The role of NGOs in integrating Ukrainian refugee children into the Austrian education system in light of the Russia versus Ukraine conflict.

Master Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the Degree

Master of Business Administration (MBA)

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AFFIDAVIT

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ABSTRACT

The Russian invasion in Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022 shattered the lives of the Ukrainians. With homes, schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure being destroyed, millions of people have been displaced. The war has not only led to an economic, social, political, and environmental crisis that would take decades to resolve, but is a humanitarian crisis that refugees face due to separation from their families, destruction of their lives, and loss of loved ones and property along with the added challenge of navigating their lives in a new country.

Amidst the war crisis, education – a basic human right is disrupted. It is highly imperative for organizations providing refuge to minimize these effects by ensuring that the displaced children have access to education. Education not only empowers children by providing them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and tools to rebuild their lives and communities, but also ensures that these children and youth are not forcefully recruited into armed military groups. It also protects them from exploitation and child labour.

The objective of the research is to assess the role played by NGOs in Austria in integrating Ukrainian refugee children into their education system. It aims to understand the challenges faced by NGOs, social workers, teachers, volunteers, refugee parents and the children themselves. The research also explores how these children are connected to schools by the NGOs, how they tackle the psychological trauma induced by war, how they address the German language barrier in Austria, and what their foreseeable future in Austria looks like.

In conclusion, the study provides insights on the role played by various people and organizations involved in refugee education. The limitations of the study stem from the fact that the war between Ukraine and Russia is currently ongoing, and the hence, the data is dynamic. The findings from the study could vary in the next 6 months to 1 year depending on the situation between the two countries at war. This also implies that there are avenues and scope for future research in this area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

x

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NPT – Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

WHO – World Health Organization

WTO – World Trade Organization

UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme

EU – European Union

UNO – United Nations Organization

SUD – Substance Use Disorder

HRP – Humanitarian Response Plan

UN OCHA – United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

IMF – International Monetary Fund

UN OHCHR – United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

EUAA – European Union Agency for Asylum

ETNO – European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association

ECPS – European Center for Populism Studies

NGO – Non-Governmental Organizations

INGO – International Non-Governmental Organizations

UPU – United Postal Union

NAFTA – North American Free Trade Agreement

IRB – Interview Review Board

1 INTRODUCTION

War has been an enduring theme throughout human history, often leaving a wake of destruction and devastation. The aftermath of wars is not only limited to economic and environmental ramifications but comes at a steep human cost. The physical suffering, loss of life and family ties, mental scars, and emotional traumas from wars take years, and sometimes a lifetime to heal. And for the survivors, especially children and young adults, the quality of life as they know takes an irreversible hit.

Amidst the war crisis, education – a basic human right is disrupted. It is highly imperative for organizations providing refuge to minimize these effects by ensuring that the displaced children have access to education. Education empowers students by providing them the necessary skills, knowledge, and tools to rebuild their lives and communities.

The Russian invasion in Ukraine has caused numerous children to become war victims, displaced from their homes and families, disrupted their childhood, and left them void of access to education. This paper focuses on the effects of the Russia versus Ukraine conflict on the education of Ukrainian children, how this has come to shape their educational journeys, and how it is being remedied by neighbouring countries taking in the refugees.

Austrian NGOs have been working towards handling the refugee crisis. The objective of this research is to assess the role of these organizations that are helping Ukrainian students to become integrated into the Austrian education system. It aims to understand the challenges faced by NGOs, how they connect schools with the displaced students, how they tackle the psychological trauma that these children carry, how they address the language barrier, how Ukrainian teachers who are also refugees help in this situation, what their foreseeable future in Austria looks like etc.

The research methodology involves establishing a conceptual framework based on available literature which functions as the analysis framework for empirical research. The empirical research is based on a qualitative research approach with in-depth interviews. The face-to-face interviews will target individual leads dealing with the crisis including NGOs, social workers, teachers, and families who have taken in refugees in Austria. The interviews aim at understanding the daily challenges of different stakeholder groups and

will help to identify the governance role of NGOs in helping Ukrainian children adapt to their new living environment.

1.1 Research objectives

The research aims at understanding the challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees, especially children regarding a disruption in their education, and how the host country NGOs try to mitigate this damage. The paper also explores various other crucial barriers for children like trauma therapy, emotional healing, language differences, and medium of instruction at school. Furthermore, the paper enhances our understanding of the challenges faced by NGOs, social workers and host families while accommodating refugees, and the various assistance offered to refugees in asylums apart from basic amenities like social counselling offered by NGOs to equip refugees integrate into the labour market, return assistance to refugees wanting to voluntarily return to their home countries, and their future in general. Additionally, the paper aims to throw some light on the basic concepts of NGO governance, policies, and crisis management.

1.2 Research question and hypothesis

The research question is formulated based on fulfilling the objectives of the study. The study will therefore answer the question:

"What roles do Austrian NGOs and organizations play in integrating Ukrainian refugee children into their education system in light of the Russia versus Ukraine conflict?"

The research hypothesis in conjunction with the theoretical framework is:

"Austrian NGOs play a vital role in integrating Ukrainian refugee children into their education system in light of the Russia versus Ukraine conflict."

The research also aims to answer other sub-questions in this regard, such as:

"What challenges do NGOs, refugees, volunteers, teachers and social workers tackle with respect to refugee education in the face of the on-going war?"

"What challenges do refugee children face in Austria?"

1.3 Scope and limitations

While the refugee crisis during a war entails a plethora of problems encompassing food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention which form the basic amenities for life, with other nuanced problems of cultural differences, racism, and xenophobia making life for the refugees more complex to navigate in the host country, this study limits the scope of the research to education of the refugee children. Education protects, enlightens, and empowers children, by securing their future. Children in refugee camps already run the risk of being forcefully recruited into armed military groups or thrust into child labour. Exploitation, physical and sexual abuse, and child marriage are other threats to children. In the limited framework of the master's thesis, this study is thus aligned to narrow the focus of the research on the education of refugee children.

The study suffers from the main limitation of deriving data from a dynamic source since the Ukraine versus Russia war is an ongoing conflict with no conclusion yet in sight. Hence, the data regarding displaced people leaving Ukraine, refugees entering Austria, those seeking asylums, children requiring assistance for education are all numbers that keep changing, the discrepancy of which this study tries its best to account for. And since the war is a current crisis, the amount of literature available on it is lean. But the arguments and hypotheses discussed in the thesis are supported by real-time information from journalistic sources like newspapers, news channels, and online media covering the war.

The other limitation is that the topic of war is rather sensitive, especially to those who have witnessed trauma first-hand, and to those dealing with remedying it. Hence, the qualitative interviews conducted can reflect opinions that are subjective interpretations of the person, and not a universal belief. The data derived from the interview could also be incomplete and staggered, since the interviewee might wish to not divulge information that could be too personal or emotional to them. This could introduce analytical and ethical challenges to the interviewer (Knott et al., 2022). In such instances, the gap in the data collected needs to be bridged, which might lack precision.

In the limited scope of the thesis in the context of graduate study, the research aims to capture the role of the NGOs in the education of the refugees.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis entails five main sections. The introduction detailing the research question, objectives, scope, and limitations of the thesis is followed by the literature review, which provides background information on the development of the war between Ukraine and Russia throughout the timeline of the conflict to enable the reader to understand the dynamics of the current state of the war. The chapter further outlines the effects of the war with a focus on the refugee crisis. Furthermore, the chapter also dwells into the United Nations' take on the current war and its policy on refugees. The chapter ends by exploring key concepts of governance and the importance of social capital and social inclusion for refugees. Chapter 3 entails the methodology by explaining the research design and instrument. It also explores the data collection methods and selection of interview participants for the study. The subsequent section, chapter 4, presents the findings from the qualitative interviews conducted and analyses the collected data. It further recognizes meaningful patterns and insights from the data to answer the research question. It also highlights Austria's reception to Ukrainian refugees, and the various organizations and NGOs involved in handling the crisis. Chapter 5 provides the conclusion and summary of the results from the study and the potential for future research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to thoroughly discuss and highlight existing relevant literature, applicable theories, concepts, and definitions in relation to the previously stated research question and hypothesis and build the foundation for the subsequent empirical research.

2.1 Timeline and Historical development of Russia versus Ukraine conflict

This section explores a brief timeline of the Ukraine-Russia conflict and the tensions leading up to the invasion of Ukraine by Russian President Vladimir Putin (Walker, 2023) (Fitzgerald and Davis, 2023).

Ukraine was declared a Sovereign state after becoming independent from USSR in December 1991 following the fall of the Soviet Union (History, 2009) This made Ukraine the second largest country in Europe with an area of 603,000 sq. kms (Statista, 2021), with a substantial population of ethnic Russians of about 12 million (Refworld, 1992). In December 1994, the Budapest memorandum was signed by Ukraine, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America which led to Ukraine giving up its nuclear weapons acquired from the Cold war era Soviet Union to the Russian Federation with a security assurance to "respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine", thus enabling Ukraine to join the NPT (The Conversation, 2022).

