she couldn't as they couldn't yet afford ingredients like butter and sugar. After meeting them that day, my parents and I immediately went to the shop and bought them the items they asked for, and of course, included



sugar and butter in our package. The family was very appreciative, and this motivated me to continue meeting more refugees and bringing them whatever it was they needed. Making a difference was as simple as the ability to make a cake for a child.

Moldova Scouts mobilize for an impactful response

Seeing this method of specific support was extremely helpful to the refugees, all Scout groups in Moldova are still using this approach of visiting Ukrainians in their towns, making a list of their needs, and delivering the items to them. It makes everyone happy with the result. We arrange and deliver packages of food, bedsheets, hygiene items, and anything the families ask for. We are granted funds through our partnership with UNICEF which is really helpful and has allowed us to give all this support.

At the start, the main needs were food and cooking items, while now it's all about things to get through the cold winter. We're delivering more packages of blankets, jackets, winter boots, and warm clothes. My mom and I prefer going to the city to give the families a better quality of these items.





As the war progressed, more refugees were arriving in Moldova, and we were adapting our Scouting activities to support more and more Ukrainian young people and their families. We organized Scout camps in the summer and opened them to Ukrainian children to give them a chance to make friends, play, learn and just have fun. I think the children enjoyed their time because there were many games and fun challenges.

I led some workshops in the camps like craft-making and many Ukrainian children participated. It's helpful that I speak Russian, so I've been translating and connecting better with Ukrainian families.

Almost on a weekly basis now, we have programmes to involve Ukrainian children in educational activities and friendship-building. In December, we organized a beautiful festival of dancing and singing, then a small group of us drove from Moldova to Austria to receive the Peace Light from Scouts and take it back.

This was a fun experience! It was the first time for Scouts in Moldova to join this yearly celebration of peace in Vienna. We brought our candles and lanterns back home and shared the Peace Light with Ukrainian families in our community as a symbol of hope and peace to come.

Impact of humanitarian action on Anisia

I've noticed that since I became more involved in this support to Ukrainians, it made me more passionate in my life and a much more grateful person. I feel like I even became more expressive and loving towards my family. Interacting closely with young people from Ukrainian, showed me how our whole life can change in one day.

The children understand their situation very well. When they play, they seem fine and just like any other child, but as soon as they are asked important questions, they immediately reflect on the war and say things like "the only thing I want is for the war to end."

I definitely have more compassion now, and a different view of life now and its value.

Poland - Polish Scouting and Guiding Association

ONE STEP CLOSER TO COMFORT

Krzysztof is a 23-year-old Scout leader in Warsaw. He joined the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association when he was nine years old and has been active in Scouting ever since. Since December 2022, Krzysztof became involved in the UAct project, taking the role of Shift Coordinator at

[UNICEF's Blue Dot](#) in Warsaw, where he was giving support to hundreds of Ukrainians each day, with other Scouts who were coordinating the Blue Dots. He is also currently a university student studying Cybersecurity and Information Security.



35,939

NSO
members



1,010,200

Ukrainians
supported



478,011

Ukrainian young
people supported

**Blue Dots are safe spaces along border crossings and transit areas that offer immediate services and information for families fleeing the war. For over one year, Scouts provided vital support and coordination of UNICEF's Blue Dots in Poland.*





“

The biggest reward is that I was able to immediately see the impact of my work and effort. ”

I'm a tech guy but I also really enjoy organising programmes and activities and working with children, which is why I enjoy being a Scout leader. I joined UAct in December 2022 at one of the Blue Dots in Warsaw. I was doing more than managing shifts - I did some communication, managed schedules, gave tech support where needed and made sure our equipment at the Blue Dot was working. When I started our team was bigger so I was only there part-time, but gradually the Blue Dot teams were downsized and I was there everyday.

This particular Blue Dot was located at a bus station in Warsaw, so there were many people coming either by bus from Ukraine or directed to us from the train station where they arrived into Poland immediately after escaping the war.

