



# Ukraine

*Situation of Roma from the  
Zakarpattia region*



This report is not, and does not purport to be, a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects of the issues addressed. It should thus be weighed against other country of origin information available on the topic.

The report at hand does not include any policy recommendations. The information does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Danish Immigration Service.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

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## Executive summary

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There is not much reliable statistical data about Roma people from Zakarpattia, and there is a considerable divergence among available estimates. According to Ukrainian official data from 2001, the Roma population in Zakarpatska Oblast comprised approximately 14,000 persons. This number constituted around 10 % of the Hungarian minority population in Zakarpattia, which is approximately 150,000.

The Roma community in Zakarpattia live in poor socio-economic conditions resulting in widespread poverty, high rate of unemployment, early marriages among women, school dropouts, and a prevalent low level of literacy.

A majority of the Roma population in Zakarpattia only speaks Hungarian and the remaining part speaks both Hungarian and Ukrainian. A high level of social isolation of Roma settlements combined with the fact that many of the rural areas near the Hungarian border consist almost entirely of Hungarian-speaking inhabitants, makes it possible for Roma to live in Zakarpattia only speaking Hungarian.

Persons, who can prove their Hungarian ancestry and speak Hungarian, can obtain Hungarian citizenship. A majority of the people of Hungarian descent living in villages close to the Hungarian border are estimated to have Hungarian passports and a large number of the Zakarpattian Roma, who have crossed the border into Hungary since 24 February 2022, are believed to have acquired Hungarian citizenship. Additionally, there are more Roma men than Roma women or children who have obtained Hungarian citizenship. Lack of documents, particularly when it comes to Roma children, is one of the major obstacles for Zakarpattian Roma with regard to obtaining Hungarian citizenship or having access to services they are entitled to in Hungary.

Zakarpattian Roma tend to be highly flexible with regard to changing location quickly from one area to another. Searching for better living conditions is assessed to be the main motive for the movement of Zakarpattian Roma across borders. There are reports of Zakarpattian Roma moving back and forth between Hungary/other EU member states and Ukraine.

There have been several cases of Zakarpattian Roma families being returned to Hungary from the Czech Republic when the authorities discovered that they had Hungarian citizenship and therefore not entitled to temporary protection.

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## Introduction and methodology

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In October 2023, the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) published a brief report in Danish titled Hungarian descendants in Transcarpathia, Ukraine.<sup>1</sup>

The report at hand is based on information from that brief report, as well as information gathered during a fact-finding mission to Hungary and Ukraine from 24 October to 31 October 2023. The purpose of the mission was to collect more detailed and updated information on the situation of Roma of Hungarian descent from Zakarpattia Oblast<sup>2</sup> in the Western part of Ukraine.

The report focuses on the situation of Zakarpattian Roma in Zakarpatska Oblast and in Hungary, including their socio-economic and cultural conditions, access to Hungarian citizenship, access to documents, and ability to enter Hungary and receive temporary protection status and services. Additionally, the report looks into the issue of language spoken by Zakarpattian Roma and the group's pattern of movement across borders.

A part of the written material used in this report is from the DIS brief report mentioned above. The brief report was – in addition to written sources – based on online interviews with three sources: the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, IOM Hungary and the Hungarian NGO, Menedék Association, working for integration of foreigners into Hungarian society.

The terms of reference (ToR) for the mission were drawn up by DIS in consultation with the Danish Immigration Appeals Board. ToR is included at the end of the report ([Annex 2: Terms of Reference](#)).

The report is written in accordance with the EUAA COI Report Methodology<sup>3</sup> and is based on a synthesis of the information obtained from oral and written sources.

As regards the oral sources, the delegation consulted five interlocutors, comprising a diplomatic source, a legal source, the Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education (from now on, the Transcarpathian College), a local NGO and Romaversitas Foundation. The sources interviewed were selected by the delegation based on the expertise, merit and role of each source relevant to the ToR. All sources were consulted either in person in Budapest or Zakarpattia. The sources were asked how reference might be made to them in the report. Three sources requested anonymity for the sake of discretion and upholding tolerable working conditions. All sources are referenced in the report according to their request.

The sources were informed about the purpose of the mission and that their statements would be included in a public report. The minutes from the meetings with the sources were

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<sup>1</sup> Denmark, DIS, *Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien*, October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>2</sup> Zakarpattia is another name of Transcarpathia. Oblast is the Ukrainian name for region or province. An oblast is the largest administrative division in Ukraine.

<sup>3</sup> EUAA, *Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology*, February 2023, [url](#)

forwarded to them for approval, giving them a chance to amend, comment or correct their statements to ensure that the minutes reflect the shared information most accurately. All sources have approved their statements, which can be found in [Annex 1](#).

In the report, care has been taken to present the views of the sources as accurately and transparently as possible. The individual sources should not be held accountable for the content of the report.

For the sake of transparency and accuracy, paragraphs in the meeting minutes have been given consecutive numbers, which are used in the report when referring to the statements of the sources in the footnotes. The intention hereby is to make it easier to find the exact place of a statement in the meeting minutes.

The report does not include all the details and nuances provided by the sources. During the interviews, sources sometimes highlighted issues that are not addressed in ToR. Since these issues could be relevant to the determination of temporary protection status, they are included in [Annex 1](#). However, they are not addressed in the report itself.

The research and editing of this report was finalised on 30 November 2023.

The report can be accessed from the website of DIS, [www.us.dk](http://www.us.dk). It is available to all stakeholders working within the field of refugee status determination as well as to the general public.

## Abbreviations

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<b>DIS</b>	The Danish Immigration Service
<b>EUAA</b>	European Union Agency for Asylum
<b>EU/EEA</b>	The European Union/ The European Economic Area
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>TP</b>	Temporary Protection
<b>UNCHR</b>	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



## Map of Transcarpathia/Zakarpattia<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hungary Today, *A New Hungarian Community Centre Has Been Opened In Transcarpathia*, 13 February 2017, [url](#)

# 1. Descendants of Hungarian citizens in Ukraine

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The majority of the Hungarian minority living in Ukraine reside in the western region of Ukraine: Zakarpatska Oblast. The region is also known as Zakarpattia or Transcarpathia. Prior to World War I, the region was a part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. However, in the aftermath of the Austrian-Hungarian defeat in World War I, the country ceded two-thirds of its territory under the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, in which the area Zakarpattia came under Czechoslovakian rule. In 1945, after World War II, Zakarpattia was incorporated into the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic, which again was a part of the Soviet Union's 15 republics. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Zakarpattia became a part of the independent Ukraine.<sup>5</sup>

In the first decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the relationship between Ukraine and Hungary was rather good, and the Hungarian government supported people of Hungarian descent in Zakarpattia with allocations of more than 250 million EUR in 2020.<sup>6</sup> However, the Zakarpattia region has been facing economic decline, and the challenging economic situation contributed to a significant part of the region's ethnic Hungarian minority population choosing to emigrate.<sup>7</sup>

## 1.1. Size of Roma population in Zakarpattia

According to Ukrainian official data from 2001, the Roma population in Zakarpatska Oblast comprised approximately 14,000 persons.<sup>8</sup> This number constituted around 10 % of the Hungarian minority population in Zakarpattia, which is approximately 150,000.<sup>9</sup> However, the diplomatic source estimated that the actual number had decreased to roughly 70,000.<sup>10</sup>

This number is based on a person's self-identification concerning ethnicity.<sup>11</sup> The Transcarpathian College assumed that in the official statistics from 2001, a part of the Roma population in Zakarpattia might have identified themselves as Hungarians, whilst others consider themselves Ukrainians.<sup>12</sup>

A local NGO mentioned that in the Roma community, there are people trying to distinguish themselves from the rest of the Roma community and positioning themselves at a higher level

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<sup>5</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, *Subcarpathian Ruthenia historical region, Eastern Europe*, n.d., [url](#); Encyclopedia Britannica, *Transcarpathia in Czechoslovakia*, n.d. [url](#); Open Democracy, *How Hungary and Ukraine fell out over a passport scandal*, 11 October 2018, [url](#); BBC, *New Hungary citizenship law fuels passport demand*, 4 Januar 2011, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> The Economist, *Ethnic Hungarians have been having a tricky time in Ukraine*, 16 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> Open Democracy, *How war has hit Zakarpattia, hundreds of miles from Ukraine's front lines*, 4 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>8</sup> Transcarpathian College: 1; A legal source: 16; a local NGO: 14

<sup>9</sup> A legal source: 16; AIDA & HHC, *Temporary Protection Hungary*, April 2023, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>10</sup> A diplomatic source: 1-2

<sup>11</sup> Transcarpathian College: 1

<sup>12</sup> Transcarpathian College: 1

of the social hierarchy by identifying themselves as Hungarians rather than Roma. However, their Roma surnames reveal their Roma origin as many Roma people share the same surnames such as Lakatos, Feka, and Orban.<sup>13</sup>

However, there are other estimates, which indicate that the number of the Roma population in Zakarpattia is much higher than 14,000 persons from the official statistics of 2001.

According to studies conducted by the Transcarpathian College, the total number of the Roma population living in Zakarpattia was assessed to comprise approximately 50,000 in 2023.<sup>14</sup>

Corroborating the information from the Transcarpathian College, the consulted local NGO mentioned that unofficial estimates would bring the size of the Roma population in Zakarpattia up to around 80,000-100,000 individuals.<sup>15</sup>

The difference between the official and the unofficial numbers was illustrated by a local NGO that gave an example from the area near Mukachevo in a village called Barkasovo. Here, the officially estimated population is 2,200. However, a Roma settlement inside the same village has a population of 3-4,000 persons.<sup>16</sup> The local NGO mentioned, that according to official statistics, there are 85 Roma settlements in Zakarpattia.<sup>17</sup>

### 1.2. Situation of the Roma population in Zakarpattia

Generally, most members of the Roma community in Zakarpattia live in poor socio-economic conditions resulting in among others premature ageing and low average life expectancy,<sup>18</sup> and the community is characterised by wide-spread poverty and high rates of unemployment.<sup>19</sup>

Although people from the Roma settlements in the cities are more often in contact with people from the surrounding predominantly Ukrainian society,<sup>20</sup> the Roma population in Zakarpattia are generally living in communities largely isolated from the rest of the society.<sup>21</sup> According to a legal source, the level of segregation is so high, that children in these communities do not know how they should behave or interact with the surrounding society.<sup>22</sup>

Roma children go to segregated Hungarian-speaking primary schools, whose students are only Roma.<sup>23</sup> Across the entire Zakarpattia, many Roma children do not attend primary school,

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<sup>13</sup> A local NGO: 18

<sup>14</sup> Transcarpathian College: 6

<sup>15</sup> A local NGO: 14

<sup>16</sup> A local NGO: 15

<sup>17</sup> A local NGO: 15

<sup>18</sup> A local NGO: 6

<sup>19</sup> Romaversitas: 17; A legal source: 5; A local NGO: 19

<sup>20</sup> A local NGO: 17

<sup>21</sup> Romaversitas: 17; A legal source: 17; A local NGO: 17; Denmark, DIS, *Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transcarpatien*, October 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>22</sup> A legal source: 17