In 2004, a presidential election between Viktor Yushchenko and the then Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych, who was backed by Russia was deemed rigged in favour of the latter who had emerged victorious, when Yushchenko was mysteriously poisoned just before the elections. Yushchenko made a recovery, but this election fraud sparked mass protests leading to the Orange revolution, where an estimated 500,000 Ukrainians (Bivings, 2023) took to the streets of Kyiv waving orange flags in support of Yushchenko. The protests rendered the election results null, forcing a re-vote leading to Yushchenko's ultimate victory. The campaign also uncovered Russia's attempts at manipulating Ukraine's election and voter tempering, with Yanukovych's ties to Russian political and criminal groups being exposed, further elevating animosity between the two countries (Bivings, 2023).

The hostility between the two countries further began brewing when Russian President Vladimir Putin opposed Ukraine's decision to join the NATO during the Bucharest summit in April 2008. While US President, George W. Bush lobbied to extend the membership to Ukraine, he could not garner enough support from other leaders like Germany and France, who feared offending Russia (Erlanger and Myers, 2008). This sentiment was further shared by other European leaders when Russian President Vladimir Putin threatened military violence in Ukraine, along with his plans to cancel his own visit to the NATO meeting should Ukraine be made a member, thus eliminating Ukraine's possibility of joining the NATO (Taylor, 2014).

In 2013, Ukrainian President Yanukovych who had won the 2010 elections was forced to flee to Russia after trying to orient Ukraine towards Russia instead of signing an agreement that would integrate them with the European Union. Yanukovych government's perceived corruption by the people and the arrest of his political opponent Yuliya Tymoshenko led to the widespread Euromaidan protest in the country leading him to be ousted from his presidency (Open Society Foundations, 2019). In the aftermath of the Euromaidan protests, in March 2014 Russia annexed Crimea, a Ukrainian peninsula comprising of Russian ethnic majority population. The seizure of Crimea by the Russian troops prompted international outrage, with the European Union and the United Nations severely condemning Russia's aggression (Minicozzi-Wheeland, 2023). This also meant that Russia breached its commitment under the Budapest memorandum from 2014 (The Conversation, 2022).

The current President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy was elected in April 2019. His campaign promised to weed out corruption and end the war with Russia-backed separatists in Eastern Ukraine (BBC News, 2019). In early 2021, the acrimony brewing between Russia and Ukraine began to steadily rise following Zelenskyy's crackdown on Viktor Medvedchuk, a pro-Russian Ukrainian oligarch and a close friend of Putin, by placing him in the Ukrainian government's sanction list and freezing his assets (Olearchyk, 2021). This led to President Putin deploying about 150,000 (BBC news, 2022) Russian troops to the Ukrainian border and issuing demands to NATO and the United States of America to prevent Ukraine from joining the military alliance, which was rejected by the Biden administration (Natasha et al., 2021).

After subsequent the backlash from USA, and breakdown of relations with NATO, on 21st of February 2022 President Putin recognized the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent states, which were considered to be areas of Russian-backed terrorists by Ukraine and ordered his troops into the regions for 'peace keeping' (Courtney et al., 2023), which served as build up before its full-blown invasion of Ukraine.

2.2 Russian invasion of Ukraine

Following the occupation of the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, Russia launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022 starting from the Donbas region by justifying the aggression as a "special military operation" aimed at protecting ethnic Russians in Ukraine (The Associated Press, 2023).

Since the invasion, Russian troops have conducted ground operations like bombings, air strikes, cyberattacks on Ukrainian activists, and shelling for annexation of Ukraine's regions (Kirby, 2022). This has left Ukrainian cities in shambles, causing large scale destruction to life and property. Russian troops have also tried to annex the capital city, Kyiv but were met with resistance from the Ukrainian troops. The Russian army also claimed the city of Kherson and occupied the Nuclear Power Plant at Zaporizhzhia (The Associated Press, 2023). Thousands of Ukrainian civilians between the ages 18 and 60 were barred from leaving the country and drafted into the army where they received basic combat skills to fend off the Russian troops entering Kyiv (Bunyan, 2022). In the spirit of solidarity and patriotism, an overwhelming number of civilians voluntarily signed up for combat training to defend their country (Mednick, 2022). The war turned deadly when the Russian troops began bombing civilians and launching missile strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure like hospitals, civilian shelters housing women, children and the elderly, perpetrating war crimes (World Economic Forum, 2023). Russian troops have also targeted Ukraine's energy reserves by destroying their electric grids, leading to nationwide blackouts, depriving civilians of electricity, heating, and water supplies in the peak of European winter (Mak, 2023). More than one year later, the war rages on and the Russian aggression in Ukraine continues.

The Russian invasion in Ukraine has shattered lives and forced millions of Ukrainians to flee their homes and seek refuge in EU and other neighbouring countries. With homes, schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure being destroyed, plenty of Ukrainians have

been displaced. As of 28th March 2023, more than 8,173,211 million refugees were recorded across EU (UNHCR, 2023), the largest refugee crisis in EU since WW2 (Bird & Noumon, 2022). The war has not only led to an economic, social, political, and environmental crisis that would take decades to resolve, but is a humanitarian crisis that refugees face due to separation from their families, disruption of their lives, and loss of loved ones and property along with the added challenge of rebuilding their lives in a new country. As of March 2023, over 8 million people have fled Ukraine (UNHCR, 2023). Of these, 150,000 refugees arrived in Austria, of which 7000 refugees applied for an asylum (Kurier, 2022).

2.3 Impacts of war

Human history is replete with war and bloodshed. Wars wreak havoc by causing catastrophic suffering to all the parties involved. The impacts of war can run deep on physical, mental, emotional, social, psychological, political, and economic levels. (Ohanlan, 1997; Allais et al., 2021; Bouchard et al., 2023; Yayan et al., 2020). Wars result in loss of life and property, injury, displacement of people, food scarcity, disability, energy crisis, sexual violence, hunger, disease, malnourishment, disruption to education, employment etc. (Brück et al., 2016; Lewtak et al., 2021; Kuzemko et al., 2022; Ba et al., 2017; Bharathi 2022). German Nobel prize winner and pacifist, Heinrich Böll powerfully summed up the consequences of war by saying, "War would never be over, never, as long as somewhere a wound it had inflicted was still bleeding." (Kirkland, 2018). Figure 1 captures the various implications of the Russia-Ukraine war, and the long-term consequences that Ukraine must grapple with (Rawtani et al., 2022). Each of the below impacts have been discussed in detail in the coming sections.

Figure 1: Impacts of the Russia-Ukraine war. Source: Rawtani et al., 2022.

2.3.1 Physical and physiological effects of war

Wars can have immediate and lifelong effects on the health of a person. (Ghobarah et al., 2004). War is a health emergency for every individual involved, be it soldiers, veterans, para-military volunteers, survivors, or civilians suffering its consequences. While wars can spell death to millions, it can also injure and cripple people for life. A 2022 survey of US war veterans revealed that 4.9 million or 27% of all war veterans had a service-related disability for life (US Dept. of Labor, 2022). Figure 2 shows the number of civilian casualties killed in Ukraine resulting from the war is 8401, and those injured to be 14.023 between February 24th, 2022, and March 26th, 2023 (OHCHR, 2023).
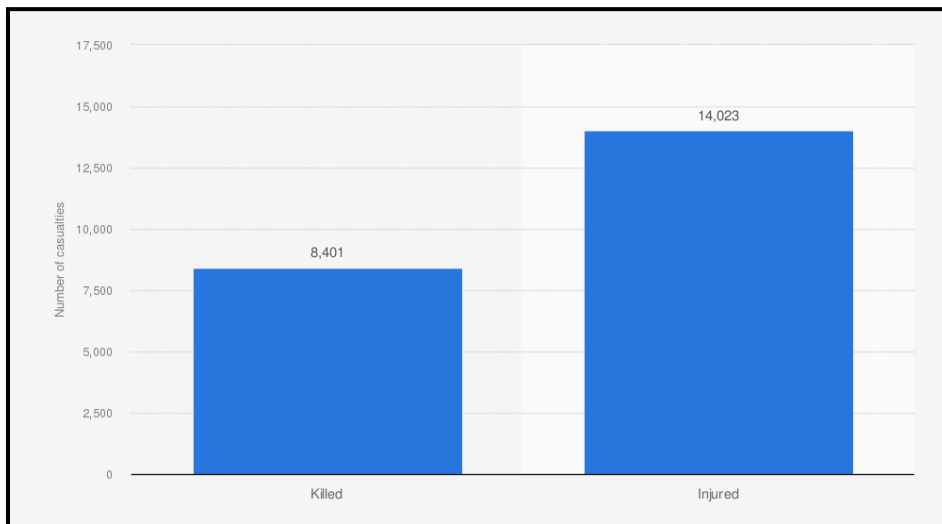
Figure 2: Civilian casualties in Ukraine during Russia's invasion. Source: OHCHR, Statista (2023)

