

***The results of the investigations carried out in Siret locality, Suceava county
and proposals for further action***

The People's Advocate Institution proceeded ex officio regarding the observance of the fundamental right to life and physical and mental integrity as well as the right to health care for migrants arriving from Ukraine to Romania.

In this context, the representatives of the People's Advocate conducted on 16.03.2022, an **investigation** in Siret, where there is an important border crossing point with Ukraine, in order to obtain clarifications from the representatives of the competent public authorities / institutions present, concerning the fundamental right to life and physical and mental integrity and the right to health care, for refugees arriving from Ukraine to Romania.

1. Siret City Hall

On the occasion of the working visit conducted by the representatives of the People's Advocate, the mayor of Siret presented us a series of issues regarding the steps taken by the local authority to prepare for the optimal reception of migrants from Ukraine.

Siret City Hall offers hot meals, cleaning, sanitation, loading / unloading aids, furniture, televisions and other infrastructure elements, for the buffer establishments (reception centres).

In Siret, there are 2 reception centres, which were organized with the support of the competent public authorities and are under the coordination of the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (ISU); as well as 9 other establishments, which are organized and funded by NGOs and churches.

The 9 centres have an accommodation capacity of 211 people; At the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, they were very crowded and currently accommodate about 30 people. The city hall also offers for these 9 establishments: hot meals, beds, blankets, televisions, clothes, toys, etc.

A large part of the resources were provided by NGOs, managed by the Social Assistance Directorate (DAS) within the mayor's office and distributed to all the mentioned centres.

The City Hall provided support to ensure the necessary conditions at the level of these reception centres, including through the involvement of employees, who provided support 12-14 hours daily. In this sense, the IT specialist employed in the mayor's office took care of the installation of internet networks, and the reception centres now also have internet access and cable TV connection. At the same time, he provided technical support for filling in the forms, as well as leaflets and posters which were distributed in the reception centres.

The employees of the European Funds Department within the mayor's office provided: the necessary translations, communication with the press, communication with migrants. The city hall

also organizes a *Help Desk* activity, useful information for migrants is published on the city hall's website and there is a telephone number that can be called 24 hours a day.

The mayor's office is currently working on creating a map of the presence of Ukrainians in the community. This mapping is done in order to organize schooling, provide social assistance and even identify job opportunities.

Representatives of AJOFM Suceava went to Siret and offered about 400 jobs, to which migrants arriving from Ukraine have the opportunity to apply. At this moment, several people have already been hired in Suceava County.

Most Ukrainians, however, are only in transit in Romania. About 120,000 Ukrainians passed through the city of Siret, of whom about a quarter (30,000) remained in the country.

Infrastructure (lighting, maintenance and replacement of damaged sanitary ware, etc.) and customs cleaning were provided by the city hall, although they should have been organized at customs level.

All support was provided by the mayor's office, given that the budget for emergencies was 0 at the moment. Bills for medicines, connection to utilities (electricity, etc.), energy consumption, equipment (electric heaters, etc.) have not been paid so far. The institution of the Prefect of Suceava County centralizes these expenses, and the amounts will be provided, most likely, from the Government Reserve Fund. Accessing European funds is more difficult and takes a relatively long time.

The most pressing problem reported by the mayor of Suceava is the financial resource for the payment of overtime performed by the employees of the mayor's office, as well as the identification of legal solutions in this regard and the provision of financial resources for the mentioned outstanding invoices.

At the Siret border crossing, a command centre was organized, consisting of representatives of the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, the Border Police, the General Inspectorate for Immigration, the Public Health Directorate, the County Council, the School Inspectorate. At the level of this command, decisions are made to ensure the necessary support for those arriving from abroad (transport, accommodation, etc.).

2. Siret border crossing point

At the Siret border crossing point were identified the representatives, seconded from all over the country, of the following public authorities / institutions and discussions were held with them: Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (ISU), including SMURD, Border Police, Health Directorate Public Suceava (DSP), General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC).

In addition to the work points of public institutions / authorities, in the vicinity of the customs there were numerous stands belonging to NGOs with food, clothes, cosmetics and other

objects necessary for those arriving in the country, a mobile hospital located by the Turkish Embassy, veterinary ambulance and animal feed.

In the immediate vicinity of the Siret Customs, an advanced ISU operational point was organized, especially for the situation of migrants arriving from Ukraine.

Migrants usually arrive in waves. Each day, about 2000-3000 people cross the border. At the time of the survey, there was a low influx of people arriving in Romania, but there were periods when their number was much higher.

In the beginning, many of the people who arrived had financial means, but in time, people who needed assistance began to come. There is a possibility that in the future, the flow of migrants will increase again at the border.

