

Rotary eClub Poland – Help Ukraine Update

This is a short progress report on our “Help Ukraine” projects and an update on the current needs of the Ukrainian refugees in Poland and our fundraising goals.

As you all know, the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has triggered Europe's greatest humanitarian refugee crisis since World War II. It is estimated that Poland has accepted nearly 3 million refugees already and there are still approximately 25 thousand new refugees crossing the Polish-Ukrainian border every day. Over 90% of these refugees are women and children. The rest are mainly elderly and/or ill people. The men remained in the Ukraine to fight the Russians.

NGOs responded to the refugee crisis immediately and they remain the key players in the humanitarian aid efforts.

During the first month of the war we were very much focused on immediate relief for the refugees (transport, food, medical aid, shelter, accommodation) but now we are addressing a wider range of needs; focusing on more specific projects and setting some mid- and long-term goals.

The good news is that Rotary clubs from all over the world are responding to our appeals for help, expressing willingness to contribute both in kind and financially, and trying to make a difference.

This is just a short update report on what we've managed to achieve so far, ongoing projects and upcoming projects that we are coordinating and Rotary e-Club's fundraising activities as part of the “Help Ukraine” effort.

Rotary e-Club Poland “Help Ukraine” projects:

1) Immediate relief - delivery of food and emergency supplies to the Polish-Ukrainian border and emergency transport services

From the beginning of the war in February our e-Club was involved in preparing and delivering food (sandwiches, beverages, fruit), blankets, clothes and sleeping bags to the Polish-Ukrainian border. In addition, members of our club personally transported refugees across the border and to various locations in Poland (our member from Giżycko, Krzysztof Szkudlarek, who owns a transport company, is still personally involved in this project and will continue to provide transport for Ukrainian refugees and supplies in and out of Ukraine and within Poland until his services are no longer required).

Start: 26 February 2022

Duration: 1 month

Status: completed



2) Immediate relief – providing or finding accommodation for Ukrainian refugees and relocation efforts

Like most Polish people, members of our e-Club have welcomed Ukrainian refugees into their homes. Apart from providing accommodation and board, we are committed to providing emotional support, finding jobs for them and making them feel comfortable and useful. For example, Ulia Lord https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%AE%D0%BB%D1%96%D1%8F_%D0%9B%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B4, a popular Ukrainian singer who is a guest at our President's home, is supporting the refugee effort by performing at regular charity events and she has now recorded a protest song in Ukrainian and Polish with our member Mateusz Kuśmirek (Antynomia band) called "War".

It is important to stress that accommodation and board for Ukrainian refugees is provided by their Polish hosts out of solidarity with the Ukrainian nation and out of the goodness of people's hearts. Given the fact that the Polish State has recently offered to pay 8 EUR per day to cover some of the costs of refugee accommodation and board for a very limited period of time and there is no return to the Ukraine for the refugees any time soon, this situation cannot continue forever. So, we are now involved in helping some of the refugees relocate to other cities in Poland or to other countries, and planning for the future.

The problem is that over 90% of the refugees are women and children, some of them are elderly or ill, and they don't generally speak Polish or other foreign languages, it will be very difficult for them to relocate to other countries and find work quickly. However, our members have helped relocate refugees to Switzerland and Sweden, and we are now involved in a Rotary-led relocation programme to Tenerife (Spain) and working together with the Global Expo Refugee Centre at 6D Modlińska St. in Warsaw to relocate refugees to the US and Canada.

Start: 25 February 2022r

Duration: unlimited

Status: ongoing



3) Immediate relief - delivery of food and other supplies to the various refugee centres

As part of this project Rotary e-Club Poland has committed at the beginning of March to supporting several refugee centres in Warsaw. The main centre which we support is the Global Expo Refugee Centre at 6D Modlińska St. in Warsaw but we also make regular deliveries to the refugee centres in Legionowo and the Wawer District of Warsaw, as well as some other smaller centres. The centre at Modlinska St. is a huge refugee reception, short-term accommodation centre and goods distribution centre. The centre provides aid to thousands of Ukrainian refugees from all over Warsaw and they also house, feed and care for over 800 Ukrainians (mainly elderly and/or ill people or women with small children) on day-to-day basis, and this also includes hundreds of pets. These refugees and their families have much lower chances for accommodation with host families and relocation, so some of them have been at the centre for a while now and their future is uncertain. The refugee centre is now expected to increase their accommodation capacity to 2000 people (because the Torwar Refugee Centre is closing down soon).