Another test carried out by Arch Gen Psychiatry to measure the physical and mental health cost of traumatic war experiences among veterans revealed that they were at a higher risk of hypertension, cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, digestive, respiratory (Korinek et al., 2017), gastrointestinal, and nervous system related diseases (Pizarro et al., 2006). Trauma exposed war veterans also suffered other physiological problems that made them susceptible to autoimmune diseases and arthritis (Stojanovich and Marisavljevich, 2008). During war, access to clean water and sanitation facilities also becomes challenging, which can result in water borne diseases like cholera (Moore, 2021). Scarcity of food in refugee camps leads to malnourishment. These camps are often overcrowded with poor hygiene conditions and a lack of health care facilities. This also elevates the risk of infectious diseases like malaria, respiratory diseases, tuberculosis (Ghobarah et al., 2004), latent tuberculosis, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, rabies, HIV, and leishmaniasis (Eiset and Wejse, 2017).

The timing of the war also meant a dual crisis for Ukraine. Not only was the country facing an external invasion, but also dealing with Covid 19. At the time of the invasion, only 35% of Ukraine's population amounting to 31,668,577 people (Jimenez, 2022; WHO, 2022) had received double doses of the corona virus vaccine. In the beginning of February 2022, shortly before the Russian invasion, Ukraine reported 37,000 corona virus cases in a single day, which was its all-time high (Chaaya et al., 2022) This put the country

at a severe risk of infection, and with inadequate testing due to the war, most cases went undetected, yet carrying the potential to spread. SARS-CoV-2 is a highly transmissible virus, and with the social and political upheaval, the overburdened healthcare system in Ukraine further faltered. With mitigation measures like social distancing, quarantine, vaccination drives, mask mandate, and the need for basic hygiene (Park, 2022) taking a hit, coupled with inadequate healthcare professionals and PPE kits, insufficient testing, and lack of hospital equipment (Choudhary et al., 2022), added with the congregation of large number of sick and injured people make for ideal conditions for an outbreak of infectious diseases. The likelihood of mass outbreak of polio and measles was also a concern since the polio drive and measles vaccine was interrupted by the war (Choudhary et al., 2022).

2.3.2 Mental and psychological effects of war

War can be a central threat to the mental and psychological health of everyone involved. Most soldiers are confronted with ethical and moral dilemma on the battlefield when they are forced to perpetrate or witness bloodshed, inflict injury in their line of duty, or fail to prevent violence on their comrades and fellow countrymen, which is often contradictory to their spiritual and moral values causing them to carry traumatic memories and stress from the ordeal for years after surviving it (Litz et al., 2009).

Survivors and veterans of war display signs of severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), loneliness, somatization, anxiety, excessive stress, and depression amongst other mental health problems (Schlecter et al., 2021; Toomey et al., 2019; Serier et al., 2022; Tsur et al., 2019) These mental health problems in turn lead to acute stress disorders, physiological changes, behavioral disorders like aggression, social changes, personality changes, cognitive disorders, depressive episodes and psychological changes in veterans and survivors (Surzykiewicz et al., 2022; Kalaitzaki and Tamiolaki, 2022). A recent study conducted by Kurapov et al., 2023) on the mental and emotional wellbeing of Ukrainian civilians in the aftermath of the Russian invasion revealed appalling statistics of 97.8% of Ukrainians reporting mental health deterioration due to the war. Of these, 84.3% Ukrainians reported depression, 86.7% reported exhaustion, 51.8% reported loneliness, 84.4% reported nervousness, and 76.9% reported anger, with the affected members also revealing substance use (Kurapov et al., 2023).

PTSD can be triggered by violent events such as wars, disasters, assaults, and accidents, or even witnessing them secondhand. PTSD often leads to the victim experiencing heightened and negative emotions, startled response, hypervigilance, nightmares, insomnia, behavioral avoidance, anxiety disorders, and transient numbness (Inoue et al., 2022; Cohen et al., 2015; Birkeland and Heir, 2017).

2.3.2.1 Effect of war on veterans and soldiers

In the US, 2 out of every 10 war veterans develop Substance Use Disorder (SUD), and 1 out of 3 who seek treatment for SUD have PTSD (US Dept. of Veteran affairs, 2023). Active-duty personnel and war veterans also reported using illicit drugs like marijuana, cannabis, heroin, and cocaine after leaving military service (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2019). Alcohol, cigarette smoking, opioids, and misuse of prescription drugs is another growing concern. A 2019 survey on Drug Abuse amongst war veterans by the US Dept of Health and Human Services yielded alarming results, as presented in figure 3 below (SAMHSA, 2020). While the exact statistics correspond to the war veterans in USA, the case and concerns can be applied to veterans and war survivors everywhere given the similarity of human nature in responding to traumatic situations.

Among Veterans with a substance use disorder:
1 IN 4 (26.9% or 343K) struggled with illicit drugs
4 IN 5 (80.8% or 1.0M) struggled with alcohol use
1 IN 13 (7.7% or 98K) struggled with illicit drugs and alcohol

Among Veterans with a mental illness:
1 IN 4 (26.6% or 833K) had a serious mental illness

6.2%
(1.3 MILLION)
People aged 18 or older had a substance use disorder (SUD)

2.3%
(481,000)
People 18 or older had BOTH an SUD and a mental illness

15.3%
(3.1 MILLION)
People aged 18 or older had a mental illness

In 2019, **3.9M** Veterans had a mental illness and/or substance use disorder-an increase of 6.5% over 2018 composed of increases in both SUD and mental illness.

SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Figure 3: Mental illness and SUDs in America among veterans => 18 years old.
Source: SAMHSA (2020)

Anxiety, a common distress among war survivors is a feeling of uneasiness, fear, dread, and uncertainty about the future is a complex response to real and perceived threats (Medical News today, 2023; Gammoh et al., 2023). Anxiety has been shown to be associated with coronary heart disease, hypertension, and cardiac deaths (Gammoh et al., 2023; Roest et al., 2010), hence having physiological impacts on the body. The aftermath of trauma could also take a hit on the social wellbeing of the war veteran or survivor making them isolated and lonely (Tsur et al., 2019). The Russian invasion of Ukraine took place in the background of a global pandemic. In the first year of the pandemic, a 25% increase in anxiety and depression was reported globally (WHO, 2022). The loss of life and livelihood during this global crisis enhanced the psychological cost of the war which exacerbated this alarming statistic further.