Upon entering the country, the migrants are picked up by the gendarmes and accompanied to the triage area where they are asked what they want to do next. ISU volunteer translators and firefighters talk with the migrants to identify the next steps needed to get them into the country in good condition.

ISU firefighters and volunteers were provided with badges, inscribed in Ukrainian, English and Romanian, indicating the service for which each was responsible: transport, accommodation, translator, volunteer. This makes it easier for migrants to ask for the support they want.

Leaflets with useful information in Ukrainian were also distributed, as well as a *Guide on the legal regime, rights and obligations of Ukrainian refugees in Romania*.

Representatives of the General Inspectorate for Immigration intervene when there are asylum seekers.

An application has been developed by ISU in which all the means of transport available at the border are registered. Transport is provided both free of charge and for a fee by public authorities and by the private sector.

At the border there were tents where those who arrived could be accommodated until the identification of a means of transport to the desired destination.

The transport availability is monitored and groups are gathered to occupy seats in the means of transport. In Suceava County, ISU provides free transportation by minibus, including to reception centres. Free transport on other desired routes is provided mainly by volunteers.

The Bulgarian Embassy sends daily means of transport to Bulgaria. There are also foreign volunteers (from Spain, Portugal, etc.) who come with aid and provide transportation.

The biggest problem identified is the language barrier, however, at the moment, there are enough volunteer translators, but in the long run difficulties could arise.

Regarding the medical assistance provided at the Siret border crossing point, there is the SMURD medical point, where a doctor and a nurse are constantly working, equipped with medicines and a 4-bed tent. At the same time, there are 3 other doctors and 4 nurses on standby, ready to intervene when necessary.

According to the SMURD doctor on duty, seconded for this mission, on the medical side, all the necessary equipment was available: 2 first aid crews under the coordination of the doctor, an intensive care vehicle which had the capacity to provide assistance for 2 people in serious condition or for 4 people in a condition of medium severity, an advanced medical point with 2 tents where there were 4 places available for persons in need of medical care.

If an ambulance leaves with a patient, one will remain available at the border crossing. In Siret there is a hospital where patients can be transported in a matter of minutes.

To date, there have been no serious medical cases or injuries. In general, medical care is provided to children who are exhausted or malnourished. During the investigation, the doctor on duty provided medical assistance to a child, who was then fed and provided with a place to rest.

No people with symptoms of poliomyelitis were identified by the medical staff. According to the information available, the situation regarding poliomyelitis is not extremely serious at this time in Ukraine.

In case of such suspicions, the persons will be sent to the hospital and the Public Health Directorate will be informed.

If public health problems are identified, two representatives of DSP Suceava are available to act accordingly.

Psychological assistance is also provided.

3. Siret Stadium Camp

The Siret Stadium camp has a capacity of 422 seats, and at the time of the investigation only 10 people were accommodated. Migrants are accommodated in the camp for short periods of time (24-48 hours), mostly for processing the necessary documents for those arriving without documents and until the identification of a means of transport, according to the needs.

The camp was equipped with:

- tents with beds, mattresses, televisions, internet connection, radiators, lighting;
- containers with bunk beds, sinks, lighting and electric heaters;
- toilets;
- showers;
- storage place for objects;
- medical point with doctor seconded by DSP, equipped with medicines.
- ambulance;
- fire extinguisher;

- ISU command point, overlooking the whole set of tents and containers;
- IGI working point.

The support staff in the camp consists of: ISU representatives, IGI representatives, doctor, psychologist, priest.

People who arrive at Siret Stadium and express their desire to seek asylum are accommodated in the camp and taken to the office of the General Inspectorate for Immigration where the applications are processed by IGI representatives, if they want to apply for international protection.

IGI representatives proceed with the registration of immigrants' data, their verification in the database, fingerprinting, taking photos. Processing time for one person is 20 minutes.

Immediately after processing, a certificate attesting the status of asylum seeker is issued, and the persons in question receive a CNP (*personal identification number*) that allows them to benefit from medical assistance in Romania and the right to work in the country.

Asylum seekers are expected to report to the Radauti Regional Centre in about 2 weeks for an interview. The IGI subsequently issues a decision granting some form of international protection, refugee or subsidiary protection, or rejects the application.

In conclusion, during the investigation conducted by the representatives of the People's Advocate Institution, in Siret, a very good mobilization and collaboration was found, both of the competent public institutions and authorities, as well as of the private sector, in order to provide humanitarian support for the persons arriving from the conflict zone in Ukraine.

Considering the mentioned aspects, we propose to carry out an investigation at the Isaccea border crossing point, which will be carried out by the Constanța Territorial Office.