<sup>23</sup> Romaversitas: 17

attend irregularly or drop out of the school system at an early age, for instance, 14-15.<sup>24</sup> However, there are variations across the different Roma communities as well as across the settlements in villages of Zakarpattia in which the Roma live.<sup>25</sup> The lack of education or the low level of education among the Roma population in Zakarpattia has brought about a considerable number of illiterate Roma across generations.<sup>26</sup> Referring to different estimates, a consulted legal source mentioned that approximately 30 % of the Roma population in Zakarpattia were illiterate.<sup>27</sup>

The prevalence of marriage at an early age is high among the women and girls from the Roma population.<sup>28</sup> There are reports of Roma girls giving birth at an early age, for instance, 12-15.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, Roma marriages are often not officially registered, and there are thus a large number of Roma couples not being in possession of their marriage certificates.<sup>30</sup> According to a Local NGO, if the female spouse register herself as a single mother, the family will be able to receive the financial support provided by the Ukrainian state to female-headed single parent families.<sup>31</sup> Roma families are usually large and it is not unusual to find families with more than nine children.<sup>32</sup>

According to a local NGO, the majority of the population in Zakarpattia has generalised negative social attitudes towards the Roma population. The source explained this negative attitude by referring to a number of socio-economic and socio-cultural features, such as:

- a high level of unemployment;
- living on social benefits
- not being integrated into the wider Ukrainian society;
- widespread illiteracy or low level of literacy;
- lack of understanding of and respect for the law and formal requirements;
- higher criminal records.<sup>33</sup>

However, a local NGO noted that the social attitudes towards Roma people are slightly better in cities such as Mukachevo compared to the rural areas.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Romaversitas: 17; Transcapattian College: 26; Denmark, DIS, *Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien*, October 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>25</sup> Transcapattian College: 26

<sup>26</sup> A legal source: 5; Romaversitas: 17; A local NGO: 19

<sup>27</sup> A legal source: 8

<sup>28</sup> Romaversitas: 17; A local NGO: 11

<sup>29</sup> A local NGO: 6

<sup>30</sup> Romaversitas: 18; Denmark, DIS, *Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien*, October 2023, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>31</sup> A local NGO: 11

<sup>32</sup> A local NGO: 6

<sup>33</sup> A local NGO: 19

<sup>34</sup> A local NGO: 19

### 1.3. Languages spoken in Zakarpattia

According to the 2001 Ukrainian census, Hungarian is spoken by only 0.33 % of the entire population in Ukraine, which in 2001 corresponded to 162,992 people. The Hungarian language is thus the 5<sup>th</sup> most spoken language in Ukraine surpassed by: Ukrainian (67 %), Russian (30 %), Romanian (0.7 %) and Crimean Tatar (0.5 %).<sup>35</sup>

The Hungarian language is almost only spoken in Zakarpattia Oblast, where 12.7 % of the region's population in 2001 had Hungarian as their first language, which then corresponded to 159,882 people.<sup>36</sup>

It is possible to live in Zakarpattia and speak exclusively Hungarian. Many of the rural areas near the Hungarian border consist almost entirely of Hungarian-speaking inhabitants.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, there are small villages and towns across the Zakarpattia, where the local communities almost exclusively speak Hungarian.<sup>38</sup>

According to the Zakarpattia-based local NGO, more than 75 % of the Roma population in Zakarpattia only speak Hungarian and the remaining 25 % speak both Hungarian and Ukrainian.<sup>39</sup> Romani language is spoken by some, but almost all Roma speak Hungarian.<sup>40</sup>

The high number of Roma people speaking Hungarian as their first language can be explained by a number of factors, including the low level of education and thereby lack of Ukrainian language skills, as well as the high level of social isolation of the Roma settlements. This makes it possible for many Roma to live their lives in their communities without having to use Ukrainian to communicate with the broader surrounding society.<sup>41</sup> However, there are some Roma, who have learned to speak Ukrainian at different levels depending on their individual life history.<sup>42</sup>

A Ukrainian law on education that takes effect in 2024 will seek to increase the proportion of Ukrainian language used in schools in order to ensure that members of minority groups can speak the state language. When the law takes effect, it will require that a certain proportion of class time in primary schools (depending on the grade level) shall be conducted in Ukrainian. The Hungarian-speaking population in Zakarpattia would therefore like to return to the previous laws that made it possible to be taught in the Hungarian language in primary school.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Translators without borders, *Language map of Ukraine*, n.d., [url](#); a diplomatic source: 16

<sup>36</sup> Translators without borders, *Language map of Ukraine*, n.d., [url](#); a diplomatic source: 16

<sup>37</sup> Transcarpathian College: 24; Denmark, DIS, *Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien*, October 2023, [url](#), p. 6; Romaversitas: 17

<sup>38</sup> Denmark, DIS, *Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien*, October 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>39</sup> A local NGO: 2

<sup>40</sup> A local NGO: 2; A legal source: 16; Romaversitas: 17

<sup>41</sup> Romaversitas: 17; A local NGO: 3; Denmark, DIS, *Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien*, October 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>42</sup> A local NGO: 3

<sup>43</sup> A diplomatic source: 16

There are also Roma in Zakarpattia who speak Russian besides their Hungarian mother tongue. These are usually persons who before the Russian invasion in 2022 had lived and worked for a while in Russia or the Russian-speaking eastern part of Ukraine, for example in the cities of Kharkiv or Donetsk. Roma living in these areas had to learn the dominant Russian language in order to survive and manage their daily life. There are still members of the Roma community living in Kyiv and other east Ukrainian cities, who are labour migrants or descendants of labour migrants from Zakarpattia. They migrated two or three generations back, and they speak Hungarian in their communities, although they have learned Russian and are integrated into the wider society.<sup>44</sup>

Although many Hungarian-speaking people from Zakarpattia, including people from the Roma community, have left the country, there is still a considerable number of Hungarian-speaking people living in the region and schools for Hungarian-speaking children are still open.<sup>45</sup>

### 1.4. Access to Ukrainian documents for the Hungarian-speaking population

According to a local NGO, which provides legal assistance to the Roma community in Zakarpattia with regard to obtaining civil documents, about 30 % of the Roma population in Zakarpattia are not registered, do not have Ukrainian IDs, or have obstacles in obtaining Ukrainian documents without legal assistance.<sup>46</sup>

There are a number of reasons why Zakarpattian Roma face difficulties in obtaining ID documents, including the lack of possibility to register, or to register properly, the person's name in the birth registration of the hospital where they were born.<sup>47</sup> One of the reasons is that many Roma people do not speak, understand or write Ukrainian sufficiently<sup>48</sup>, and because of this the person's name has, in many cases, been registered based on the oral statement of the mother, which in a large number of cases differs from the name by which the person identify him- or herself. For instance, a person's name may be registered as Katarina whilst the person identifies herself as Elizabeth.<sup>49</sup>

Additionally, in Ukraine, children will be given their father's name (patronymic) as their second name. However, as many Roma families do not register their marriages, the father to the child is not registered as the father, and thus the child will not get the father's name as their second name. In this situation, it will be difficult to prove that the children from the same parents

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<sup>44</sup> A local NGO: 2

<sup>45</sup> A local NGO: 16

<sup>46</sup> A local NGO: 1

<sup>47</sup> A local NGO: 1

<sup>48</sup> A local NGO: 1; Denmark, DIS, *Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien*, October 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>49</sup> A local NGO: 1

belong to the same family, which is an obstacle to obtaining Ukrainian ID documents for the child.<sup>50</sup>

However, as many Ukrainian officials in Zakarpattia Oblast also speak Hungarian, it is possible for a person only speaking Hungarian to go through the administrative procedures and obtain Ukrainian documents, despite the fact that the administrative language in Zakarpatska Oblast is Ukrainian. Due to the Hungarian language skills of the government officials, they can, for instance, ask the applicant for the relevant documents for issuing a passport, and the whole process will be conducted in Hungarian.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> A local NGO: 11

<sup>51</sup> Transcarpathian College: 25; A diplomatic source: 17

## 2. Access to Hungarian citizenship

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### 2.1. Current legislation and requirements for obtaining Hungarian citizenship

The Hungarian Status Law, which was introduced in 2001, granted ethnic Hungarians living in Ukraine and other neighbouring countries to Hungary a number of cultural and economic rights. These rights included seasonal working permits in Hungary.<sup>52</sup>

The rights of the Hungarian diaspora were significantly expanded when amendments to the Act on Nationality of 1993 were introduced in 2011. These amendments made it possible for persons of Hungarian descent to obtain Hungarian citizenship without having to be a resident in Hungary.<sup>53</sup>

Pursuant to article 4, subsection 3 of the Hungarian Nationality Act, a person can obtain Hungarian citizenship if two requirements are fulfilled:

- the applicant's ancestors were Hungarian citizens or the applicant's Hungarian origin can be presumed,
- the person has proven knowledge of the Hungarian language.<sup>54</sup>

In addition, the person must have a clean criminal record, i.e. not have been involved in any criminal proceedings before the Hungarian court and not pose a threat to public order and national security in Hungary. The applicant's residence in Hungary either before submission or during the application period is not a requirement.<sup>55</sup>

The law requires that an applicant's ancestors were living in Zakarpattia when it was a part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire or their ancestors were citizens of Hungary between 1939 and 1944. As the population of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire also comprised ethnic Ukrainians and Roma, their descendants are also entitled to Hungarian citizenship if they fulfil the other requirements. Although many of the ethnic Ukrainians speak broken Hungarian, their language proficiency is considered sufficient to obtain Hungarian citizenship.<sup>56</sup>

In the wake of the amendments of the Hungarian Nationality Act in 2011, the Hungarian authorities launched an information campaign to inform persons of Hungarian descent in

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<sup>52</sup> EUDO Citizenship Observatory, *Country Report Hungary*, April 2013, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>53</sup> EUDO Citizenship Observatory, *Country Report Hungary*, April 2013, [url](#), p. 17; BBC, *New Hungary citizenship law fuels passport demand*, 4 January 2011, [url](#)

<sup>54</sup> Hungary, ACT LV of 1993, *on Hungarian Nationality*, 1 January 2019, [url](#), p. 2-3; Transcarpathian College: 7; A local NGO: 5

<sup>55</sup> Hungary, ACT LV of 1993, *on Hungarian Nationality*, 1 January 2019, [url](#), p. 2-3, 7-8

<sup>56</sup> Transcarpathian College: 7, 9



Zakarpattia, including the Zakarpattian Roma community, about their possibility of obtaining Hungarian citizenship.<sup>57</sup>

Applications for Hungarian citizenship must be made in person, as it is not possible to apply online. An applicant from Zakarpattia should therefore apply at a Hungarian representation in Ukraine or with the relevant authority in Hungary.<sup>58</sup>

According to a diplomatic source, it is uncomplicated for persons of Hungarian descent living in Zakarpattia to obtain Hungarian citizenship. If a person can prove a Hungarian bloodline and speak Hungarian, they can obtain Hungarian citizenship.<sup>59</sup> In some cases, it may be sufficient for a person to apply for Hungarian citizenship if the person has a Hungarian surname and speaks Hungarian. Therefore, the diplomatic source assessed that almost all Hungarian-speaking persons from Zakarpattia, who apply for Hungarian citizenship, would be granted citizenship.<sup>60</sup>

## 2.2. Prevalence and profile of the Zarkarpattian Roma population with Hungarian citizenship

### 2.2.1. Prevalence

When the Hungarian government introduced the simplified naturalisation procedure in 2011, it led to a considerable increase in applicants obtaining Hungarian citizenship.<sup>61</sup> It is difficult to estimate the exact number of Roma from Zakarpattia who have acquired Hungarian citizenship because of lack of official data.<sup>62</sup>