Depression, PTSD, and suicide rates were found to be interlinked among war veterans (Sher et al., 2012; Wilks et al., 2019). The rate of suicide among veterans is 1.5 times higher than that of civilians (VA National Suicide Data report cited by Hooper, 2023). Figure 4 shows a comparison of suicide rates between veterans and non-veterans in the United States from 2001-2020 (US Dept. of Veteran Affairs, 2022). From Figure 5 we can conclude that depression, PTSD, anxiety disorder, SUDs, and general mental health deterioration are the leading causes of suicide deaths among war veterans. (John Elflein, 2020).
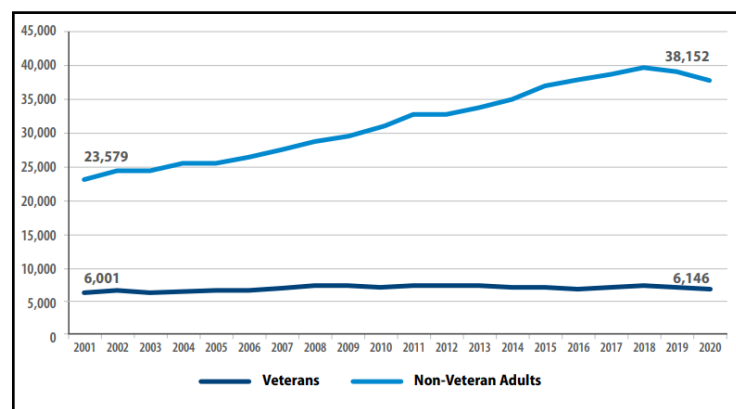
Figure 4: Comparison of suicide deaths among veterans and non-veterans in USA from 2001-2020. Source: Annual Report, National Veteran Suicide Prevention, 2022
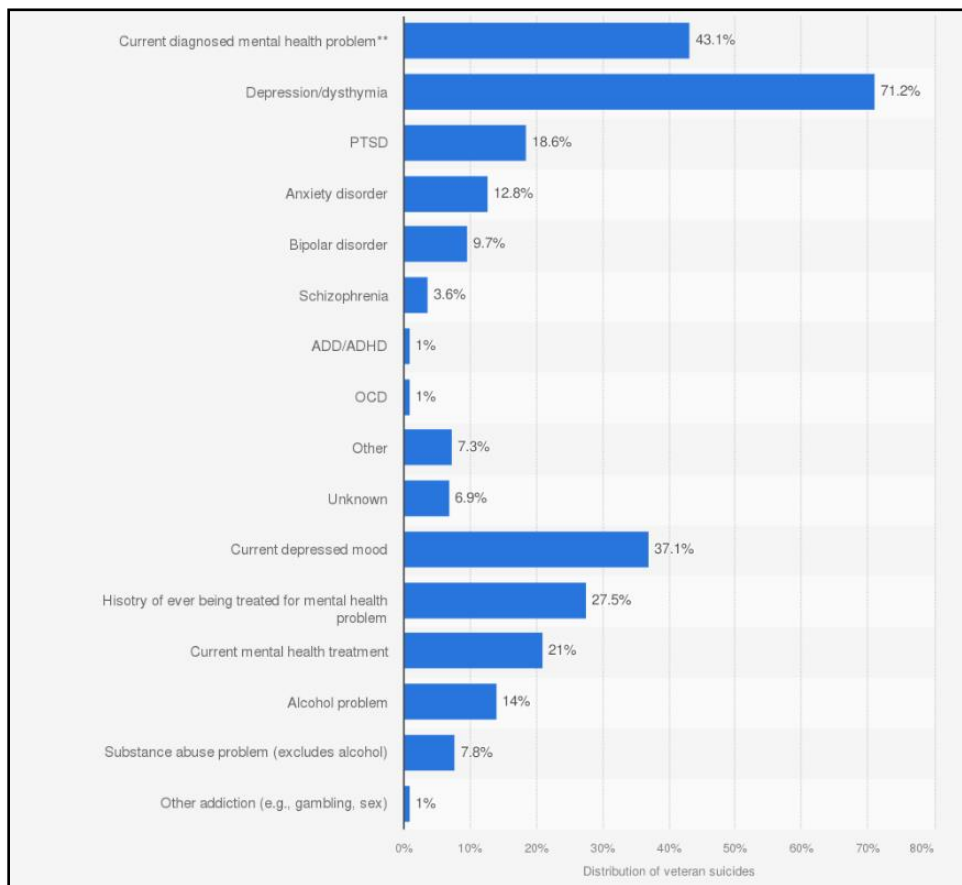
Figure 5: Distribution of U.S. suicide deaths by mental status among war veterans in 2015. Source: John Elflein, MMWR, CDC, Statista (2020)

2.3.3 Environmental impacts of war

Every aspect of the ecosystem is being altered by human activity, be it agricultural expansion on land areas, deforestation, land degradation, irresponsible waste disposal, excessive use of plastic, harm to marine life, threat of extinction for biodiversity, pollution, or emission of greenhouse gases (UNEP, 2023). While the planet is already in a state of decline, war worsens this by leaving a deep, irreversible, and damaging impact. The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) of Ukraine before Russian invasion was 49.6 (Wolf et al., 2022) and it ranked 52 (EPI, 2022) in the world. This implies that Ukraine already struggled to achieve a better score with respect to environmental indicators like air quality, sanitation, drinking water, climate change, agriculture, ecosystem health, waste management and biodiversity, which could only worsen post war.

Military vehicles, vessels, aircrafts, tanks, artilleries, missiles, and infrastructure demand a lot of resources which require energy, and this is usually supplied by oil and fossil fuels that generate CO2 and greenhouse gas emissions (Rawtani et al., 2022). A shocking 5.5% of global emissions come from militaries in the world. This 'military carbon footprint' is higher than most countries' entire emissions, including that of Russia (Ellie Kinney, 2022). Testing and training of armies also requires large areas of land and sea. 1-6% of the world's land surface is estimated to be designated as military training areas (Zentelis and Lindenmayer, 2014). Military training requires digging of trenches and borrows, and testing of weaponry, which is harmful for terrestrial and marine life, and disrupts land-scapes by causing noise, air, soil, and water pollution, and will have long term consequences on human health and the ecosystem.

Military equipment also generates copious amounts of waste that need proper disposal. Disposal of chemical and nuclear weaponry is particularly challenging and dangerous with lasting impact throughout its lifecycle (Weir, 2015). Incineration and detonation of ammunitions severely pollutes air and land and poses a serious health threat to the public (Lustgarten, 2017). On the first day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the gamma radiation levels in the Chernobyl zone were reported to be 28 times the annual limit (Darbyshire, 2022) which is highly concerning. This could be attributed to the movement of heavy vehicles in the area. Any damage to the nuclear reactors in Chernobyl or Zaporizhian nuclear power plants could have history repeating, and spell disaster for Ukraine and the neighboring countries. With an ongoing war, the careful handling and responsible disposal of hazardous waste materials (Gidarakos, 2015) takes a back seat, thus festering and worsening its effects with time. In the face of the war, the coal mines in the Donbas region have also been abandoned without following proper protocol for the removal and disposal of heavy metals like lead, mercury, and arsenic which could lead to potential poisoning of water bodies meant for drinking and irrigation purposes. (Dumčiūtė and Tecleme, 2023) Energetic compounds like TNT and hexogen RDX from missiles and rockets (OECD, 2022) contain toxins that pose a threat to public health and the environment for many years to come. Shelling and bombing of cities leave destruction in their wake in the form of mountainous piles of rubble and debris (UNEP, 2018).

Explosive munitions consume plenty of fossil fuels and release immense amounts of toxic gases and CO2 emissions causing large scale pollution of land, water, soil, and air.

They also annihilate sensitive biodiversity, geodiversity, and landscapes. While Ukraine occupies 6% of Europe's land area, it boasts of 35% of Europe's total biodiversity with over 70,000 species of rare flora and fauna (Bondarenko, 2015). This rich biodiversity is likely to take a massive hit from the conflict, making nature a casualty of the war.

Explosions and bombing in rural areas are ruinous to agricultural areas (Appau et al., 2021) where toxins and chemicals from the explosives cause degradation of the soil. Digging of trenches and burrows further depletes the health of the soil. 1/3rd of Ukraine's agroecosystem which is one of the world's most fertile land (Turi et al., 2014) is struggling with the production of wheat, sunflower oil, and corn from soil deterioration, leading experts to believe that this could prompt the largest food crisis in the world since World War 2 (Harari and Maesano, 2022; Racioopi et al., 2022). It can also contaminate wells, water canals, and lakes meant for irrigation and drinking which threatens livestock, livelihood, and food security. Warfare can have a catastrophic influence on the soil morphology and composition, and disturb the physical, chemical, and biological nature of the soil. Trenches, tunnels, and heavy machinery disturb the physical nature of the soil, while heavy metals, gases, dioxins, and radioactive waste alter its chemical nature, leading the two disturbances to destroy beneficial microorganisms and natural nutrients present in the soil (Certini et al., 2013). The barrage of strikes from the Russian troops on Ukraine's energy grids, pipelines, chemical plants, refineries, and industrial warehouses have already contaminated the air, soil, and water supply infrastructure of Ukraine. Due to this desecration, approximately 1.4 million Ukrainians lack access to safe water, while 4.6 million only have limited access (OECD, 2022).

The wreckage and scrap from the destruction is often dumped in seas and water bodies, causing detrimental effects on the ecology of marine life. Deforestation sees a spike during conflict due to the increase in demand of firewood for heating and fuel. This directly impacts wildlife and destroys soil health. At least 900 areas under conservation in Ukraine amounting to 1.2 million hectares have been destroyed by shelling and bombing by the Russian troops (Ukrainian Ministry of Environment and Natural resources, 2022, cited by WWF, 2022).

Wars also mean human displacement and a large influx of people into other areas, sometimes across borders. Makeshift refugee camps often lack basic services like water, food, and sanitation facilities, and are compelled to use locally available resources which puts

a strain on the local infrastructure (Wier, 2020). This also leads to a large environmental footprint that can be hard to cope with for the area receiving refugees (UNEP, 2019). At least 15,000 people have been internally displaced in western Ukraine and seek refuge in protected areas like Synevir National Park and Carpathian Biosphere Reserve, which puts significant pressure on park facilities and resources (WWF, 2022). Wars redirect funds meant for sustainable development to other need of the hour priorities. This sets back the country's sustainable development by many years, which can have an extensive long-term impact.