Most refugees have very few possessions because they could not take much luggage when they left Ukraine and they have very little or no money, so all the centres are in great need of all sorts of products, and volunteers are required all the time. For example, the volunteers at the Global Expo Centre at Modlińska perform various tasks: transporting and carrying packages, sorting through packages and segregating all the goods by categories, cooking, cleaning, distributing aid, helping the ill/elderly Ukrainian refugees with their basic needs, providing information, interpreting, caring for pets, providing emotional and psychological support, Polish/English lessons, other training/workshops, and even entertainment. This centre operates 24/7 mainly thanks to volunteers from Poland and abroad.

Our members have also volunteered here and we try to help as much as we can but they are always in desperate need of volunteers and goods and funding.









Our e-Club has been very active in helping these refugee centres by delivering all sorts of goods (either purchased directly by our club and members, received from other Rotary clubs or purchased with various donations).

The needs vary from day to day so it is very difficult to specify what exactly is needed at any given time. For example, sometimes baby products or hygiene products are in high demand or some

medical/hygiene products for the elderly/ill, while at other times the warehouses are overflowing with these products and they need something else. For example, at the moment all the centres have very high demand for non-perishable food products (especially, tea, coffee, sugar, canned milk, rice, beans, muesli, flour, cornflakes, porridge, per food and various canned goods) and personal hygiene products (including tampons and shaving kits), most need disposable utensils, new clothes, sleeping bags and blankets, underwear (especially in L, XL and XXL size), socks, tracksuits and other casual clothes, thermal wear, sports shoes, bathroom slippers, suitcases etc. Used clothes, blankets, and shoes are not needed. In other words, the situation is very dynamic and keeps changing on a day-to-day basis, so some of the goods delivered from abroad at great expense are not necessarily in high demand by the time they arrive at their destination. Additionally, there are a lot of delays and logistical issues associated with handling goods coming from abroad and in most cases it is much easier and cheaper to buy them in Poland wholesale, and get them picked up by the people who are locally coordinating their transports and distribution. Therefore, nowadays we strongly recommend sending funds instead of products to trusted NGOs.

After getting off to a rocky start the centres are generally very well run and the volunteers who work there are fantastic. For example, the Global Expo Refugee Centre Co-ordinator appointed by the Mazowsze Province Governor, Joanna Mikulska (first from the left in the top left-hand picture) and the Volunteer Co-ordinator, Beata Kalska (second from the left in the top left-hand picture) and the site Co-Ordinator Oksana are extremely dedicated to this project and can be found at the centre practically at all times. This is the Global Expo Modlinska Centre FB page where they publish important information, appeals for volunteers and daily updates on what is needed:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/506610454151642/>

So, financial aid definitely works best but in order to provide help any way we can, we are also ready to accept donations in-kind and as Rotary e-Club Poland we handle some goods at our Warsaw headquarters and have organised a warehouse for storage of large quantities of donated goods on the outskirts of Warsaw at: ul. Nowodworska 26a, 05-119 Michałów Grabina (please contact us at eclub@rotary.org.pl before planning any deliveries).

Start: 1 March 2022

Duration: unlimited

Status: ongoing

4) "The Future is Now!" Project for Ukrainian Primary School Kids

Our Rotary e-Club not only co-operates with the Primary School for Children with Special Needs in Legionowo and we have recently also established co-operation with another primary school in Warsaw (Szkoła Podstawowa no. 361) <https://sp361.edupage.org>

This is a big primary school which has accepted over 150 Ukrainian refugee children (aged 7 – 15). Ukrainian children generally have problems adapting to their new environment, they feel alienated, they don't know Polish, they are worried about the future and miss their fathers who are fighting in the war. The school is trying to address these issues and make their life easier. With our sponsorship and help

they organized a Sports Day event on 13 April 2022. The kids participated in mixed polish-Ukrainian teams and Rotary e-Club Poland provided all the snacks, drinks, treats and awards for the winners as well as a special prize (a trip to a Hula Kula Recreation Complex). The Principal, Tomasz Romiszewski (see picture with our President below), is extremely dedicated to making the Ukrainian kids feel safe and cared for, and he has some other great ideas for integration projects that would help these traumatized kids overcome the stress of adjusting to their new school and settling down in a foreign country. Rotary e-Club Poland is committed to helping the school organize other integration events in the future.