A diplomatic source noted that the Hungarian authorities had granted approximately 900,000 Hungarian citizenships to its diaspora in the period 2011-2020.<sup>63</sup> According to the Transcarpathian College, approximately 70,000 people obtained Hungarian citizenship in Ukraine in the period 2011-2014.<sup>64</sup>

According to a diplomatic source, from 2013 to 2023, there were approximately 300,000 Hungarian passports issued to persons who had been granted citizenship through this simplified naturalisation procedure.<sup>65</sup> A local NGO assessed that approximately 70 % of people

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<sup>57</sup> Denmark, DIS, Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien, October 2023, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>58</sup> Transcapattian College: 11

<sup>59</sup> A diplomatic source: 3

<sup>60</sup> A diplomatic source: 4

<sup>61</sup> A diplomatic source: 6

<sup>62</sup> Denmark, DIS, Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien, October 2023, [url](#), p. 8; A diplomatic source: 1

<sup>63</sup> A diplomatic source: 11

<sup>64</sup> Transcapattian College: 9

<sup>65</sup> A diplomatic source: 7

of Hungarian descent living in villages close to the Hungarian border possesses Hungarian passports.<sup>66</sup>

Some sources estimated that approximately half of the Zakarpattian Roma, who have crossed the border into Hungary since 24 February 2022, have acquired Hungarian citizenship.<sup>67</sup> This also includes the children, who have crossed the border to Hungary.<sup>68</sup>

### *2.2.2. Profile of those having obtained Hungarian citizenship*

According to the Hungarian Transcarpathian College of Higher Education, the total number of applications by June 2016 reached 149,000, which corresponds to the total number of persons of Hungarian descent living in Zakarpattia, according to the 2001 census. This number of applications in Zakarpattia indicates that the applicants included both Ukrainians and Roma people with Hungarian language as their native language.<sup>69</sup>

Furthermore, there are more Roma men than Roma women (or children), who have obtained Hungarian citizenship and are in possession of Hungarian documents.<sup>70</sup>

The higher rate of Hungarian citizenship among Roma men compared to Roma women may be explained by the high demand for cheap, unskilled or low-skilled workforce within construction and industry in Hungary in 2016-17. The demand motivated many Hungarian employers to recruit cheap male labour from the Roma community in Zakarpattia, who came to Hungary to work, whilst the women and the kids stayed home in Ukraine. It was thus the male members of the family who needed Hungarian citizenship and documents in order to travel back and forth between Ukraine and Hungary.<sup>71</sup>

## 2.3. Fraudulent cases

According to a diplomatic source, the simplified naturalisation procedure in 2011 led to many cases of identity fraud.<sup>72</sup> Some of the 300,000 Hungarian passports that the new citizens obtained in the period 2013 to 2023, were issued based on fraudulent documents – mostly breeder documents such as birth certificates.<sup>73</sup>

Even some members of organised crime organisations have received Hungarian passports in this period. Among the fraudulent cases, some had Interpol warrants and some had committed

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<sup>66</sup> A local NGO: 5

<sup>67</sup> Denmark, DIS, Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien, October 2023, [url](#), p. 8; Transcapattian College: 9; Romaversitas: 2

<sup>68</sup> Romaversitas: 2

<sup>69</sup> Transcapattian College: 9

<sup>70</sup> Romaversitas: 4

<sup>71</sup> Romaversitas: 4; A legal source: 9

<sup>72</sup> a diplomatic source: 6

<sup>73</sup> a diplomatic source: 9

forgery and money laundering. The majority of fraud cases included Ukrainian nationals, although there were also Iranian nationals, who had been involved in human trafficking.<sup>74</sup>

It was assessed by a diplomatic source that approximately 1,500 persons have received Hungarian passports in a fraudulent manner. Due to these fraudulent cases, the Hungarian government have tightened the naturalisation procedures. This includes, among other things, mandatory registration of biometric data for issuance of Hungarian passports and ID cards, which was introduced in February 2020. Although the number of fraudulent cases has decreased after this tightening, roughly 900,000, who have received citizenship until then (2020), have never been properly investigated by the Hungarian government, according to the diplomatic source.<sup>75</sup>

## 2.4. Obstacles for the Roma population in acquiring Hungarian citizenship

There is no discrimination by the Hungarian authorities against the Hungarian-speaking Roma population in Zakarpattia in relation to their access to Hungarian citizenship. The requirements and the process, through which their citizenship applications are processed by the authorities, in practice do not differ from other applicants.<sup>76</sup> It is still very easy for Roma people from Zakarpattia to obtain Hungarian citizenship.<sup>77</sup> However, Roma people experience more difficulties in the process of applying for Hungarian citizenship compared to other groups. For instance, the poor access of Roma to information about their rights and opportunities (due to illiteracy or low-level literacy) can lead to difficulties in getting the correct documents translated, which are required for acquiring Hungarian citizenship.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, as many Zakarpattian Roma do not enter formal marriages, it may be difficult for them to prove their Hungarian descent, as the family is not in possession of marriage certificates.<sup>79</sup>

These factors may, according to a local NGO, help explain why the proportionate number of Roma people having obtained Hungarian citizenship and Hungarian passports is less than that of ethnic Hungarians living in Zakarpattia.<sup>80</sup>

In addition, it is no longer possible, as it was in the period 2011-2018, to obtain Hungarian citizenship at the Hungarian consulates in Zakarpattia, and applicants from Transcarpathia have to travel to Hungary to complete the application process.<sup>81</sup> As a result, it is difficult for the poorest sections of the Roma community to obtain Hungarian citizenship and documents, as

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<sup>74</sup> A diplomatic source: 10

<sup>75</sup> A diplomatic source: 11

<sup>76</sup> Denmark, DIS, *Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien*, October 2023, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>77</sup> Romaversitas: 5

<sup>78</sup> A local NGO: 5; Denmark, DIS, *Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien*, October 2023, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>79</sup> Denmark, DIS, *Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien*, October 2023, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>79</sup> A local NGO: 5

<sup>81</sup> Denmark, DIS, *Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien*, October 2023, [url](#), p. 8

they do not have the financial resources necessary to provide translated Ukrainian documents and to travel to Hungary to complete the application process.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, a local NGO assessed that those members of the Roma community, who have obtained Hungarian citizenship and documents, belong to the wealthier part of the community or have connections to people and organisations who can help them in this regard.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> A local NGO: 8

<sup>83</sup> A local NGO: 7

## 3. Zakarpattian Roma in Hungary

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### 3.1. Access to Hungary

The border crossings between Zakarpattia and Hungary are easier to cross than border crossings between Hungary and other countries such as Serbia or Romania, according to a diplomatic source.<sup>84</sup>

The Hungarian government has taken a liberal stand on border crossings during the war, as the Hungarian authorities believe that the majority of persons fleeing Ukraine to Hungary are Hungarian nationals.<sup>85</sup>

Since Russia began its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the emigration out of Ukraine has been higher from the predominantly Hungarian villages in Zakarpattia, where many have Hungarian passports.<sup>86</sup> Many Ukrainians, including Roma people living in Zakarpattia, preferred to move to or through Hungary, as they lived close to the Hungarian border, but also because they could speak Hungarian.<sup>87</sup>

Due to the imposed martial law in Ukraine, men between 18 and 60 years of age are barred from leaving Ukraine. This is also the case for women who are medical doctors or women who are members of the legislative bodies of the region.<sup>88</sup> However, fathers, who have three or more children, are allowed to leave Ukraine<sup>89</sup>, which means that many Roma men from Zakarpattia can leave the country, as many Roma families have more than three children.<sup>90</sup> For the other categories, who are not barred from exiting Ukraine, it is in general easy to move across the border to Hungary.<sup>91</sup>

In Zakarpattia, it is common to have both a Ukrainian and a Hungarian set of ID documents when crossing the border. Dual nationals will then show the set of ID documents that is most advantageous for the person concerned, including at the Ukrainian and Hungarian border crossing respectively.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> A diplomatic source: 12

<sup>85</sup> A diplomatic source: 13

<sup>86</sup> Open Democracy, *How war has hit Zakarpattia, hundreds of miles from Ukraine's front lines*, 4 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>87</sup> Transcarpathian College: 12-13

<sup>88</sup> Transcarpathian College: 18; Liga Zakon, *Адміністрація Державної Прикордонної Служби України [Administration of the State Border Service of Ukraine]*, 17 March 2022, [url](#); Liga Zakon, *Міністерство Оборони України Наказ [Ministry of Defence of Ukraine Order]*, 11 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>89</sup> Liga Zakon, *Адміністрація Державної Прикордонної Служби України [Administration of the State Border Service of Ukraine]*, 17 March 2022, [url](#); Liga Zakon, *Міністерство Оборони України Наказ [Ministry of Defence of Ukraine Order]*, 11 November 2021, [url](#)

<sup>90</sup> Transcarpathian College: 19

<sup>91</sup> Transcarpathian College: 18

<sup>92</sup> Denmark, DIS, *Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien*, October 2023, [url](#), p.12; a diplomatic source: 11

Unlike the Ukrainians, who only have Ukrainian citizenship, men in the military service age with Hungarian passports living in Zakarpattia, under martial law, have been able to leave Ukraine legally to avoid mobilisation.<sup>93</sup> Many men from Zakarpattia have taken advantage of this opportunity and used their Hungarian passports to leave Ukraine in order to avoid military service. The men who have fled the country support their families financially from abroad.<sup>94</sup>

Hungary was unprepared to receive the influx of refugees from Ukraine and the state administration, as well as the civil society, did not have the proper capacity and infrastructure to handle the few thousand refugees who came to Hungary from Ukraine when the war started. An example of this is that not everyone, who had a biometric Ukrainian or Hungarian passport, was registered upon arrival as the registration only happened on the basis of the applicant's request.<sup>95</sup>

### *3.1.1. Obstacles for the Roma population exiting Ukraine*

In the first months of the war, there was a huge number of Ukrainians, including Roma people from Zakarpattia, who crossed the border and fled the country merely by using their ID cards or in some cases even their birth certificates. However, the situation changed after a while, and people were required to have travel documents in order to cross the border. Document checks at the border have generally become stricter, and the border guards use devices to check the biometric features of documents and the persons carrying them. The new strict check of the identity of persons crossing the border has been introduced, because there have been many cases of people using the passports of their family members who look like them, for instance, a woman using her sister's passport to leave the country. There are still countries, such as Georgia and Turkey, to which Ukrainians can travel by using their ID cards only.<sup>96</sup>

If a Roma male presents a Hungarian passport to the Ukrainian border guards, he will most likely be allowed to exit Ukraine assuming that he is merely a Hungarian citizen.<sup>97</sup> However, if the border guards see that the person also is in possession of a Ukrainian passport or they suspect the person of being a Ukrainian citizen, then they will check if the person has Ukrainian citizenship. The Ukrainian border guards can, for instance, find out about the person's Ukrainian citizenship by looking at the place of birth, which is noted in the Hungarian passports. If the place of birth is a location in Ukraine, this could raise the border guard's suspicion that the person in question also is a Ukrainian citizen.<sup>98</sup> If it turns out that he is also registered as a Ukrainian citizen, and he is barred from leaving the country due to the martial law, he will not

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<sup>93</sup> Open Democracy, *How war has hit Zakarpattia, hundreds of miles from Ukraine's front lines*, 4 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>94</sup> A local NGO: 5