2.3.4 Economic impacts of war

Wars are a major impediment to the economic development of countries. Apart from the severe human cost of the Russia-Ukraine war, the destruction of physical capital, infrastructure, and disruption to production come at a great financial cost. The Russian invasion of Ukraine took place at a time when global economy was still recovering from the catastrophic economic blow from the covid-19 pandemic, pushing Ukraine farther on its road to recovery. The number of people forced into extreme poverty increased by 70 million during the pandemic pushing the overall number to 700 million (The World Bank, 2022).

The cost of military equipment has both serious environmental and financial consequences. Countries often incur huge debts to fund wartime equipment or sell foreign investments to fund them. Wars also disrupt international trade by diverting the resources that fund important development (Stein and Russet, 1980, pp 412). The rising inflation, cost of living, food shortage, increasing poverty, rise in energy and oil costs, environmental deterioration, National debt, and deglobalization are all concerning by-products of the economic impacts of war (Rogoff, 2023). Due to inflation, there is a disruption in individual income, uncertainty, and loss of personal savings, leading civilians to lose faith in the financial system. With manufacturing and industrial production taking a hit, a severe shortage of food, goods, and services prevails, which could drive governments trying to tackle the crisis into hyperinflation.

According to IMF, the estimated global economic growth pre-war was projected to be 5% in 2022, but with the onset of the war, the growth has dropped to 3.1%, and is said to worsen to 2.2% in 2023 (IMF data cited and calculated by Knoema, 2022). The Russian

invasion of Ukraine has affected other countries globally due to a hike in the price of oil and gas. Russia is a major exporter of oil and gas, and with the economic sanctions laid on Russia, the countries importing it from Russia are turning to alternate providers. The surge in demand for the fuels have led to a steep rise in the price affecting the end user, which is usually the common man. There would be a significant negative income effect on the household of G7 European countries with a 40% reduction in bilateral trade with Russia (OECD, 2023), but reciprocally, the same effect is almost twice as intense on Russian households with the elimination of oil dependency. 70% of Russia's imports of machinery, electronics, and motor vehicles come from the G7 countries, apart from Europe and Australia (OECD, 2023). The import-export restrictions mean an economic hindrance to all the parties involved.

With the destruction to its production facilities, agricultural lands, industrial plants, and lack of labor supply due to the displacement of millions of people, Ukraine's economy is projected to contract by 35% this year (The World Bank, 2022). This war also has far-reaching consequences on the supply chain, global food and energy markets, stock markets and international trade (Silva et al., 2023). Russia and Ukraine produce 30% of global wheat exports, 11% of oil, and 20% of corn, along with inert gases, uranium and titanium sponge, the supply of which affect many industries (OECD iLibrary, 2022). Russia is also among the top 5 exporters of nickel, palladium, and steel, while Ukraine is a key producer of sunflower oil, barely, minerals, soya, sugar beet, and rapeseed (Coface for Trade, 2022). The prices of all these commodities have sky-rocketed since the war. The commodities face serious shortage and are mostly unavailable in the countries dependent on Ukraine and Russia for the supply. The effects are especially concerning countries dependent heavily on export of food grains like wheat, since it threatens global food security (Lin et al., 2023). Figure 6 displays the steep rise in prices of the commodities supplied by Ukraine and Russia with the onset of the war. Figure 7 shows the dependence of different countries on Russia and Ukraine for wheat imports. Figure 8 presents a sudden drop in Ukraine's exports and imports, showing how the economy was hit hard by the Russian invasion.
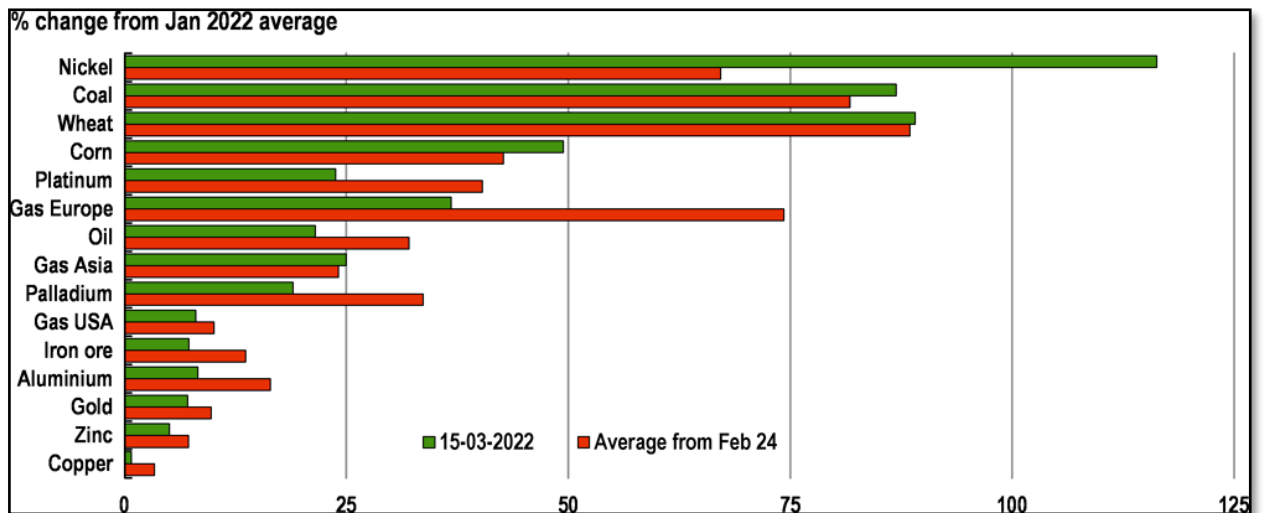
Figure 6: Increase in the prices of important commodities which were supplied by Russia and Ukraine. Source: Refinitiv. cited by OECD..
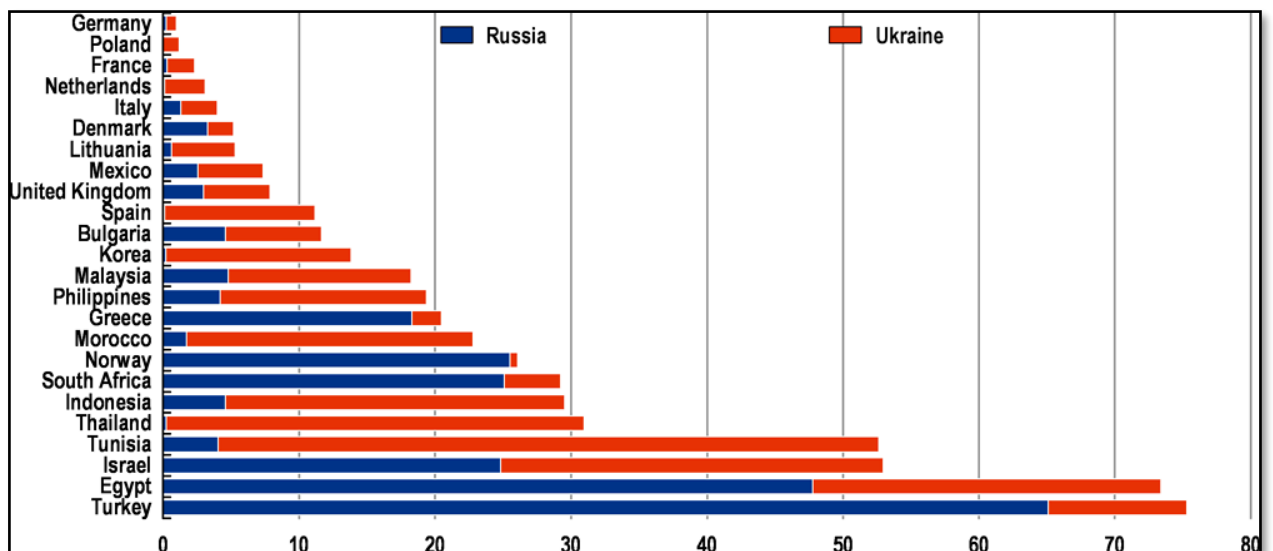
Figure 7: Share of wheat imports into other counties from Russia and Ukraine in 2019. Source: Comtrade. cited and calculated by OECD.
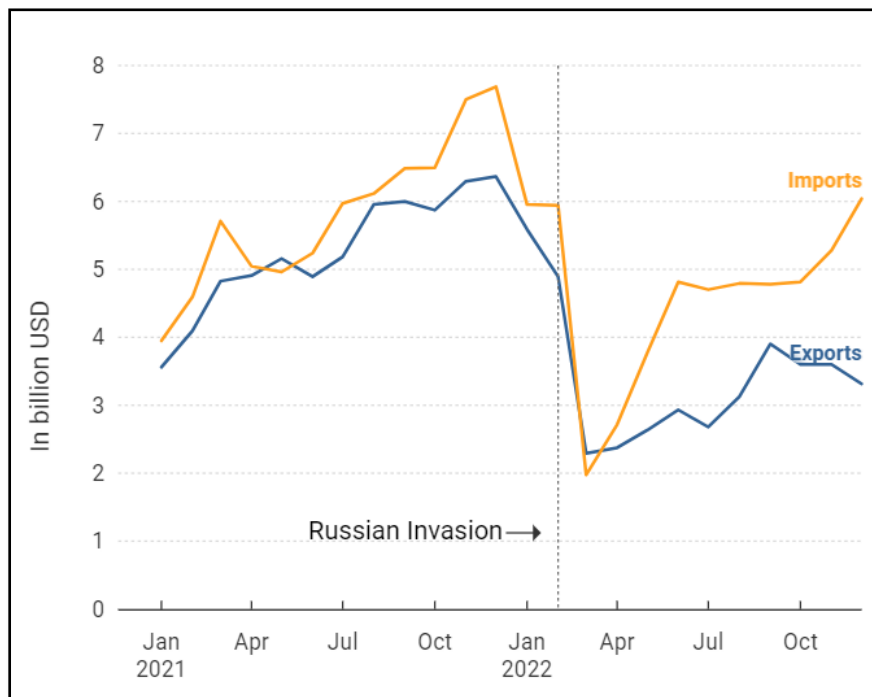
Figure 8: Fall in Ukraine's exports and imports due to the Russian invasion. Source: External Trade, National Bank of Ukraine (2023) cited by Michael E. O'Hanlon, Constanze Stelzenmüller, and David Wessel, Ukraine Index (2023)

