

# Stress factor related to the reception of Ukrainian refugees and hosts in Europe

Volume 15 Issue 5 - 2022

## Opinion

The arrival of Ukrainian refugees requires security and a stable environment. They need medium and long-term perspectives. They are mostly women and children who arrive from Ukraine in France and Belgium or from other parts of Europe (Poland, Hungary, Romania, etc.). They are particularly vulnerable. Their accommodation requires the full attention of the host. It is important to be aware of the challenges that the hosts will face and the psychological impact this will have. Hosting will create a co-location from the outset. This can be accompanied by particular challenges. Initially, it is a question of the “chemistry” between the host and the host (the refugee). A crucial factor is the freedom of choice of all concerned, as there is no guarantee of mutual sympathy. It is important to take into account that Ukrainian refugees have different expectations and are not primarily looking for a new home and a new family. Many want to return to Ukraine as soon as possible and return to their former life and environment. In particular, this can be seen in the patriotism exercised by the men who stayed in.

Ukraine to fight Russia. This may mean that these refugees do not easily accept and/or adapt to the new living conditions. It is imperative for the host to bear in mind that the children and their careers have a strong need for safe, secure shelter and that they are not primarily looking for a flat share with strangers. Refugees may want to be grateful for the help offered. They may feel guilty for needing help without being able to provide compensation. They need privacy and the environment provided is important: room, sanitary facilities and kitchen, whether shared with the host or not. The need for the refugee to create his or her own secure and intimate temporary cocoon is often encountered. Moreover, the length of time spent in accommodation has a considerable impact on the host's psyche and, until now, no study has addressed this issue. Beyond the benevolent idea, the host will be confronted with various factors that they have not taken into account: although they are aware of what is happening in Ukraine, they are not really aware of the reality on the ground and the difficult journey their hosts have to make to arrive in the host country. Many Ukrainian refugees have adjustment and mental health problems such as alcoholism or personality disorders or post-traumatic stress disorder, they have a different history and culture, the notion of freedom differs between Eastern and Western Europe, gender roles are not the same everywhere. They arrive and have expectations imposed on them that are specific to Western European countries and must immediately adapt to them (forced adaptation, finding a job, enrolling their children in school, registering with a health insurance company, ...). The policy of the receiving countries requires them to integrate into other codes and laws as soon as they arrive, without allowing them to really breathe and digest what has just happened to them. From one trauma (fleeing war), they move on to a second trauma (adapting). From then on, the question arises as to whether our infatuation with reception and the way of proceeding is healthy for everyone, whether they are the host or the looked after? This can have an impact on the career who is faced with difficulties in understanding a guest who

**Carine Duray-Parmentier**Department of Psychotherapist and Psychotraumatologist,  
Psychotherapy Center of Namur, Belgium**Correspondence:** Carine Duray-Parmentier, Department of  
Psychotherapist and Psychotraumatologist, Psychotherapy  
Center of Namur, Belgium, Tel 00 32 496411184,  
Email carine.durayduray@gmail.com**Received:** September 13, 2022 | **Published:** September 30,  
2022

does not seem to meet the expectations of the reception. Many hosts mention the fact that Ukrainian refugees stay in their rooms, do not share family life, have alcohol problems, do not inform their hosts of important information (outings, trips to another country in the Schengen area because they are authorised), some refuse to learn the language of the host country. A gap is created and frustrations emerge for both parties. A key element is also highlighted: the duration of the reception. Usually, when the host hosts a guest, they know the entry and exit dates, i.e. the duration of the stay. For many host families, the uncertainty about the duration of the reception of Ukrainian refugees is paramount. Politicians caught off guard by the war in Ukraine have put in place certain arrangements for the mass reception of people fleeing the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Emergency responses that leave some people uncertain about the reception of refugees. Social welfare centres are caught off guard as the demand for social housing is saturated. This uncertainty regarding the end date of the reception leads to considerable stress for the host.<sup>1-7</sup> Both the foster career and the host feel helpless and the situation is uncertain and unclear. The feeling of guilt can also be felt by the host. Indeed, the longer the hosting period lasts, the more the host is confronted with a new reality: he/she is no longer alone in his/her private home and the desire to return to his/her old habits and homeostasis becomes more and more felt. He or she may then be caught in an inner conflict of welcoming and wanting the host to leave. So how can we improve contact and exchanges, especially when language is a barrier, when codes are different, when values are different and when there are difficulties in adapting to each other? This is, of course, an analysis that consists of the beginning of an in-depth reflection based on a certain number of experiences and felt testimonies. Ideally, it would be appropriate to direct some studies in the coming months. It is a matter of preliminary analysis.<sup>7-11</sup>

## Acknowledgments

None.

## Conflicts of interest

Author declares there are no conflicts of interest.

## Funding

None.

## References

1. Levy BS, Leaning J. Russia's War in Ukraine. The Devastation of Health and Human Rights. *New England Journal of Medicine*; 2022;387:102–105.
2. <https://www.psycom.org/actualites/vu-sur-le-web/refugies-arrivant-dukraïne-ce-qui-peut-preserver-leur-santé-mentale/>
3. Greenaway CH, Fabreau G, Pottie K. The war in Ukraine and refugee health care: considerations for health care providers in Canada. *CMAJ*. 2022;194(26):E911-E915.
4. World Health Organization. Ukraine - WHO Special Initiative for Mental Health. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020.
5. Pottie K, Greenaway C, Feightner J, et al. Evidence-based clinical guidelines for immigrants and refugees. *CMAJ*. 2011;183:E824–E925.
6. Purkey E, Patel R, Phillips SP. Trauma-informed care: better care for all. *Can Fam Physician*. 2018;64 (3):173–175.
7. Simone R. The Great Migration and Europe; the debate on history, politics, society. Gallimard for the French translation. 2021. p. 168-171.
8. <https://www.parlement-wallonie.be/pwpages?p=interp-questions-voir&type=28&iddoc=110630>
9. Public Health Guidance on Infectious Disease Screening and Vaccination in Newly Arrived Migrants in the EU/EEA. Sweden, Stockholm: European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC); 2018.
10. Russell G, Harris MF, Cheng IH, et al. Coordinated primary health care for refugees: a best practice framework for Australia. Acton (AU): Australian Institute of Primary Health Care Research; 2013.
11. National Standards for Equity in Health Care. Ottawa: National Newcomer Navigation Network; 2022.