It was extremely busy. We were receiving around 2,000 inquiries each day at the Blue Dot. We handled many different issues like families needing support with their documents, pet registrations, legal advice, or just solving issues that needed a Polish speaker to help their situation with different authorities. Sadly we dealt with many cases of theft being reported by the refugees who had belongings or money stolen from them. Who would do such a terrible thing to families who are already in this difficult situation?

In these cases, we helped them either contact the police or other NGOs that could help - we really provided help any way we could.

Every day, I could feel that people trusted us. Even people working at the station came to us for different things, because they knew we had solutions and information. It came with intense moments of course, but it was very meaningful when people expressed their appreciation. So many of them thanked us daily for our presence there.



The Blue Dot is located next to a temporary sleeping quarter dedicated to hosting Ukrainians in this period. This was great because we had a Child Friendly Space in the Blue Dot for the kids to play. Lots of children came to play and spend time there - they loved it. They had art activities and played together, which is good for them during this transit time in a new country and especially while their families are struggling.

As Scouts, leadership skills get built inside us as we do Scouting and lead patrols of younger children. My experience at the Blue Dot allowed me to apply my leadership in a professional environment which was very unique, and I was leading people who were older than me which was new.

We were a team of coordinators, a psychologist, a Child Protection Specialist, and a designated person for the Child Friendly Space. Many of them were Ukrainian refugees, which was incredibly helpful to the refugees coming to the Blue Dot for assistance. They were able to understand each other and we can see it helped them build a lot of trust with us which was important.

Looking back now, I can say that I learned SO MUCH during my months there. The first thing that I'm really happy about is that I got to learn Ukrainian! Our languages are a little similar but interacting on a daily basis with Ukrainians, definitely helped me speak and understand it much better. Another thing I learned is crisis management, which also means to be a problem-solver under pressure while managing a team of people. It wasn't easy at all. Solutions needed to be quick and efficient. I'm grateful that I now have this skill to help me throughout my life.

Many aspects of it were rewarding but the biggest reward is that I was able to immediately see the impact of my work and effort. The positive results were immediate and it kept me motivated every day. Even if I handled a simple problem, like fixing an issue with someone's train ticket, to this person it is literally everything to them in that moment. Because of my help, they are one step closer to comfort, safety or family and this was my biggest reward.

Romania - National Organization of Romanian Scouts

ROMANIAN SCOUTS' RAPID, STRUCTURED, AND COMPASSIONATE RESPONSE AT THE BORDER



As families fled the escalating violence in Ukraine, young Scouts like 25-year-old Raluca were among the first responders at the borders of neighbouring countries,

offering urgent support like food, accommodation and access to information to help the arriving families as they sought refuge.



6,087

NSO
members



1,242

Ukrainians
supported



1,242

Ukrainian young
people supported





World Scouting
Scouts Mondial

 **SCOUTS**
Creating a Better World



“
*The values
 we learn in
 Scouting unite
 us to make the
 world a better
 place.*”

It was late February. Hundreds of Ukrainian families started to cross Romanian borders, leaving their homes and lives behind to embark on an uncertain journey.

Being long time Scouts, Raluca and her friend Mihaela were prepared to be of service at any moment, and they knew they needed to mobilize immediately. It was 9:00 p.m. on 26 February, when both Scouts got in their car and drove three hours to Romania’s northern border, Sighetu-Marmației, to lend a helping hand.

“We weren’t exactly sure what kind of help we could give once we reached the border, but we didn’t want to just wait for instructions before assessing the situation, and we knew a plan could take a week or more to arrive. Families were suffering and we wanted to act immediately and coordinate the response based on what we identify at the border, so we headed off to see for ourselves,” explained Raluca.

The situation at the border was dire. Mostly women and children were arriving that night, carrying few belongings and clearly exhausted and distressed mentally and emotionally. Raluca and Mihaela started to ask around if anyone needed a ride somewhere, but it was late at night and they could sense the fear and shock among the refugees. Raluca and her friend decided it would be best to come back in the morning, fully equipped with a strategy and a larger team.