It is important to understand that now that the Ukrainian refugees are living in Poland for the foreseeable future, the parents need to find work and the kids living in Poland need to be taken care of and participate in all sorts of integration activities, learn Polish and start making plans!

The school holidays in Poland are over 2 months long (from third week of June until end of August) and that is why we are planning to help both primary and high-school kids by organizing holiday camps.

As part of our extensive partner network, we co-operate with other organisations and if we manage to raise the necessary funds to make the down payment and cover the costs they will help us organize a two week summer camp for Ukrainian primary school kids at a nice location.

We are also helping Ukrainian kids in the Zagłębie/Silesia region. As part of our fund raising efforts, on 19.03.2022 we organized a Polish-Ukrainian FIDE chess tournament for kids in Katowice. The event was supervised by our member from Katowice, Paweł Koza, who is a certified chess instructor. We had more than 100 participants from several countries and Ukrainian participants were admitted free of charge. All proceeds from the tournament were used to finance aid for Ukrainian refugees. Another such event will be organised in May in Wrocław.



Start: 10 March 2022

Duration: unlimited

Status: ongoing

5) "The Future is Now!" Project for Ukrainian High School Kids

Our Rotary e-Club is also committed to helping Ukrainian teenagers. We have launched the first such project at the Stefan Czarnecki High School in Warsaw (XLVI Liceum im. Stefana Czarneckiego w

Warszawie - <https://lo46targowek.eduwarszawa.pl>). There are 30 students from Ukraine currently studying at this high school and Polina Krajewska (the 15 year old Ukrainian daughter of our honorary member Olga Krajewska – also a member of Rotary Kharkiv Mryia in Ukraine) is co-ordinating a support group and project for these kids. Apart from holding support meetings and setting up a social media discussion group, these kids also do volunteer work in refugee centres.

Ukrainian teenagers do not have separate classes, they study according to the Polish programme and they need a lot of help with their Polish lessons and integration. Teenagers generally have more integration issues than primary school kids. They are older, they are more aware of what is happening in the Ukraine, they lost touch with their friends, they do not learn foreign languages as quickly as the younger kids, the universities they've been planning to go to have been destroyed etc.. In other words, these kids have been displaced and left without any support at the worst possible time. Many of them are in denial and mistakenly believe that they'll return to Ukraine and their old lives any day now, but at the moment they all feel like they've been deprived of a future.

These teenagers require emotional support and a new perspective. When asked about their needs, they declared that apart from Polish lessons they want to learn more about Poland, travel and integrate with their peers. If we manage to collect the necessary funds, our Rotary e-Club is ready to organize extra tuition, day trips, psychological support groups and sponsor some holiday activities. These kids would also like to go to a summer camp and would really enjoy meeting teenagers from other counties (because they want to improve their English skills as well as integrating with their peers and combine this with sports activities). So, if we manage to raise the necessary funds to cover the costs, we will organize a two-week summer camp for Ukrainian high school kids. We would also try to invite English speaking volunteers from other countries to participate.



Start: 10 March 2022

Duration: unlimited

Status: ongoing

As part of our earlier Help Ukraine relief joint fundraising with other Warsaw clubs, we were given access to some donations in kind from the shared warehouse, and we diligently distributed these goods to the refugee centres over the past month, but unfortunately we did not get access to any of the funds collected by the Cluster. This is why budgeting any future projects is so difficult at the moment. Given that we are involved in several "Help Ukraine" projects at the same time and the school holidays start in June, in spite of all the volunteer work and contributions made by our own Rotary e-Club members we are extremely short on funds, so if you wish to contribute to our efforts and support our projects (outlined above) and help the Ukrainian refugees in a coordinated way, please make a contribution to our Fund and work directly with us. We are confident we can implement all of our projects and help more individuals by working together as fellow Rotarians. Please remember that every penny counts, and even the smallest contribution can change someone's life and make the refugee situation in Poland more bearable.

If you are interested in receiving more materials (pictures, films etc.), please let us know. If you have ideas on how to provide other help for Ukrainian refugees or can assist in relocation of refugees to other countries and you'd like to talk to us personally, we will be happy to tell you more about our projects, the current refugee situation in Poland and our plans on zoom. Please let us know if you'd like us to schedule a meeting.

Thank you very much for all your support and willingness to contribute to this worthy humanitarian refugee cause!

Best regards,

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