<sup>95</sup> A legal source: 11

<sup>96</sup> A local NGO: 10

<sup>97</sup> A local NGO: 12;

<sup>98</sup> Transcapattian College: 20; A local NGO: 12

be allowed to exit the country. Ukraine does not recognise dual citizenship and Ukrainian citizens will only be considered and treated as Ukrainians by the authorities at the border.<sup>99</sup>

As a result of Ukrainian regulation, which came into force in September 2022, men over 18 with dual Ukrainian-Hungarian citizenship can no longer travel from Ukraine to Hungary or from Hungary to Ukraine without a Ukrainian passport. However, there are reports that border guards are still tolerant towards Hungarian citizens on their way to Hungary. The guards often let them through with a Hungarian passport, although on the way back from Hungary, the Ukrainian border guards will only accept Ukrainian documents.<sup>100</sup>

In the Roma families with unregistered marriages, who have more than three children, the male parent cannot take advantage of the rule exempting men with more than two children from military service and giving him the opportunity to leave the country. This is because he is officially not registered as the father of his children and thus the children do not have his name (patronymic) as their second name.<sup>101</sup>

## 3.2. Situation of Zakarpattian Roma in Hungary

The Roma NGO Romaversitas has heard from the organisations working with Roma refugees that these Roma refugees encounter integration problems such as lack of network, lack of resources, lack of knowledge, and illiteracy.<sup>102</sup>

### 3.2.1. Size of the Roma population from Zakarpattia in Hungary

Based on the experience from working with Roma refugees from Ukraine, Romaversitas assessed that there were at least 1,000 Roma persons from Zakarpattia in Hungary.<sup>103</sup> It is unclear how many persons among the Roma people, who have come to Hungary and asked for temporary protection, have obtained Hungarian citizenship.<sup>104</sup>

### 3.2.2. Legal status

According to a legal source, Roma people from Ukraine who come to Hungary, can be divided into different groups depending on their legal status:

- a) Persons, who are not of Hungarian descent, do not speak Hungarian and come from areas far away in Ukraine (i.e. not Zakarpattia). These people do not have Hungarian citizenship. If such persons do not have a biometric passport, they will not be able to obtain the temporary residence card issued for the first 30 days of residence in Hungary (before the temporary protection can be applied and granted).

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<sup>99</sup> A local NGO: 12

<sup>100</sup> Hungary Today, *Ukraine Punishes Transcarpathian Hungarians Again*, 20 December 2022, [url](#)

<sup>101</sup> A local NGO: 11

<sup>102</sup> Romaversitas: 11

<sup>103</sup> Romaversitas: 1

<sup>104</sup> A legal source: 13

- b) Persons, who have a biometric passport can enter Hungary and can stay free of any permit for 90 days within six months. They can then apply and obtain temporary protection and receive all the benefits and assistance that the temporary protection entails.
- c) Persons without a biometric passport can, if they have some other official Ukrainian documents (for ex.: ID card, driving licence, birth certificate), apply for temporary protection.
- d) Persons with dual Ukrainian-Hungarian citizenship who can document their Hungarian citizenship. Such persons will not face any issues regarding obtaining a residence permit in Hungary.<sup>105</sup>

### 3.2.3. Accommodation

The shelters in Hungary, which accommodate Roma refugees from Ukraine, are situated in several locations. There are many shelters housing 50-100 persons. There are also shelters, which neither UNHCR nor other international organisations have access to, as they are managed by the Hungarian authorities and it is only the authorities, who have access to these shelters.<sup>106</sup>

According to new Hungarian legislation, which became effective as of 15 September 2023, those who provide accommodation to refugees no longer receive a daily amount of 8,000 HUF per refugee, which they have received until now, unless the refugee is a pregnant woman, a person with disabilities, retired or registered as being active in the labour market. Considering the fact that the majority of the refugees are Roma from Zakarpattia, who either do not have a job or are irregularly employed workers, the legislation will squeeze many Roma refugees out of the shelters.<sup>107</sup>

### 3.2.4. Access to assistance and social services

When members of the Roma community in Zakarpattia are moving to Hungary, they are often not aware of the services to which they are entitled.<sup>108</sup> This applies not only to the Roma refugees who came to Hungary after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022, but also to the Roma migrant workers who came to Hungary in 2016-2017, as some of these migrant workers also brought their families to Hungary, especially in the region of Székesfehérvár.<sup>109</sup>

A legal source mentioned a number of factors causing the Zakarpattian Roma facing difficulties in receiving the services they are entitled to in Hungary, including:

- poor educational background and low level of literacy,
- widespread misinformation or lack of information in the Roma communities, and

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<sup>105</sup> A legal source: 7

<sup>106</sup> Romaversitas: 6

<sup>107</sup> Romaversitas: 9

<sup>108</sup> Romaversitas: 7; A legal source: 8

<sup>109</sup> A legal source: 9



- lack of knowledge about how to approach the Hungarian administration.<sup>110</sup>

As a result, people tend to rely on what other people tell them about their rights and possibilities.<sup>111</sup>

When Zakarpattian Roma arrived in Hungary after February 2022, they were advised about their possibilities of acquiring Hungarian citizenship, and hence often expressed interest in obtaining Hungarian citizenship upon arrival.<sup>112</sup> However, many Hungarian authorities, at that time, were not aware of the services, which the Roma refugees from Ukraine with Hungarian citizenship were entitled to. This resulted in many refugees not receiving the services, which they were entitled to receive.<sup>113</sup>

### *3.2.5. Documents for children*

According to findings from a research project by the Roma NGO Romaversitas, many Roma refugees, including children, from Zakarpattia in Hungary lack documents. This also applies to children, whose parents have become Hungarian citizens. These children do not have Hungarian documents, as their parents have not registered them with the Hungarian authorities.<sup>114</sup>

As a legal source explained, it is not unusual in the Zakarpattian Roma community that parents have ID documents but their children do not, even among those who have Hungarian citizenship. This is because the parents do not find it necessary, either practically or culturally, to obtain documents for the children, and they can live their lives without having documents. When the war broke out in Ukraine, it happened so fast that these people did not have time to apply for documents for their children.<sup>115</sup>

Children, whose parents have acquired Hungarian citizenship, are regarded as Hungarian citizens, and they are entitled to obtain Hungarian documents. However, in order to obtain documents, their parents have to apply for it. A Ukrainian birth certificate is enough to start the process of applying for Hungarian documents in such cases.<sup>116</sup>

At the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the lack of documents caused problems in regard to the services in Hungary children were entitled to, including enrolment in schools and kindergartens and vaccinations. Some of these problems were gradually solved as regards families who had

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<sup>110</sup> A legal source: 8-9

<sup>111</sup> A legal source: 8-9

<sup>112</sup> Denmark, DIS, Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkarpattien, October 2023, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>113</sup> Romaversitas: 7

<sup>114</sup> Romaversitas: 8

<sup>115</sup> A legal source: 20

<sup>116</sup> A legal source: 21

Hungarian citizenship. However, for other families without Hungarian citizenship it is still an issue at the time of drafting this report (October 2023).<sup>117</sup>

### 3.2.6. *Women*

Since the breakout of the war in February 2022, Roma women came to Hungary with their children but without their husbands, as they were prohibited from leaving Ukraine or they were already in Hungary.<sup>118</sup> According to a legal source, these women were in a vulnerable position due to a number of cumulative factors such as low level of literacy, early school dropouts, early marriages and a distinct lack of knowledge about their rights.<sup>119</sup>

As a result, they have faced difficulties in Hungary, and there have been cases of exploitation and sexual harassment of these women.<sup>120</sup> Due to the lack of capacity and assumedly a lack of willingness among the Hungarian authorities, these women do not receive adequate assistance from the Hungarian state in coping with the problems they are facing, according to a legal source.<sup>121</sup>

### 3.2.7. *Connection to the Roma community in Hungary*

Although members of the Roma community in Hungary and Ukraine both speak Hungarian and live geographically close to each other, there are some differences between these two communities with regard to their habits and their Romani language, as the Romani dialect spoken in these two communities is not exactly the same.<sup>122</sup>

In general, there are no strong social relations between the Roma communities in Zakarpattia and Hungary.<sup>123</sup> However, connections on a personal level could be established by a person from one settlement in Zakarpattia living in a Roma settlement in Hungary.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, there are connections between different organisations and NGOs working in both Zakarpattia and Hungary.<sup>125</sup>

After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine and the arrival of Ukrainian Roma refugees, a number of organisations started focusing on the Roma people from Ukraine and providing assistance to them.<sup>126</sup> In this regard, the social connection became relatively strong between the Roma

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<sup>117</sup> A legal source: 19

<sup>118</sup> A legal source: 10; Romaversitas: 12

<sup>119</sup> A legal source: 10

<sup>120</sup> A legal source: 10;

<sup>121</sup> A legal source: 10; Romaversitas: 12

<sup>122</sup> A legal source: 4

<sup>123</sup> Transcapattian College: 21; Romaversitas: 13; A legal source: 4; A local NGO: 13

<sup>124</sup> Transcapattian College: 21

<sup>125</sup> Transcapattian College: 21; Romaversitas: 13

<sup>126</sup> Romaversitas: 13

community in Zakarpattia and the Roma families who have left the region and now lived abroad.<sup>127</sup>

### *3.2.8. Attitudes towards Zakarpattian Roma*

At the beginning of the war in Ukraine, families in the Roma community in Hungary welcomed and accommodated Roma refugees from Zakarpattia in their homes despite their own poor living conditions. However, there has also been a fear in the Hungarian Roma community that they have to share the scarce resources and opportunities (i.e. social services and jobs ) with the Zakarpattian Roma coming to Hungary.<sup>128</sup>

Many members of the leading Hungarian political party, Fidesz, have a negative attitude towards the Roma population in order to get public support, according to two sources consulted for this report.<sup>129</sup>

The Roma NGO Romaversitas opined that the Hungarian state seeks to push the Ukrainian Roma refugees out of Hungary. When the war in Ukraine began and Roma people from Ukraine started coming to Hungary, the authorities' negative rhetoric changed direction from the Hungarian Roma towards the Roma refugees from Ukraine.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> A local NGO: 13

<sup>128</sup> Romaversitas: 13; A legal source: 6

<sup>129</sup> A diplomatic source: 15; Romaversitas: 10

<sup>130</sup> Romaversitas: 10

## 4. Moving across borders

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Zakarpattian Roma are perceived as a people “on the wheel”<sup>131</sup>, i.e. as being highly flexible with regard to changing location quickly from one area to another.<sup>132</sup>

It is very common in the shelters in Hungary, in which Zakarpattian Roma refugees live, that some families overnight decide to move to another country or back to Ukraine.<sup>133</sup>

When Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022, many Ukrainians, including the Roma people, began to move out of the country, as no one knew what was going to happen if Russia invaded the whole country.<sup>134</sup> The Roma people from Zakarpattia, who in the beginning of the war did not move further than the border areas in Hungary after coming to Hungary, started then moving on from the Hungarian border areas to Budapest and afterwards to other European Union member states such as Austria or the Czech Republic. However, many Zakarpattian Roma have tended to return to Ukraine after receiving humanitarian assistance related to the temporary protection<sup>135</sup>, and many living in the border area have repeated this pattern of circular moving or “circular migration” several times.<sup>136</sup>