Russia is the 3rd largest producer of oil and gas, after USA and Saudi Arabia (International Energy Agency, 2023), exporting 50% of its oil to Europe, which has stooped to 8% since the war (Reuters, 2023). After the fall of Soviet Union, most European countries depended on Russia for their energy needs of oil and gas. This was geographically more convenient and supplied via pipelines. East and central European countries like Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Latvia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Moldova, Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Slovakia depended on Russia for their energy needs (Cui et al., 2023; Jenkins, 2023). With the economic sanctions and restrictions levied on Russia, Europe grappled with the sudden drop in supply, and faced a major energy crisis with households and businesses forced to save energy, amidst rising prices (Adekoya et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2023). While the transition away from Russian oil has been a challenge for EU countries, they are exploring other alternatives to fossil fuels (Osicka and Cernoch, 2022), and the direction they are headed seems like a sustainable future (Steffen and Patt, 2022; Jenkins, 2023). But reciprocally, the economic sanctions weigh heavily on Russia, effectively isolating it from the global financial market, which could also affect the value of its currency (Koleva, 2023). Western companies withdrawing from Russia will also

compound its challenges, affecting it deeply in the long run (Tooze, 2022). Figure 9 shows the dependence of European countries on Russian oil and gas prior to the war.
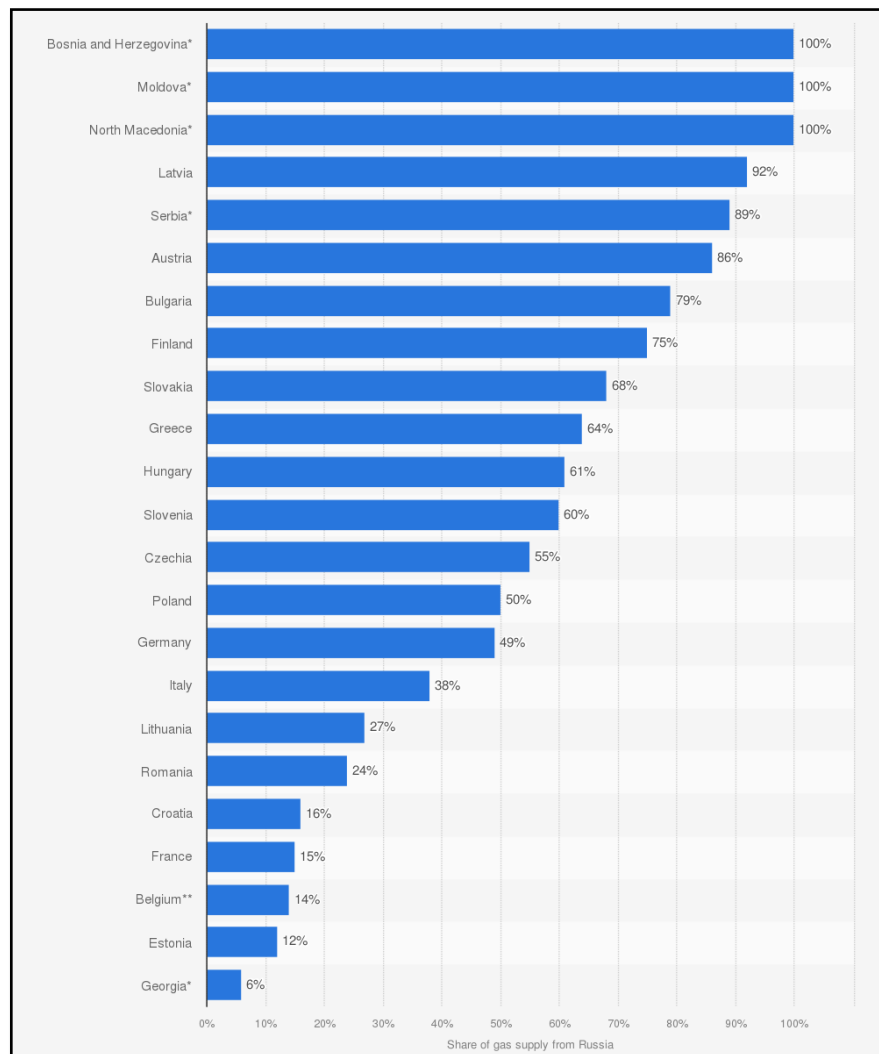
Figure 9: EU countries' share of oil and gas from Russia in 2021. Source: Statista 2023 from the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators; Eurostat; IEA; BP; Energy Community; 2021

The war also hits the travel and tourism sector severely. Not only do Ukraine and Russia lose revenue from tourism into their countries, the neighboring countries and countries receiving Ukrainian and Russian tourists also lose out on revenue. The war caused a loss of $14 billion to the tourism economy in 2022 (UN World Tourism Organization, 2023). There is a 50% reduction in cruise ships docking in Tallinn, with Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania losing 10% of annual Russian tourists, and countries like Montenegro that attracted Russian tourists also losing out on revenue due to Schengen system not issuing

visas to Russian passport holders (Nikolova, 2022). The recovery to the tourism sector seems challenging post war. This also threatens the livelihood of locals dependent on tourism, and impacts tourism related businesses and jobs.

The aftermath of the war sees an army of immobilized soldiers who become unemployed, with very lean job prospects. Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery will cost an estimated $349 billion and is expected to rise as the war continues. This number is higher than Ukraine's pre-war GDP, a huge financial cost of the war (The World bank, 2022).

2.3.5 Effect of war on children

The effect of war is especially brutal on children and young adults. Their childhoods are stolen from them. Every 1 in 6 children or 426 million children live in a conflict zone today (Save the children, 2023). 4.3 million children or more than half of Ukraine's child population were displaced from their homes within one month of the Ukraine – Russia war (UNICEF, 2022). Apart from enduring physical and psychological trauma (Yayan et al., 2020) of losing their home and family members, they also face other threats like malnourishment, high mortality rates (Wagner et al., 2018), diseases brought on by poor hygiene (Lewtak et al., 2021), illnesses specifically in cold countries where children are prone to pneumonia and respiratory ailments (Piotrowicz et al., 2022), disruption in their vaccinations (Perciaccante et al., 2022) , setback in their education that will lead to long term effects (Bharathi, 2022), sexual abuse (Abdullah et al., 2023), exploitation of children and the threat of human trafficking (Zakaria et al., 2022) – the fear of which drives the parents to push female children into child marriage (Elnakib et al., 2022), and child labor and forceful recruitment into the military without time for proper training (Palosaari et al., 2013; Deputy et al., 2022).