“That night, we got home and sent out messages to our Scout group, mobilizing a whole team for the next morning. We told everyone to wear their Scout uniforms the next day, to give us credibility, and we went back with more cars and a plan to give shelter and accommodation to support the influx of refugees,” she continued.



The following morning, Raluca and her Scout group were a full operation at the border, made up of young volunteers working together efficiently, delivering some supplies but mainly focused on transporting refugees to different cities in Romania and facilitating safe accommodation including developing a network of people who opened their homes to hosting some families.

“We made sure that our team had a Ukrainian speaker. She’s the mother of a Scout who was providing psychological first aid to the women. Her interaction with them in their own language allowed us to understand what the families needed at this time and most importantly gain their trust during this challenging time because we can see they were in shock and reluctant to interact with others.”

The Scouts’ motto is “be prepared” and, as Scouts, Raluca and her team took charge, making sure to cover every need that may arise. The second day at the border the team managed to help 12 Ukrainians, and the following day they helped 40. Eventually Raluca and her team assisted 340 refugees, some with their pets, to reach safety and access the critical information and services they needed in her country.

The team, made up of volunteer translators, field coordinators, and trusted drivers, worked tirelessly to facilitate safe accommodation and transportation for families who needed a place to stay. Scouts from different cities in Romania joined efforts, putting their usual priorities on hold and made this their top priority. The team of dedicated volunteers involved their families, community, and activated their networks to make sure that refugees from Ukraine can feel at home.

During the week, the volunteers coordinated with more Scout groups, establishing shifts at the border and ensured that each team member could get some rest. With the support of their National Scout Organization in Romania, the teams were working tirelessly to support refugees who had just crossed the border.

“We worked day and night that week, but we found it remarkably rewarding as we helped more and more people each day. Gaining the trust of refugees was just amazing and solidified our motivation to continue doing all we could.”

As more humanitarian agencies set up their teams at the border, the efforts of the Scouts became more noticeable, eventually leading to collaborations between the young Scout volunteers and relief organizations. The Scouts supported UNICEF at the Blue Dots, spaces along border crossings that provide urgent and critical information and referral services to the arriving families and children.

“It was extremely humbling to see different organizations and religious groups working hand in hand, relying on each other, and uniting their efforts towards the common goal of making sure that the refugees are protected and that their basic needs met,” expressed Raluca.

The war is having a devastating impact on the Ukrainian population. More than 100 days into the conflict, over two-thirds of the country’s 7.5 million children have now been forced from their homes by the war, either inside Ukraine or abroad.

In response to this unfolding humanitarian crisis, thousands of Scout volunteers have mobilized to help meet the immediate and long-term needs in Ukraine and neighbouring countries. Like Raluca, teams of Scouts are volunteering to help families at border crossings, refugee and migrant centres, transit centres, and more. In the countries neighbouring Ukraine, the Scouts have introduced Scouting activities for young people who fled the war, providing a sense of normalcy, and strengthening their resilience.

“Scouting is the reason we choose this path of service and peacebuilding. It wasn’t until I became involved in this humanitarian response that I realized that Scouting was literally preparing us for any circumstance – the camps we organize, the tents we sleep in, and the responsibility we take at a young age all equipped us to manage the waves of people in need in this crisis,” Raluca shared.

“The values we learn in Scouting unite us to make the world a better place.”

This is just one of the many initiatives that Scouts led in different host countries at the onset of war in Ukraine. Considering the timeliness of these actions and the large volunteer network involved, the World Organization of the Scout Movement has partnered with UNICEF in Romania and eight other countries neighbouring Ukraine to leverage the power of young people and engage with them to address the needs of refugees fleeing the war. With the support of UNICEF, Scouts like Raluca and her dedicated team have the means to lead impactful actions and continue to inspire other young people to do the same.