When Roma people from Zakarpattia move to Hungary or other EU countries, it is, according to a legal source, a “social migration”, i.e. searching for social benefits and employment<sup>137</sup>, or as explained by another source, a strategy for upholding a living and finding better living conditions elsewhere.<sup>138</sup>

### 4.1. Movement between Hungary and Zakarpattia

Since February 2022, there have been between 5,000 – 15,000 people who daily have crossed the border between Ukraine and Hungary. Many of those who cross the border regularly are Roma families, who travel to Hungary to receive the benefits that the temporary protection entitles them to, after which they travel back to Ukraine.<sup>139</sup> There is also a high level of movement across the Zakarpattian and Hungarian borders, as people are moving back and forth for work and education.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> A local NGO: 21

<sup>132</sup> Transcapattian College: 15; Romaversitas: 16; A local NGO: 21

<sup>133</sup> Romaversitas: 16; Transcapattian College: 22

<sup>134</sup> Transcapattian College: 12

<sup>135</sup> Denmark, DIS, *Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien*, October 2023, [url](#), p.12; Transcapattian College: 15-16; A legal source: 14

<sup>136</sup> Transcapattian College: 16

<sup>137</sup> A legal source: 15

<sup>138</sup> Transcapattian College: 22

<sup>139</sup> Denmark, DIS, *Ukraine: Ungarske efterkommere i Transkartpatien*, October 2023, [url](#), p.12; Transcapattian College: 15; A legal source: 14

<sup>140</sup> Transcapattian College: 17

Romaversitas noted that there were also other reasons why Roma go back to Ukraine. The source mentioned a number of cases, where pregnant Roma women went back to Ukraine to receive medical maternal care, as they did not know that they had free access to medical care in Hungary. Sometimes they go back to Ukraine to visit their families or to have a look at their properties in the Zakarpattia region. However, the source did not know of any family who have gone back to Ukraine and stayed there permanently.<sup>141</sup>

## 4.2. Moving to other EU countries

Roma refugees do not necessarily stay in Hungary and may move on to other European countries.<sup>142</sup>

According to Romaversitas and the Transcarpathian College, the movement of Zakarpattian Roma people from Hungary to other countries is usually based on information they receive from their surroundings about better benefits and help or job opportunities in the country of destination. Sometimes, they come back to Hungary as they realise that their information about the situation in other host countries has not proven correct.<sup>143</sup>

According to a local NGO, economic survival is one of the main drivers behind the Roma migration from Ukraine to other European countries. Although the level of financial support they receive or the income they earn in other European countries is not high, the socio-economic conditions in Zakarpattia are so poor that they try any chance to get a better life in other countries.<sup>144</sup>

A legal source considered expired residence and work permit in Hungary, the Czech Republic or other neighbouring countries as a motivating factor behind the Roma moving to other European countries. The source found it very likely that Roma persons from Ukraine applying for temporary protection in EU countries such as Denmark mainly have Hungarian citizenship as it otherwise would be quite difficult to cross the numerous borders on their way without having Hungarian documents.<sup>145</sup>

Similarly, a local NGO is familiar with a number of cases of Roma families from the Zakarpattia region seeking temporary protection in European countries despite having Hungarian citizenship. However, the organisation underlines that these families have no other choice but to take advantage of the situation, as the Roma community has been facing a worsening economic situation since the outbreak of Covid-19 and later the war in Ukraine. In addition, many Roma families are in deep debt to powerful and wealthy persons in the Roma community

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<sup>141</sup> Romaversitas: 15

<sup>142</sup> Romaversitas: 14

<sup>143</sup> Romaversitas: 16; Transcarpathian College: 22

<sup>144</sup> A local NGO: 20

<sup>145</sup> A legal source: 15

in Zakarpattia, who try to keep these families in debt in order to exploit them, which makes these families prone to find resources in other countries to pay their debt.<sup>146</sup>

The consulted legal source assumed that Roma men applying for temporary protection in other EU countries such as Denmark might be the same men who left Ukraine and came, for example to Hungary or the Czech Republic, as labour force before the war broke out in Ukraine.<sup>147</sup>

There have been several cases of Roma families from Ukraine with Hungarian citizenship who have been sent back to Hungary from the Czech Republic when the authorities discovered that they had Hungarian citizenship and thus were not entitled to temporary protection.<sup>148</sup>

### 4.3. Purchase and registration of a vehicle in Hungary

In order to register a vehicle in Hungary, a person must present the following to the traffic authorities in the country:

1. Proof of the acquisition of the vehicle
2. Proof of compulsory motor vehicle liability insurance or the exemption from such
3. Proof that the traffic authority, that has issued a license for the vehicle, has determined the technical data and technical suitability of the vehicle
4. The operator of the vehicle has a residential address or a registered office (location) in Hungary.<sup>149</sup>

In this regard, in order to register a vehicle in Hungary, a person must first have a registered address in the country. Therefore, a person must be able to present an address registration card if they are an EU/EEA citizen or a proof of address in Hungary – a so-called [accommodation reporting form](#) if the person in question is a non-EU/EEA citizen, e.g. if the person is a Ukrainian citizen.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> A local NGO: 9

<sup>147</sup> A legal source: 15

<sup>148</sup> Romaversitas: 14

<sup>149</sup> Kormányhivatalok, *Hasznos tudnivalók külföldi gépjármű vásárlása esetén [Useful information when buying a foreign vehicle]*, 27 June 2019, [url](#)

<sup>150</sup> InterRelocation, *Information on Car Purchase and Ownership in Hungary*, n.d, [url](#)

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## Annex 1: Meeting minutes

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### Meeting with the Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education, 26 October 2023, Berehove, Ukraine

*About the source: The source holds a PhD in Geography and teaches at the Department of Geography and Tourism at the Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education. The College has been operating since 1996 aligned with and licensed by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Formerly, it was named Transcarpathian Hungarian Teacher Training College (KMTF) and provided only teacher education qualifications. In 2003, following structural and profile enhancements, the college took its current name and now provides, in addition to teacher education, a number of additional specializations. The College does not receive any federal government funds from the state budget of Ukraine. Its founder is the Charitable Foundation of Transcarpathian Hungarian Pedagogical College, which provides its finance. The institution's expenses are largely covered with the support of Hungary, augmented through grant projects.*

*For more information about the source, see [Information about the College](#) on its website.*

#### *Roma population with Hungarian language as native in Ukraine*

1. According to Ukrainian official data from 2001, the Roma population in Zakarpatska Oblast was 14,000 persons. This number is based on a person's self-identification with regards to ethnicity/nationality. Thus, a part of the Roma population in Zakarpattia identify themselves as Hungarians, whilst others consider themselves Ukrainians.
2. In 2009, the Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education conducted a study with the purpose of assessing the number of the Roma population residing in Zakarpatska Oblast. According to this study, the Roma population was 32,000 persons in 2001.
3. In 2005, due to very low national fertility rates, the Ukrainian government introduced a new law, which allocated a significant financial support to families with 3 or more children. The amount was equal to EUR 10,000, which was paid out over 3-6 years. Despite already having many children, Roma families reacted very positively to the new law and the number of children increased further in these families.
4. According to estimations, the annual rate of fertility between 2007-2014 was 50 children per 1,000 Roma people; a number which, according to the source, is perceived by the Ukrainian authorities as very high. The government scheme to support families with three or more children was carried on until 2012, when the government decided to lower the amount of the financial child support received by the families.

5. According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, the financial support given for the third child and any additional child above that amounted to UAH 1,700 (approximately EUR 44) per month in 2019.<sup>151</sup>
6. The Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education has conducted a number of studies where they assess the total number of the Roma population living in Zakarpattia. The first demographic study of its kind in Hungarian was published in 2010. There have subsequently been updates of these studies. The latest study was conducted in 2016, which also can be found online.<sup>152</sup> The latest study from 2016 did not show a significant change in the growth among the Roma population, which made the source to extrapolate that there are approximately 50,000 Roma living in Zakarpatska Oblast in 2023.

### *Access to Hungarian citizenship*

7. It is possible for the Roma population in Zakarpattia to obtain Hungarian citizenship, which requires proving that ancestors were living in Zakarpattia when it was a part of the Austrian Hungarian Empire or was citizens of Hungary between 1939-1944 and that they speak Hungarian.
8. Whilst some Roma applied and obtained Hungarian citizenship, others did not apply. The source opined that a Hungarian citizenship is perceived as an asset among many Roma people in Zakarpattia, as it opens the doors to the EU labour market.
9. Although there has been no official data on citizenship in recent years, there are unofficial estimates indicating that the majority of Hungarian-speaking persons in the Zakarpattia region has obtained Hungarian citizenship.<sup>153</sup> According to some sources, it is likely that among 100,000-150,000 person living in Zakarpatska Oblast today have obtained Hungarian citizenship. This number includes both Ukrainians and Roma people with Hungarian language as native. However, the source underlined that this figure was not available in official statistics.
10. As the population of the Austrian Hungarian Empire also comprised ethnic Ukrainians, their descendants are also entitled to Hungarian citizenship. Although many of them

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<sup>151</sup> Government portal, Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, *From April 1, Government introduces assistance to large families*, 26 March 2019, [URL](#)

<sup>152</sup> Partium Kiadó, *Roma népesség Magyarország északkeleti határtérségében [the Roma population in the northeastern border region of Hungary]*, 2016, [url](#); Közoktatás, *A Kárpátaljai Magyar Pedagógusszövetség Lapja [The Journal of the Transcarpathian Hungarian Teachers' Association]*, 2016, [url](#)

<sup>153</sup> The source referred to three sources: ResearchGate, *Migráció és versengő nemzetpolitikák Kárpátalján az Euromajdan után*, December 2016, [url](#), pp. 88-89; Telex, *Minden tisztségtől megfosztja Ukrajna a kettős állampolgárságú kárpátaljai magyarokat*, March 2021, [url](#); Infopost, *7 projekt Beregszász számára, melyek arra ösztönöznék a magyar közösséget, hogy higgyen Ukrajnában*, 15 august 2021, [url](#)

speak broken Hungarian, their language proficiency is considered sufficient to obtain Hungarian citizenship.

11. Applications for Hungarian citizenship must be made in person, and online applications are not allowed. An applicant should therefore apply at a Hungarian representation abroad or with the relevant authority in Hungary.

### *Access to Hungary*

12. When the war with Russia started in February 2022, many Ukrainians including Roma people began to move out of the country, as no one knew what was going to happen if Russia would invade the whole country.
13. The people living in Zakarpatska Oblast preferred to move to or through Hungary when they left Ukraine. This was partly due to the proximity of the Hungarian border, although the Hungarian language also played a role in choosing to move to or through Hungary.
14. When the ethnic Ukrainians left Ukraine after February 2022, they mostly stayed abroad. The Hungarians from Zakarpatska Oblast also moved to Hungary and stayed there.
15. On the other hand, the Roma community is highly flexible and able to change location quickly. Because of this, many from the Roma community, who moved across the border to Hungary, and applied for humanitarian help (clothes, food etc.) on the Hungarian side, returned to Zakarpatska Oblast, when they received this help.
16. Many Roma who live in the border area repeated this pattern of circular moving several times, which caused negative reactions and attitudes among the authorities of involved European countries who saw this as an exploitation of the situation and the humanitarian assistance provided by them. The Roma people from Zakarpattia, who in the beginning of the war did not move further than the border side areas in Hungary after coming to Hungary, started then moving on from the Hungarian border areas to Budapest and afterwards to Austria and the Czech Republic, and later on to other European Union member states and asked for humanitarian help and then back again to the Zakarpattia region in Ukraine. This pattern of movement is, according to the source, could be interpreted as some kind of circular migration.
17. In general, there is a high level of movement across the Zakarpattian and Hungarian borders, as people are moving back and forth for work and education. The Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education in partnership with other research institutions conducted a study in 2017, which documented that around 18,000 persons of Hungarian ethnicity from Zakarpaska Oblast worked or studied in the EU – in particular in the Czech Republic and Germany. However, the largest proportion worked

or studied in Hungary. After the beginning of the war with Russia, this number increased. However, there is no estimate of this increase.