2.3.5.1 Poverty

Children in Russia, Ukraine and other countries are bearing the burden of the soaring inflation and economic crisis from the war. 9.2 % of Russian children and 5.2% of Ukrainian children are estimated to be driven into poverty due to the war (Statista Research Dept., 2023). Figure 10 shows the share of children in Central Asia and Eastern Europe estimated to fall into poverty from the economic shock of the Ukraine

- Russia war. According to UNICEF, 2.8 million children in Russia and 0.5 million children in Ukraine now live below poverty line. This could result in 4500 children dying before their first birthday, and 117,000 children dropping out of school this year, both heartrending statistics (UNICEF, 2022).
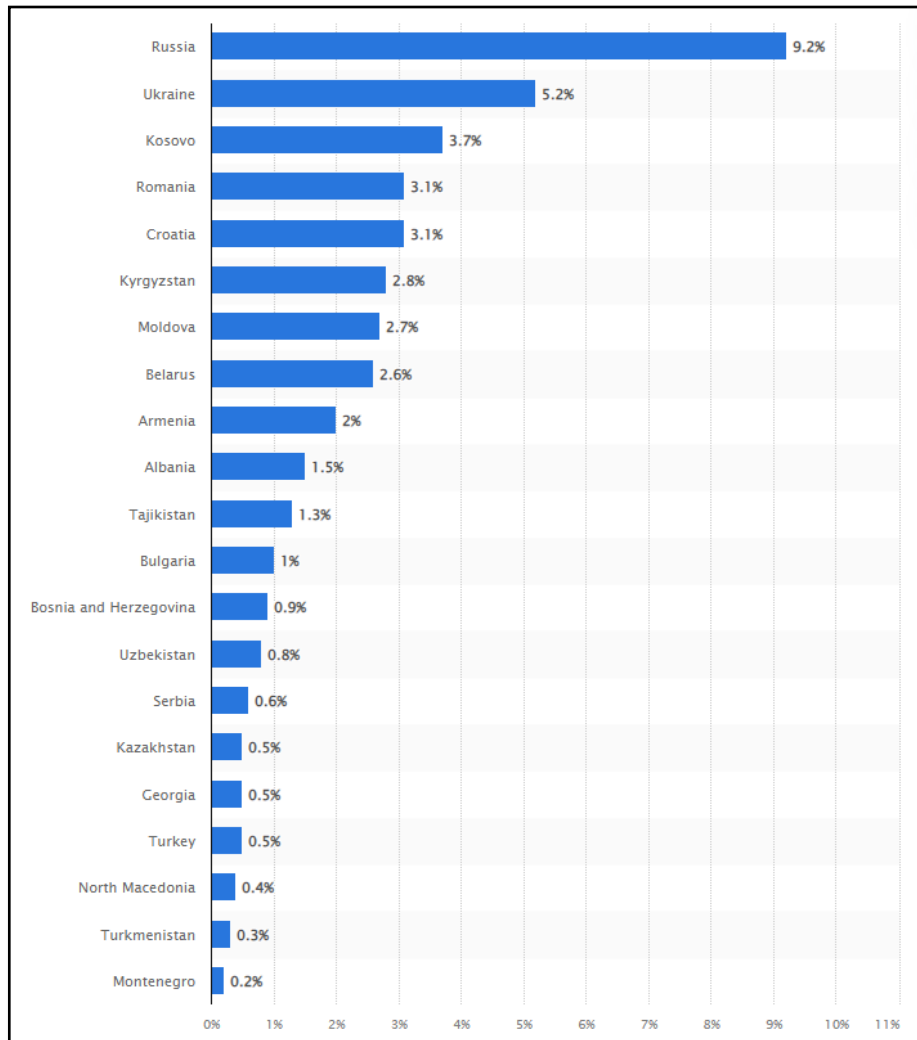
Figure 10: County wise share of children estimated to be driven into poverty due to Russia – Ukraine war. Source: Statista Research Dept., 2023

2.3.5.2 Child mortality

A study conducted between 1995 and 2015 followed 1.99 million births in 35 countries in Africa in regions of armed conflict and political instability. The data discovered that war torn areas have a high rate of child mortality due to a plethora of reasons. The study found 133,361 deaths of infants less than 1 year old and 204,101 deaths of

children less than 5 years old, of which 968,444 were conflict related deaths (Wagner et al., 2018). Another study conducted on the children of deployed soldiers and war veterans of the Gulf War showed behavioral, social, and physical problems including obesity and dentition (Toomey et al., 2021). This goes to show that children do not necessarily have to be in the war vicinity to suffer its unpleasant consequences.

2.3.5.3 Malnutrition and illness

Food supply and production are hit, crops, livestock and soil are damaged, and agricultural areas are polluted during war, heightening food scarcity. The health of children deteriorates in war zones due to the lack of healthy and nutritious food, clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, and proper shelter. Children in conflict prone areas are twice as likely to be affected by malnutrition compared to those living in peaceful zones and are at a risk of being moderate to severely underweight (Kirsty, 2021; Dahab et al., 2021). Malnourished children suffer from stunted growth and are vulnerable to respiratory illness, varicella, malaria, measles, diphtheria, cholera, and diarrhoea with their immunity levels being lowered leading to an impairment in their physical and cognitive development (Alves et al., 2022; Hotez, 2022; Ottolini et al., 2021). Globally 45% of deaths among children younger than 5 years old were attributed to malnutrition in 2020 (WHO, 2021). According to UNICEF's executive director, Henrietta Fore, Children under the age of five in war zones were 20 times more likely to die from diarrhoea than violence from the conflict (The Guardian, 2019). Child vaccinations and immunization drives are also affected during wars resulting in the outbreak of infectious diseases. Figure 11 captures the dynamic and results of war conflict. War also has terrible consequences on pregnant women and young mothers. With hospitals and refugee camps being filled with the injured and victims of war, prenatal care for women takes a back seat. During the Russian invasion, 265,000 Ukrainian women were pregnant (UN Population Fund, 2022 cited by IOM, 2023) with 195,000 births in the midst of war in 2022 (Euronews, 2023). Pregnant women are under tremendous stress during pregnancy and labor from the war, violence, fear, and uncertainty around them. An increased number of premature births in Ukraine post Russian invasion has been reported with babies likely to develop digestive, respiratory, or neurological health complications (UN, 2022). Post birth care

during war takes a hit due to the lack of facilities and care, leading to intergenerational health effects on both the mother and baby (Devakumar et al., 2014).
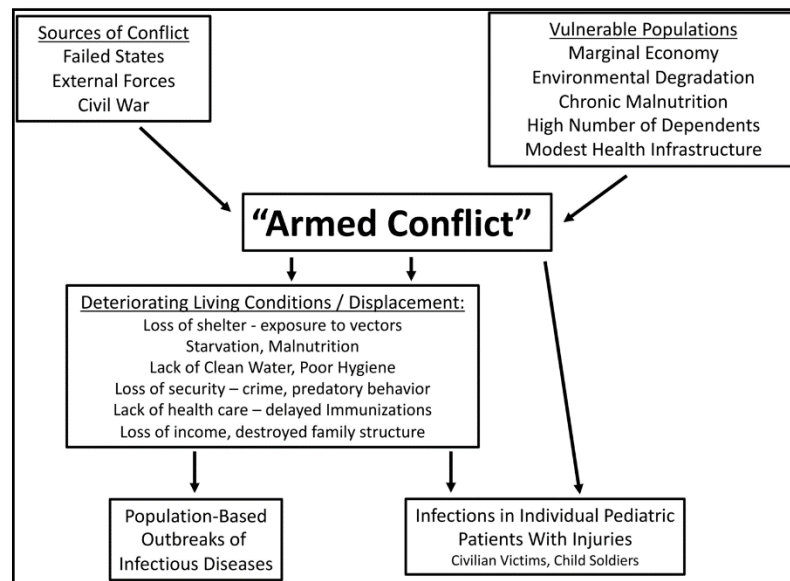
Figure 11: The various ways armed conflict affects children. Source: Ottolini et al., 2021

2.3.5.4 Mental and emotional health of children

Children seek love, care, and attention from their parents or guardians. This often becomes disrupted during wars when the adults in their life become preoccupied with trying to protect them and hence become emotionally unavailable, or are separated from them by deployment, death, or other reasons. Emotional and mental nourishment is as important for children as their physical health. Children separated from their families during war with no parental figure are at a higher risk of falling into substance abuse and violent behavior due to anxiety, PTSD, and depression and display suicidal tendencies (Schiff et al., 2012; Purwar et al., 2010). The traumatic experiences children face during war and displacement cause cognitive and emotional impairment that affect their memory, motor skills, academic performance, socioemotional skills, impulse disorder, and overall development (Elbert et al., 2009; Qouta et al., 2021). The stressful living conditions in refugee camps, neglect, poverty, malnutrition, separation from family, social marginalization are other causes for poor mental health among war affected children (Tamashiro, 2010). Apart from facing distress and uncertainty themselves, adolescents and young adults from the Ukraine war have access to digital

media today where they are exposed to graphic imagery, explicit information, con-flicting opinions, and several stories of others experiencing a similar trauma, which could elevate their own fears and trauma further (Elvevag and DeLisi, 2022). A study conducted on 2677 adolescents aged 11-17 in the war-torn regions of Donetsk and in Kirovograd in central Ukraine showed the youth exposed to witnessing the death of civilians or family members, and violence like shelling, explosions, and artillery fires suffered from PTSD, anxiety, and moderate to severe depression (Osokina et al., 2023). With the Russian invasion taking place during a global pandemic that had al-ready caused loneliness, isolation, depression, and hopelessness among people, the cumulative effect of the Covid-19 pandemic and the war resulted in a surge of mental health disorders among young Ukrainians (Chaaya et al., 2022).