Slovakia - Association of Scouts and Guides of Slovakia

MY JOURNEY OF DISCOVERING HUMANITY IN CRISIS AND SERVICE

Veronika is a 21-year-old Scout in Slovakia. She became active in community service actions during the COVID-19 pandemic when Slovakian Scouts led response efforts like delivering face masks and respirators. In 2022, Veronika joined the UAct

project, giving her support at the border as hundreds of Ukrainians fled to Slovakia. As a psychology student, she observed a number of compelling aspects of humanitarian work, and a strong sense of comradery was one.



7,465

NSO
members



85,855

Ukrainians
supported



16,935

Ukrainian young
people supported





**“
This
humanitarian
experience
certainly
shaped my
future career
plans too.”**

When the war broke out in February 2022, many of us Scouts went to the borders to give a hand any way we could. There were so many mothers with young children, even babies, who just crossed the border, escaping into Slovakia. It was like a basecamp that was set up, and different organizations were present, and growing by the day, to provide their services to the refugee families.

The temperature was freezing cold, and the nights were horrible. We had a large room where Ukrainian families stayed for the night until they arranged their next move. It didn't take Scouts long to organize ourselves. When we saw how much help was needed, we immediately divided ourselves into day and night shifts. Some of us volunteered at the registration desk, others made sure the refugees were warm as they waited for their passports and documents to be checked. Some of us volunteered by helping other organizations like Cooks without Borders, in serving hot meals to the refugees.

We were around 40-50 Scouts on a daily basis, depending on people's availability. We were spread out across the campsite, even taking the initiative in keeping the location and its bathrooms clean.

I was there for the first week, registering volunteers, reporters, drivers, and whoever visited the campsite. One thing stuck with me since then is the positive attitude of everyone giving support at the border. We all worked with very high enthusiasm and energy which helped our spirits a lot. I really hope the refugees also found this attitude helpful and comforting for them.



Scouts who spoke Ukrainian or Russian were the first point of contact for the families as they arrived, which was especially emotional and tough. But despite this, everyone was motivated – we became a community, all supporting each other and all working toward the same thing.

Soon after I moved and started working at the camp in Michalovce where some refugees were being transported there from the border. I was there handling the registrations of everyone present at the site, including volunteers who came not only from Slovakia but also from around the world to volunteer and give their time and support. Again, the support and motivation were all around me. We spent a lot of time together and really connected

and learned from each other every day in these tough situations. I felt part of a community, where people were interacting together on a deeper level as human beings and with so much openness. It felt very rewarding.

I believe everyone who is involved in this humanitarian response learned a lot and grew from it. In my case, I was having some issues with my studies that were really affecting my mental health. This experience opened my eyes. It made me witness right before my eyes the devastating struggles others we forced to face and made me view my life differently and now I feel very grateful to be alive. It also helped me restore my faith in others, after being surrounded each day by genuinely kind people. The whole environment runs on acts of kindness both among the refugees and the volunteers.

From my experience, I can say it's important that youth get involved in humanitarian work. As it did for me, humanitarian action gives an opportunity for young people to see their real potential and believe that they are capable of so much!

Going forward, I am planning to continue with my studies in psychology. This humanitarian experience certainly shaped my future career plans too. I've become very interested in clinical psychology for children in humanitarian crises and those who experienced trauma.

Ukraine - National Organization of Scouts of Ukraine

HOW ANNA REALIZED THAT HAPPINESS CAN BE FOUND EVEN IN THE DARKEST OF TIMES

Anna is a 20-year-old Scout leader from Dnipro, Ukraine. She fled Ukraine when the war escalated in February 2022, but she returned to Dnipro as soon as it was safe to do so. Having faced displacement, Anna volunteers with internally displaced children who fled to Dnipro from war-affected cities like Mariupol and Sievierodonetsk. The immense support Anna received from strangers on her journey out of Ukraine left her motivated and inspired

to give the same joy and assistance to other young people in a similar situation. Through her National Scout Organization, she involves displaced children in Scouting activities and Scouting's educational approaches to re-introduce a sense of normalcy to their childhood, while supporting their learning and well-being. Anna shares her story