18. Men between 18-60 years of age are prohibited from leaving Ukraine. This is also the case for women who are medical doctors or women who are members of the legislative bodies of the region. For the other categories, it is in general easy to move across the border to Hungary.
19. Fathers who have 3 or more children are allowed to leave Ukraine, which means that many Roma men from Zakarpattia can leave the country as many Roma families have more than 3 children.
20. It is possible for the Ukrainian border authorities to check whether a person, who tries to cross the border merely by showing their Hungarian passport at the Ukrainian border, also is a Ukrainian citizen. This is because the place of birth is notified in the Hungarian passports. If the place of birth is a location in Ukraine, this could raise the border guard's suspicion that the person in question also is a Ukrainian citizen.
21. In general, there are no strong social relations between the Roma communities in Zakarpattia and in Hungary. However, connections on a personal level could be established by a person from one settlement in Zakarpattia living in a settlement in Hungary. Furthermore, there are connections between different organisations and NGOs working in both Zakarpattia and Hungary.
22. According to the source, when Roma people from Zakarpattia move to Hungary or other EU countries, it is a strategy for upholding a living and finding better living conditions elsewhere. As regards those, who move on from Hungary to other EU countries, their decision about which country to move to is often based on circulating information in the community about more generous humanitarian aid, better social benefits or higher chances of finding employment in the country of destination.
23. There exists a system for social security in Hungary, although the amount of the support given by the state is not very high and the social security is only paid in a short period of time.

### *Language spoken in Zakarpattia*

24. It is possible to live in Zakarpattia only speaking Hungarian if a person lives in the settlements where mainly Hungarians or Hungarian-speaking Roma are living.
25. As many Ukrainian officials in Zakarpattia Oblast also speak Hungarian, it is possible for a person only speaking Hungarian to go through the due administrative procedures and obtain Ukrainian document, although the administrative language in Zakarpatska Oblast is Ukrainian. Due to the Hungarian language skills of the government officials, they can for instance ask the applicant for the relevant documents for issuing a passport, and the whole process will be conducted in Hungarian.

26. A large number of the Roma population in Zakarpattia have little or limited education. However, there are variations across the different Roma communities as well as across the settlements in which the Roma live.

## Meeting with a diplomatic source, Budapest, Hungary, 25 October 2023

### *Number of Hungarian citizens in Ukraine*

1. The exact number of persons of Hungarian descent from Zakarpattia region in Ukraine, who are exclusively Ukrainian citizens, is unclear. Furthermore, the number of persons of Roma origin from Zakarpattia, who are Hungarian citizens, is even more difficult to assess.
2. Hungarian authorities state that approximately 150,000 Hungarians live in Ukraine. However, several sources have assessed that the actual number has fallen to roughly 70,000.

### *Access to Hungarian citizenship*

3. It is remarkably uncomplicated for persons of Hungarian descent living in Zakarpattia to obtain Hungarian citizenship. If a person can prove a Hungarian bloodline and speak Hungarian they can obtain Hungarian citizenship.
4. In some cases, it may be sufficient for a person to apply for Hungarian citizenship if the person has a Hungarian surname, and speaks Hungarian. Therefore, almost all Hungarian-speaking persons from Zakarpattia, who apply for Hungarian citizenship, would, be granted citizenship.
5. The source mentioned a concrete case where an applicant had to submit their parents' birth certificates showing Hungarian names and did an interview in Hungarian, which included questions about where the applicant's family came from in historical (greater) Hungary.
6. When the Hungarian government introduced a simplified naturalisation procedure in 2011, it led to a considerable increase in applicants obtaining Hungarian citizenship. In this process, there were many cases of identity fraud.
7. From 2013-2023 there were approximately 300,000 Hungarian passports issued to persons who had been granted citizenship through this simplified naturalisation procedure.
8. The Ukrainian government does not recognise dual citizenship. However, they do not enforce the law forbidding dual citizenship, which means that a Ukrainian of Hungarian descent can easily obtain Hungarian passport without any problems. Some of the 300,000 Hungarian passports mentioned above were issued based on fraudulent documents – mostly breeder documents such as birth certificates.
9. Even some members of organised crime organisations had received Hungarian passports. Among the fraudulent cases, some had Interpol warrants and some had

committed forgery and money laundering. The majority of fraud cases included Ukrainian nationals, although there were also Iranian nationals, who had been involved with human trafficking.

10. To the best of the source's knowledge, approximately 1,500 persons had received Hungarian passports in a fraudulent manner. Due to these fraudulent cases, the Hungarian government have tightened the naturalisation procedures. This includes among other things mandatory registration of biometric data for issuance of Hungarian passports and ID cards, which was introduced in February 2020. Although the number of fraudulent cases has decreased after this tightening, roughly 900,000 who received citizenship during this period of "loose" checks have never been properly investigated by the Hungarian government.

### *Access to Hungary*

11. Persons of Hungarian descent in Zakarpattia can move back and forth across the border easily. They may be in possession of Hungarian ID card proving that they are citizens of Hungary.
12. The border crossings between Zakarpattia and Hungary is perceived to be easier to cross than border crossings between Hungary and other countries such as Serbia or Romania.
13. The Hungarian government has taken a liberal stand on border crossing during the war, as the Hungarian authorities believe that the majority of persons fleeing Ukraine to Hungary are Hungarians.
14. The Hungarian government has often been vocal about Ukrainian mistreatment of Hungarians living in Ukraine, including the Roma community of Hungarian descent.
15. Many members of the leading Hungarian political party, Fidesz, have a negative attitude towards the Roma population. However, the Roma people of Hungarian descent tend to vote for Fidesz regardless, nearly 95% of the Hungarian diaspora also tend to vote for Fidesz as the party is perceived by them to be a protector of Hungarians abroad.

### *Language spoken in Zakarpattia*

16. It is possible to live in Zakarpattia only speaking Hungarian although only around 12 percent of the population of Zakarpattia is ethnically Hungarian, and the communities in which a person can communicate in Hungarian are concentrated and limited in number. However, the Ukrainian law on education, when it takes effect in 2024, will seek to increase the proportion of Ukrainian language used in schools in order to ensure members of minority groups can speak the state language. When the law takes effect, it will require that a certain proportion of class time (it varies based on the grade level) be conducted in the state language. The Hungarians would therefore like to return to the previous laws that made it possible to be taught in Hungarian language.

17. The source opined that a Rom of Hungarian descent could get Ukrainian documents without speaking Ukrainian as many of the Ukrainian officials in Zakarpattia region would also speak Hungarian, however, the source did not have a lot of evidence to back this up.



## Meeting with Romaversitas, Budapest, Hungary, 30 October 2023

*About the source: Romaversitas is a Roma-founded and Roma-led community-based education NGO, which was founded in 1996. Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, the organisation has been following closely the situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine in Hungary, especially the situation of children. Romaversitas has among others things been involved in capacity building of NGOs and grass grassroots organisations providing support to Roma refugees from Ukraine. Since June 2022, Romaversitas has been running a project focusing on the educational inclusion of Roma refugee children.*

### *Zakarpattian Roma with Hungarian citizenship in Hungary*

1. Based on the experience from working with Roma refugees from Ukraine, the source assessed that there were at least 1,000 Roma persons from Zakarpattia in Hungary.
2. It is the source's assessment that approximately half of the Roma population from Zakarpattia region, including the children, who have crossed the border to Hungary, have Ukrainian-Hungarian dual citizenship.
3. The number of people registered under the temporary protection does not include persons with Hungarian citizenship, as Hungarian citizens are not officially entitled to temporary protection and thus not registered as being eligible for receiving services associated with the temporary protection. However, based on a government decree from 8 March 2022 (section 8), Ukrainians with Hungarian citizenship are entitled to receive these services.<sup>154</sup> Because of this, the real number of Roma from Zakarpattia in Hungary might be higher than what appears from the official statistics on people under the temporary protection.
4. In the source's experience, there are more Roma men than Roma women or children, who have Hungarian citizenship and obtained Hungarian documents. The reason behind this goes back to around six years ago, when a high demand for cheap, unskilled or low-skilled workforce within construction and industry in Hungary made many Roma men from Zakarpattia to go to Hungary to work, whilst the woman and the kids stayed home in Ukraine. As it was the male members of the family, who needed the Hungarian citizenship and documents in order to travel back and forth between Ukraine and Hungary, it was often them, who applied for Hungarian citizenship and documents.
5. It is still very easy for Roma people from Zakarpattia to obtain Hungarian citizenship.

### *Conditions in Hungary*

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<sup>154</sup> HHC, Government Decree No. 86/2022. (III. 7.), 8 March 2022, [url](#), p. 4

6. The shelters in Hungary that accommodates Roma refugees from Ukraine are situated in several locations. There are many shelters in which 50-100 persons live. There are also shelters, which neither UNHCR or other international organisation have access to, as they are controlled by the Hungarian authorities and it is only them, who have access to these shelters.
7. Roma people from Zakarpattia moving to Hungary are often not aware of the services, to which they are entitled. In the beginning of the war in Ukraine, even many Hungarian authorities were not aware of the services, which the Roma refugees from Ukraine with Hungarian citizenship were entitled to. This resulted in many refugees did not receive the services, which they had right to get.
8. Romaversitas' recent research project about education of Roma refugee children shows that many Roma refugees from Zakarpattia in Hungary lack documents. This also applies to children, whose parents have become Hungarian citizens. These children do not have Hungarian documents, as their parents have not registered them with the Hungarian authorities.
9. According to a new Hungarian legislation, which became effective as of 15 September 2023, actors who provide accommodation to refugees, no longer receive a daily amount of HUF 8,000 per refugee, which they have received until now, unless the refugee is a pregnant woman, a person with disabilities, retired or registered as being active in the labour market. Considering the fact that the majority of whom are Roma from Zakarpattia, who either do not have a job or are irregularly employed workers, the legislation will squeeze many Roma refugees out of the shelters.

### *The Hungarian authorities' attitude*

10. It is Romaversitas' general understanding that the Hungarian state tries to push the Ukrainian Roma refugees out of Hungary. Before February 2022, the political establishment in Hungary used a negative rhetoric and propaganda against the Roma community in Hungary in order to gain public support. When the war in Ukraine began and Roma people from Ukraine started coming to Hungary, the authorities' negative rhetoric changed direction towards the Roma refugees from Ukraine, who are to be targeted.
11. In the events organised by Romaversitas in cooperation with UNHCR within the refugee coordination Forum, the authorities who were invited refused adamantly to acknowledge that the Roma refugees from Ukraine are facing different or greater integration problems than other refugee groups in Hungary. This is, however, contrary to, what Romaversitas constantly hear from the organisations working with Roma

refugees about the integration problems, these refugees encounter, for instance lack of network, lack of resources, lack of knowledge, illiteracy etc.

12. When the war broke out in February 2022, Roma men who had already come to Hungary to work were concerned about their families back in Ukraine. However, they could not go back to Ukraine as they risked being recruited to the military. Therefore, their wives and children came to Hungary to join them. On their way to Hungary, these Roma families experienced negative attitudes by the Hungarian authorities at the border and even when they arrived, some of them did not receive the services and the aid, to which they were entitled.

### *Connection to the Hungarian Roma community*

13. There has not been a strong social connection between the Roma community in Hungary and the Roma community in Zakarpattia. There were organisations and NGOs working with the Roma community in Hungary before the war in Ukraine. However, it was not before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine and the arrival of Ukrainian Roma refugees that these organisations started focusing on the Roma people from Ukraine and providing assistance to them. There were families in the Roma community in Hungary, who welcomed and accommodated Roma refugees from Zakarpattia in the houses in the beginning of the war despite they themselves lived in poor conditions. However, since the beginning of the war, there has also been a fear in the Roma community in Hungary of Roma refugees from Zakarpattia coming and taking the scarce resources and opportunities (social services, jobs etc.) they have.

### *Moving across borders*

14. Roma refugees from Ukraine tend to move to Hungary, Poland, Romania, Moldova, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Germany, depending on which Roma community in Ukraine they are coming from, as there are different groups of Roma in Ukraine. For instance, Roma from Zakarpattia usually go to Hungary or those from Kharkiv go to Poland. However, this does not mean that they necessarily stay in these countries, and they may move on to other European countries. There have been several cases of Roma families from Ukraine with Hungarian citizenship, who have been sent back to Hungary from Czech Republic when the authorities discovered that they had Hungarian citizenship and were thus not entitled to temporary protection.
15. The source has heard that it is very common that Roma people from Zakarpattia move back and forth across the border between Hungary and Ukraine. There have been cases of pregnant women going back to Ukraine to receive medical care because they did not know that they had free access to medical care in Hungary. Sometimes they go back to Ukraine to visit their families or to have a look at their properties in the Zakarpattia

region. However, the source does not know of any family who have gone back to Ukraine and stayed there permanently.

16. The source affirms that Roma families from Zakarpattia tend to move suddenly from one area to another. The source has heard from some of Romaversitas' partners that it is very common in the shelters that some families overnight decide to move to another country or back to Ukraine. The movement of Zakarpattian Roma people from Hungary to other countries is usually based on information they receive from their surroundings about better benefits and help or job opportunities in the country of destination. Sometimes, they come back to Hungary as they realise that their information about the situation in other host countries did not prove correct.

### *Roma population in Zakarpattia*

17. All Roma refugees from Zakarpattia whom the source has talked to, could speak Hungarian, and the source believe that Hungarian is the main language of Roma people from Zakarpattia. The widespread use of Hungarian is a result of Roma people in Zakarpattia living in isolated communities where the dominant language is Hungarian, and they also go to segregated Hungarian-speaking schools, whose students are only Roma. Across the entire Zakarpattia, many Roma children do not attend school, attend irregularly or drop out of the school system at an early age, for instance 14-15. This is among other things due to early marriages, poverty and the family's need for income, teachers who are not capable of dealing with the a complex problems Roma kids are facing and thus find it easier to have these kids out of the school system etc. The source have seen many cases of Roma refugees across different generations, who are illiterate.
18. In the source's experience, many Roma marriages are often not official, and they have thus no marriage certificate.

## Meeting with a legal source, Budapest, 25 October 2023

1. The Hungarian legislation is very detailed about the rights of Hungary's 13 minorities. All 13 minorities are allocated a budget by the state for their activities, and they have right to conduct activities promoting their culture and their language, including having their own schools and the right to teach their mother tongue.
2. The Roma community is the most affected minority among Hungary's 13 minorities, as regards segregation and discrimination. The estimated number of Roma population in Hungary is, according to a scientific research, about 7-800,000 people. However, in a census published 2 weeks before the interview (October 2023), only 209,000 people identified themselves as belonging to the Roma community in Hungary, which is one third of the number in 2011. The main reason behind the low number of Roma people in the mentioned census is the lack of trust and the negative attitude expressed by the Hungarian state and society towards the Roma population, which make them refrain from identifying themselves as Roma when they are asked about their ethnicity in the census.
3. The Roma people are the largest minority group in Hungary followed by the Germans. The most Roma populated area in Hungary is the area stretching over the borders to Ukraine, Slovakia and Romania in the north-eastern part of the country. Another area populated by Roma people is located in the south-western part of the country, which stretches into Serbia and Croatia. These Roma populated areas are quite poor and there are not much economic activity and job opportunities in them.
4. The Roma community in Hungary is a settled community, which means that they are not travellers. There is not much active and daily contact between the Roma community in Hungary with the Roma communities in neighbouring countries such as Ukraine. Although the Roma community in Hungary and in Ukraine both speak Hungarian and they geographically do not live far from each other, there are some differences between these two communities with regard to their habits and their Romani language, as the Romani language spoken in these two communities is not exactly the same.
5. The situation for Roma people in Ukraine is much worse than the situation of the Roma community in Hungary in every aspect, for instance, the rate of unemployment, prevalence of segregation in the educational system, prevalence of illiteracy etc.
6. In February 2022, when the war started in Ukraine, the Roma community in Hungary was very receptive in the beginning towards Roma people coming from Ukraine and felt obliged to help them who had the same ethnic background as themselves although the Hungarian Roma people experienced economic hardship themselves. However, this

feeling of sympathy towards Ukrainian Roma people did not last long as the Roma community, the Roma NGOs ran short of resources, and a fear of the Roma newcomers turning into a rival workforce in the labour market began to emerge.

7. Roma people from Ukraine, who come to Hungary, can be divided into different groups depending on their legal status:
  - e) Persons, who are not of Hungarian descent, do not speak Hungarian and come from areas far away from Zarkarpattia in Ukraine (i.e. not Zakarpattia). These people do not have Hungarian citizenship. If such persons do not have a biometric passport, they will not be able to obtain the temporary residence card issued for the first 30 days of residence in Hungary (before the temporary protection can be applied and granted).
  - f) Persons, who have a biometric passport can enter Hungary and can stay free of any permit for 90 days within six months. They can then apply and obtain the temporary protection and receive all the benefits and assistance, which the temporary protection entails.
  - g) Persons without a biometric passport: if they have some other official Ukrainian documents (for ex.: ID card, driving licence, birth certificate), they can apply for temporary protection.
  - h) Persons with dual Ukrainian-Hungarian citizenship who can document their Hungarian citizenship. Such persons will not face any issue regarding obtaining residence permit in Hungary.
8. In general, there is much misinformation or lack of information in the Roma communities, and many Roma do not know about their rights in Hungary. The lack of information is in most cases due to the low level of literacy among Roma people, which makes them rely on what other people tell them about their rights and possibilities. According to different estimations, approximately 30% of Roma population in Zakarpattia are illiterate.
9. 6-7 years ago, the Hungarian labour market started receiving unskilled or low-skilled workers from neighbouring countries, who were mainly employed within the construction sector. These workers comprised particularly people with Hungarian citizenship, and there were many Roma men from Ukraine among them. In the beginning, some of them also brought their families to Hungary, especially in the region of Székesfehérvár. As most of these workers were uneducated or low-educated people, they did not know about the rules and regulations in Hungary and about, how they should deal with the Hungarian administration regarding their rights and government

services and support they are entitled to. On the other hand, the Hungarian society and state were not - and are still not - prepared to receive refugees and immigrants in big numbers. This situation has caused many problems for these workers and their families later on, who came with them or came later.

10. Another group among Roma people from Ukraine, who have faced severe difficulties in Hungary, are women, who came to Hungary together with their children and without their husbands after the breakout of the war in February 2022, because their husbands were prohibited from leaving Ukraine. These women were already in a more vulnerable position than their husbands, due to a number of cumulative factors such as low level of literacy, early school dropouts, early marriages, a distinct lack of knowledge about their rights etc. As a result, they have faced difficulties in Hungary, and there have been cases of exploitation and sexual harassment of these women. Due to the lack of capacity and assumedly a lack of willingness among the Hungarian authorities, these women do not receive the adequate assistance from the Hungarian state in coping with the problems they are facing.
11. Hungary was so unprepared to receive the influx of refugees from Ukraine that the state administration and the civil society did not even have the proper capacity and infrastructure to handle the few thousands refugees who came to Hungary from Ukraine when the war started. An example of this is that not everyone who had a biometric Ukrainian or Hungarian passport was registered upon arrival as the registration only happened on the basis of the applicant's request, as the authorities were not adequately prepared and not very keen to register.
12. Those who have Hungarian citizenship are eligible to apply for assistance with regard to housing in Hungary. However, due to a lack of adequate housing possibilities in Hungary, the applicants cannot be sure that they receive the assistance.
13. It is not clear how many persons among the Roma people, who have come to Hungary and asked for temporary protection, have Hungarian citizenship.
14. In the beginning, when Roma people from Zakarpattia came to Hungary and applied for and were granted temporary protection, many of them did not stay in Hungary but went back to Ukraine after some days as soon as they received the assistance provided in connection with the temporary protection. They continued travelling back and forth between Hungary and Ukraine in this way for some time in order to receive assistance and aid. After some time, they began moving on to other EU countries instead of going back to Ukraine.
15. The source assumed that Roma men applying for temporary protection in other EU countries such as Denmark might be the men who left Ukraine and came for example

to Hungary and/or the Czech Republic as labour force before the war broke out in Ukraine. It was the source's perception that these Roma men have started a "social migration" (i.e. searching for social benefits and employment) to other EU countries, since their residence and work permit have expired in Hungary, the Czech Republic or maybe other neighbouring countries. The source found it very likely that Roma persons from Ukraine applying for temporary protection in EU countries such as Denmark mainly have Hungarian citizenship as it otherwise would be quite difficult to cross the several borders on their way without having Hungarian documents. Although the source did not rule out the possibility of taking advantage and misuse of the temporary protection, she underlined that the Roma population from Zakarpattia generally do not know about their possibilities and rights.

16. According to the surveys made by NGO's, who work with UNHCR, the total number of Roma population living in Ukraine is around 200,000 of which 14,000-15,000 live in the Zakarpattia region. Most of the 14,000-15,000 Roma living in Zakarpattia are Hungarian-speaking and they comprise around 10% of the Hungarian minority population in Zakarpattia, which is approximately 150,000.
17. The level of segregation of the Roma communities in Ukraine is much higher than that of Hungary. In Ukraine, most Roma population live in closed settlements completely isolated from the rest of the society so that children in these communities even do not know how they should behave or interact with the surrounding society. There are 120 Roma settlements in Ukraine. However, it was not clear to the source, whether these closed settlements would only be inhabited by Hungarian-speaking Roma.
18. It is not only in Ukraine that there are isolated Roma communities with inhabitants who cannot speak the country's national language. Such Roma communities also exists in other communities such as the Hungarian-speaking communities in Romania where some people cannot speak or understand Romanian.
19. In the beginning of the war in Ukraine, many Roma families came to Hungary where the children did not have any documents. This caused problems in many regards, including enrolment in schools and kindergartens, vaccinations etc. Some of these problems were gradually solved as regards families who had Hungarian citizenship, but for other families without Hungarian citizenship it has been an issue up until today (October 2023).
20. It is not unusual to find families, where the parents have documents and the children do not, even among those who have Hungarian citizenship. This is because the Roma population in Ukraine live an isolated life in isolated settlements with minimal contact to the larger society. Thus, the parents do not find it necessary, either practically or culturally, to obtain documents for the children, and they can live their lives without



having documents. When the war broke out, it happened so fast and suddenly that these people did not think about or have time to obtain documents for their children.