1,580

NSO
members



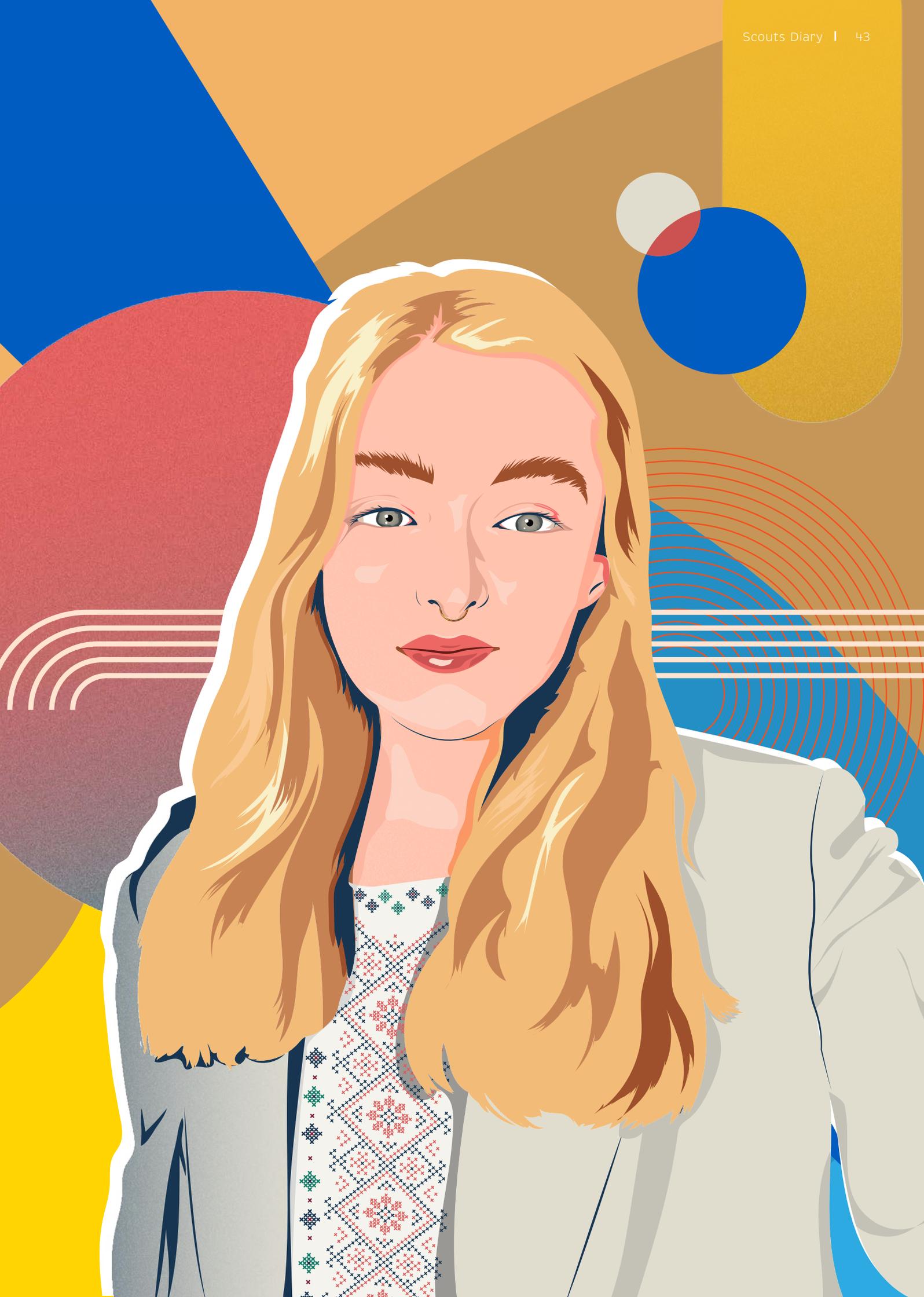
9,806

Ukrainians
supported



6,112

Ukrainian young
people supported





“
Everything was new here and I felt alone, but when I came to Scouting, I felt like I found a family.”