21. Children, whose parents have acquired Hungarian citizenship, are regarded as Hungarian citizens until it is not proven otherwise, and they are entitled to obtain Hungarian documents. However, in order to obtain documents their parents have to apply in respect of the child. A Ukrainian birth certificate is enough to start the process of applying for Hungarian documents in such cases.

## Meeting with a local NGO, Zakarpattia, Ukraine, 27 October 2023

*About the source: The local NGO has worked for more than 20 years in the Zakarpattia region of western Ukraine. The source provides support to refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons and internally displaced persons (IDPs) with basic assistance, which include material, medical, social and legal assistance. The local NGO's Roma unit is currently running a project where members of the Roma community in Zakarpattia are provided legal assistance to obtain civil documents, including birth certificates and ID documents.*

*The work of the local NGO is based on needs and trends observed through monitoring and surveys. It has offices in Ukraine, Hungary and Romania, and works in neighbouring countries of Slovakia and Poland.*

1. The source provides legal assistance to the Roma community in Zakarpattia with regard to obtaining civil documents as about 30% of the Roma population in Zakarpattia are not registered, do not have Ukrainian IDs or have obstacles in obtaining Ukrainian documents without legal assistance. There are a number of reasons why these people cannot obtain ID documents without legal assistance, including lack of possibility to register or to register properly the person's name in the birth registration of the hospital where they were born. Since many of these people do not speak, understand or write Ukrainian properly, the person's name has in many cases been registered based on the oral statement of the mother, which in many cases differs from the name the person identify him- or herself. For instance, a person's name may be registered Katarina whilst the person identify herself as Elizabeth.
2. More than 75% of the Roma population in Zakarpattia only speak Hungarian and the remaining 25% speak both Hungarian and Ukrainian. Romani language is spoken by some, but almost all speak Hungarian. There are also Roma in Zakarpattia who speak Russian besides their Hungarian mother tongue. These are usually persons, who before the war had lived and worked for a while in Russia or the Russian speaking eastern part of Ukraine. for example in the cities of Kharkiv or Donetsk. Roma living in these areas had to learn the language in order to survive and manage their daily life There are still members of the Roma community living in Kyiv and other east Ukrainian cities who are labour migrants or descendants of labour migrants from Zakarpattia. These persons migrated two or three generations back, and they speak Hungarian among themselves, although they have learned Russian and are integrated into the society.
3. In Zakarpattia, the Roma people are mostly not integrated into the society and live a very isolated life in their communities, which is why they do not learn Ukrainian. However, there are some Roma, who have learned to speak Ukrainian at different levels depending on their individual life history.

4. There are also Hungarian speaking people in Zakarpattia who are not Roma. Most of them live in villages close to the Hungarian border, especially around Berehove. They speak better Ukrainian, are more integrated into the society and their socio-economic situation is, in general, better than that of the Roma population. There are also people among this group who only speak Hungarian; however, unlike many Hungarian-speaking Roma in Zakarpattia, they have Ukrainian documents, jobs, businesses, houses, cars and in general better off than Roma people with a similar lingual profile. Thus, speaking only Hungarian is not a precondition for being integrated into the society and having a better economic life. There are some cities in Zakarpattia, where some shopkeepers may not understand Ukrainian at all.
5. Approximately 70% of people of Hungarian descent living in villages close to the Hungarian border have Hungarian passports. The high number of Hungarian-Ukrainian dual citizens is due to the Hungarian nationality law, which stipulates that a person who has Hungarian ancestors and can speak Hungarian, can obtain Hungarian citizenship and Hungarian passport. Many men from these villages have taken advantage of this right and used their passports to leave Ukraine in order to avoid military service. In some villages, no or very few men are seen in Sunday masses in the church as they have left the country. The men who have fled the country send money back to their families, and the local NGO has seen lines of women from these communities crossing the border to Hungary in order to see their male family members on the other side. However, the proportionate number of Roma people having obtained Hungarian citizenship and Hungarian passports is less than that of ethnic Hungarians living in Zakarpattia. This is due to the poor knowledge of Roma people about their rights, their lack of documents and thus their lack of ability to prove their Hungarian descent.
6. Generally, most members of the Roma community live in poor socio-economic conditions resulting in among others premature ageing and low average life expectancy. Roma families are usually big and it is not unusual to find families with 9-12 children. The children in these families tend to get married at an early age and some girls get pregnant at an early age as well, for instance 12-15.
7. The source does not have information about how many members of the Roma community in Zakarpattia have obtained Hungarian citizenship and documents. However, it is the source's understanding that those in the Roma community, who have obtained Hungarian citizenship and documents, belong to the wealthier part of the community or have connections to people and organisations who can help them in this regard.
8. In order to obtain Hungarian citizenship and documents, a person has to, among other things, provide translated Ukrainian documents and travel to Hungary. This process

requires financial resources, which poor parts of the Roma community do not have. According to the source, the Hungarian authorities might have information about how many persons from Zakarpattia region have obtained Hungarian citizenship and documents. On the other hand, the source finds it difficult to make statistics about how many people from the Roma community have obtained Hungarian citizenship and documents as the ethnic background of the person is not registered in the Ukrainian documents.

9. The source is familiar with a number of cases of Roma families from Zakarpattia region seeking temporary protection in European countries despite having Hungarian citizenship. However, the organisation underlies that these families have no other choice but to take advantage of the situation as the Roma community has been facing a worsening economic situation since the outbreak of Covid-19 and later the war in Ukraine. In addition, many Roma families are in deep debt to powerful and wealthy persons in the Roma community who try to keep these families in debt in order to exploit them, which makes these families prone to find resources in other countries to pay their debt.
10. In the first months of the war, there was a huge number of Ukrainians, including Roma people from Zakarpattia, who crossed the border and fled the county merely by using their ID cards or in some cases even their birth certificates. However, the situation changed shortly after, and people were required to have travel documents in order to cross the border. Document check at the border has generally become stricter and the border guards use devices checking the biometric features of documents and the persons carrying them. The new strict check of the identity of persons crossing the border has been introduced, as there have been many cases of people using passports of their family members who look like them, for instance a woman using her sister's passport, to leave the country. There are still countries such as Georgia and Turkey to which Ukrainians can travel only by using their ID-cards.
11. In most Roma families in Zakarpattia, the marriage is not officially registered, and the female spouse is registered as a single mother. In this way, the family is able to receive the government's social payment to single women headed families. When a marriage is registered, the children get the father's name (patronymic) as their second name. However, if a marriage is not registered and the male spouse, who is the real father of the children, is not registered as their father, and the children thus do not get his name as their second name, it will become difficult to prove that the children belong to the same family, which is an obstacle for obtaining ID documents for the children. It also creates a problem for the father in connection with military service in Ukraine, as if a man with more than three children can be exempted from military service. Therefore, if

he is not registered as the father of his children due to lack of official registration, he will be unable to leave the country.

12. If a Roma male shows a Hungarian passport to the Ukrainian border guards, he will most likely be allowed to exit Ukraine assuming that he is merely a Hungarian citizen. However, if the border guards see that the person also has a Ukrainian passport or they suspect the person of being a Ukrainian citizen, then they will check if the person has Ukrainian citizenship. If it turns out that he is also registered as a Ukrainian citizen, and he is barred from leaving the country due to the martial law, he will not be allowed to exit the country. Ukraine does not recognise dual citizenship and Ukrainian citizen will only be considered and treated as Ukrainians by the authorities at the border.
13. There is not a strong connection between the Roma communities in Zakarpattia and in Hungary. There is, on the other hand, a relatively strong connection between the Roma community in Zakarpattia and the Roma families who have left the region and now live abroad.
14. The official number of the Roma population in Zakarpattia region is 14,500, although the number differs considerably from the unofficial estimates of 80,000-100,000 mentioned by different sources. The unofficial estimates indicate that the number of the Roma population in Zakarpattia is increasing every year.
15. According to the official statistics, there are 85 Roma settlements in Zakarpattia. The difference between the official and the unofficial numbers can be illustrated by an example from the area around Mukachevo. In this area, where there is a Roma settlement in every village, there is a village called Barkasovo, whose population is officially 2,200. However, a Roma settlement inside the same village has a population of 3-4,000 persons.
16. It is the source's assessment that the Hungarian-speaking Roma population in Zakarpattia is at least as big as the Hungarian-speaking non-Roma population in the region. Although many Hungarian-speaking people from Zakarpattia, including people from the Roma community, have left the country, there is still a considerable number of Hungarian-speaking people living in the region and schools for Hungarian-speaking children are still open.
17. The Roma identity is generally stronger in Roma settlements in villages compared to the cities, as Roma settlements in the villages live an isolated life without much contact to the rest of the society. On the other hand, people in the Roma settlements in the cities are more in contact with the surrounding predominantly Ukrainian society.
18. In the Roma community, people with lighter skin consider themselves as Europeans and try to distinguish themselves from the rest of the Roma community. They position

themselves at a higher level of the social hierarchy by identifying themselves as Hungarians rather than Roma. However, their Roma surnames reveal their Roma origin as many Roma people share the same surnames such as Lakatos, Feka, Orban.

19. The social attitudes towards Roma people is slightly better in the cities such as Mukachevo compared to the rural areas. However, in general, there is a negative social attitude towards Roma people in Zakarpattia, which can be explained by a number of socio-economic and socio-cultural features that are characteristic for the Roma community, such as high level of unemployment, living on social security, not being integrated into the wider Ukrainian society, widespread illiteracy or low level of literacy, poor physical and slovenly appearance, aberrant and rude social behaviour, lack of understanding of and respect for law and formal requirements, higher criminal records etc. Although all these features can be understood and explained by their socio-economic conditions, which Roma people have lived in for generations, the general society tends not to have a high tolerance towards it.
20. It is the source's assessment that economic survival is one of the main reasons why many Roma people leave Ukraine and move to other European countries. Although the level of the financial support they receive or the income they earn in other European countries is not high, the socio-economic conditions in Zakarpattia are so poor that they try any chance to get a better life in other countries.
21. The source opined that it was a general tendency among Roma people to move quickly and suddenly from one place to another, and that they were as such a people "on the wheel". As an example, the organisation mentioned a case of a Rom who suddenly disappeared while his application for documents was being processed, and then appeared again one year later.

## Annex 2: Terms of Reference

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- Descendants of Hungarian citizens in Ukraine
  - Access to Hungarian citizenship
  - Access to identity documents
  - Access to Hungarian residence permit
  - Ability to renounce Hungarian residence permit
  - Criteria for Ukrainian citizens to own property in Hungary
  - Access to the labour market in Hungary
  - Ability to move across the border
- Conditions for leaving Ukraine
- Conditions for entering Hungary
- Historical change in size of community in Ukraine and Hungary respectively
- Ability to live in Zakarpattia Oblast only speaking Hungarian
  - Schooling/education in Hungarian?
- Hungarian Roma community in Ukraine
  - Access to Hungarian citizenship
  - Access to identity documents
  - Ability to move across the border