I prepared my emergency suitcase in January 2022, as we all waited in anticipation over which day the war was going to start. My family already decided that my parents would stay behind in Ukraine, but my siblings and I would need to evacuate immediately to another country.

I packed essentials like warm clothes, battery chargers, and important documents in my suitcase. In situations like this, we also want to hold on to things that have sentimental value and are not necessarily lifesaving. So, I tucked away a childhood photo of me and my mom and a postcard my best friend drew for me. I had no idea what kind of journey awaited me, or if I would ever see my hometown and parents again.

Exactly one year ago, I rushed to grab that suitcase so I wouldn't miss one of the first evacuation trains leaving Ukraine. It was terrifying. The railway station was filled with elderly people, women, and children, all engulfed in confusion and fear. The train compartments were heavily overcrowded, and many passengers were in the walkway. The desperation for safety filled the air. I was accompanied by my siblings and friends of our family. We were escaping to Germany but stopped in many places along the way. We traveled for five days before reaching our destination, Berlin.

I was in Germany for six months, living in an apartment too small to fit us all. But we were safe and managed to be in touch with my parents as much as possible. When the situation in Dnipro improved in August, I decided it was time to return home. My parents discouraged the idea as Ukraine was far from stable or safe. It saddened me a lot that I never got to say a proper goodbye to anything or anyone back home, so when the opportunity came, I immediately went back.

I reconnected with Scouting in Dnipro. Most children in my Scout patrol fled the city so I didn't have a patrol to lead anymore. I learned that my National Scout Organization is working with



UNICEF (UAct project) on helping and welcoming Ukrainians who escaped the violence in their cities and moved to Dnipro. I wanted to be involved right away!

Along our journey out of Ukraine, I was humbled by the generosity of strangers offering us help. For example, when we stopped in Poland, a family invited us to spend the night



in their home and cooked us a warm meal and we managed to shower and sleep comfortably before they drove us back to the station the next day. This is only one incident out of many that I am so grateful for. Volunteering in the UAct project and helping children who fled their cities is my way of sharing this gratitude and giving back the kindness that was given to me.

I love a quote from Harry Potter that says, "Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times, if you only remember to turn on the light." To me, this light is the kindness of people who come your way.



Part of my role in the UAct project was working on recruiting adult volunteers to match the increasing number of Ukrainian children wanting to join our Scouting activities and programme. We managed to find more volunteers and now I lead a patrol of children who are around 11 and 12 years old. The children are mainly from Mariupol and Sievierodonetsk, who escaped to Dnipro in the last months. We've been at our Scout centre every week playing games, drawing, learning, and being creative with them. We introduce them to Scouting concepts and values through games to give them a better understanding of Scouting. A lot of the children bring their younger siblings along, so we opened a Cub Scout patrol.

We reached out to professional psychologists at the beginning, to advise us on the best approach to support the children and how to make sure we protect them and care for their wellbeing. I believe it's a good thing that we're able to relate to some of the children's experiences in this war, but we focus more on making our Scout space a safe place for them to live their childhood and feel like they belong.



The children love Scouting now and ask for more frequent meetings. We asked the children for their feedback, and one girl said to me: “Everything was new here and I felt alone, but when I came to Scouting, I felt like I found a family. It makes me feel alive when I am here. I love the other kids and the leaders here too.”

My heart lit up when I heard her words. This is the light and happiness I want them to feel during their darkest times.

We’re now looking forward to warmer weather so we can all enjoy outdoor activities and show them how much fun Scouting is outdoors. We can only hope for better weather and no warning sirens again.



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