2.3.5.5 Injury and disability

As of August 2022, at least 972 children in Ukraine were either wounded or killed (UNICEF, 2022). Children become unfortunate collateral damage in wars where ci-vilians are targeted with bombs, shelling, explosives, and land mines. With hospitals and other facilities destroyed, there is a lack of access to first aid and medication during war, leaving children exposed to infection and permanent damage. Without proper care, nutrition, or hygiene, convalescence is often hindered. Wars can severely injure children or render them disabled for life. Children who lose limbs from wars will have to wait for up to 10 years to be fitted with a prosthetic limb (Barbara, 2006). Children who have been injured or suffer lifelong disabilities from the war lose their self-confidence while navigating the challenges of a life with limitations brought on by disability, and the trauma could take many years to heal.

Navigating war zones for children with pre-existing disabilities is a disproportionate challenge. Disabled children are far more vulnerable since they could be separated from their care givers, their facilities, special medication, their equipment, and sup-port system in the heat of the war. Transferring disabled children to other facilities is also particularly hard given that most rehabilitation centers are grossly inadequate and poorly equipped to handle them. Children with mental retardation, psychosocial, sen-sory, and intellectual disabilities face other disadvantages like stigma and lack of spe-cially trained care givers (UN 2022 cited by Cerimovic, 2022). Ukraine has 90,000

children in institutional care like orphanages, boarding schools, and residential facilities, which is the highest in Europe. Nearly half of these children are disabled (UNICEF, 2022). Due to the war thousands of these children are displaced, some retained in the institutions in the thick of the war exposed to the danger of being bombed, and many children have been returned to their families in haste, without providing the protection or care they require (UNICEF, 2022).

2.3.5.6 Sexual violence, exploitation, and child soldiers

During wars, law and order and governmental protection are at their weakest. This puts children at a high risk of exploitation. Children are forced into illegal labor, trafficked, sent into combat as child soldiers, exploited, and sexually abused during wars (World vision, 2022). According to the 2020 annual report of the UN Secretary-General 19,379 children around the world were abducted, killed, maimed, or recruited into the army with a 90% increase in the rate of abduction and 70% increase in rape (UN, 2020). This number is likely higher post Russia-Ukraine war. Women and girls particularly run the risk of being victims of gender-based violence which includes sexual, physical, mental, and economic harm and violence (UNHCR, 2023). Rape, Sexual abuse, forced impregnation, coercion, manipulation, forced marriage, and sexual slavery are viewed as military tools and strategies (UN, 2019) that not only shape the woman's future, but to humiliate and destroy the future identity of her community (Smith-Spark, 2023; World vision, 2022). According to UN estimation, for every one rape reported in conflict areas, 10 to 20 rapes are not reported (Relief web, 2019). This also puts children at risk of sexually transmitted diseases like AIDS. Child marriage is another major barrier girls have to navigate during wars. Families of the girl child prefer to marry off the child under the excuse of protecting her, often without realizing that the child is being pushed into a life of domestic and sexual abuse, and poverty (DiGiuseppe and Haer, 2022). Globally 12 million girls are married off before the age of 18 which is 28 girls per minute (OHCHR, 2023), and this statistic is higher in war prone areas. Social exclusion, ethnic cleansing, stigma, and socio-economic marginalization of children will have a long-term impact on their emotional well-being and sense of identity and belonging even after the war ends (Denov and Lakor, 2017). Children under the age of 18 are often recruited into the armed forces as combatants without any formal training, preparation, or practice. These children end up

as war victims and are either injured, maimed, or disabled. Between 2005 and 2020, more than 93,000 children were verified to be child soldiers (UNICEF, 2021). Children are used on the battlefield to confuse the enemy by playing at their moral principles. Children are also recruited in the making of bombs and explosives, as suicide bombers, spies, and messengers during war (Kaplan, 2005).

2.4 Refugee crisis

One of the long-term consequences of war is the refugee crisis. Saunier and Meganck (2007, p. 222) define refugee as "a person who, owning to well-founded dear, or fact, of being persecuted for reasons of race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/ her nationality and is unable or, owning to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/ her self of the protection of that country." They further explain that refugees do not have a nationality and are often outside their homes or borders of their nation. When refugees are forced to leave their place of residence due to a natural calamity, war, disease, or other man-made disasters, but remain within the borders of their country, they are referred to as Internally displaced persons (Saunier and Meganck, 2007, p. 166). As of January 2023, 5,352,000 Ukrainians were internally displaced (IDMC, 2023) while 8.3 million Ukrainians were recorded and regarded as refugees across Europe (UNHCR, 2023).

Civilians displaced within their country or fleeing them are forced to live in terribly inadequate conditions with lack of access to housing, food, health care, education, employment, clean water, and sanitary facilities. (Garsow et al., 2021; TatahMentan et al., 2017; Bharathi 2022; Alhawarin et al., 2021; Lai et al., 2022). Additionally, they carry psychological war trauma, loss of mental health, fear, and PTSD (Fino et al., 2020) which are exacerbated by other difficulties like finding transportation that takes them to safety, entry denial in neighboring countries, visa complications in the receiving country, the fear of deportation, inability to get social security and hence medical assistance in case of inherent health issues and disabilities, financial burden, uncertainty about their future, anxiety about having to rebuild their entire lives in an-

other country, and the added hurdle of having to navigate this during a global pandemic in case of Ukrainian refugees (Nickerson et al., 2011; Ekinci and Van Lange, 2023).

Millions of people from war torn countries around the world like Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Libya, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Ukraine etc. are displaced from their homes (World Data, 2021). The UN Refugee Agency has released concerning statistics in this regard. As of 2022, there were more than 103 million people forcibly displaced from their homes in the world. Of this, 72% of the refugees come from just five countries – Syria, Venezuela, Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Sudan. Ukraine contributes 5.4 million people to this figure. In 2021, of the 83.9 million people displaced from their homes, 36.5 million were children under the age of 18, and 1.5 million children were born as refugees between the years 2018 and 2021 (UNHCR, 2022).

17.6 million Ukrainians need Humanitarian assistance as of 2023. Of these 45% are women, 23% are children and 15% are people with disabilities (Center for Disaster Philanthropy, 2023). In 2022, the year when Ukrainians endured extreme hostility, injuries, death and loss of family and property, the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) was able to raise USD 3.8 billion with local and international support to help Ukrainians with food, cash, health care and other assistance. For 2023, the HRP estimates and plans to ensure USD 3.9 billion reaches 11.1 million Ukrainians of the 18 million in dire need for assistance (UNOCHA Relief web, 2023).

One of the most pressing needs for Ukrainian refugees is healthcare. Ukraine has one of the highest rampancy of drug-resistant Tuberculosis in the world, and HIV cases in Eastern Europe, with the least immunization against Covid 19. Along with this, diseases like cholera, polio, diphtheria, and measles are on the verge of becoming epidemics again. Refugees with chronic illnesses like congestive heart failure, cardiovascular diseases, renal diseases, angina, hypertension, respiratory disorders, and diabetes are intensified from the stress of having to migrate (Musio, 2023; Spiegel, 2022). Cancer care for Ukrainian refugees was one of the biggest challenges for healthcare providers and oncologists in host countries. Lack of documentation, missing diagnosis report and tissue samples, interrupted treatments, and issues with lan-

guage and communication while running the risk of Covid 19 infections and side effects from chemotherapy put the vulnerable groups in a critical state (Püsküllüoğlu et al., 2023). Most neighboring EU nations also have the constraint of shelter. Accommodating families in office buildings, temporary housing, and repurposed shopping centers has been the short-term solution, but with the rising number of refugees seeking shelter, overcrowding ensues. Informational needs such as legal advice, documentation, paperwork in foreign languages to gain social security and a place of residence, accessing health care and services are added challenges (Lee et al., 2023). Other concerns for separated families, the elderly, women, and children include gender-based violence, conflict related sexual abuse, potential discrimination, and human trafficking (Andrews et al., 2023, Spiegel, 2023).

Host countries receiving refugees develop "host fatigue" after a year or two and express anti-refugee sentiments. Additionally, refugees are seen in a negative light - as a burden in many host countries, denying them the opportunity to integrate into the labor market or society in general. This stems from narratives of prejudice, nationalism, xenophobia, religious intolerance, political agenda, fear of terrorism and economic considerations (Parsons, 2016; UN OHCHR, 2002).

But many economists and experts hold contrary opinions about the benefits refugees can bring. According to economist Giovaani Peri, Ukrainian refugees if integrated properly can enable economic growth and could be a human capital windfall for the host countries (Edwards, 2022). Refugee influx stimulates the surge of GDP and household incomes of the host countries since refugees receive aid and consume goods and services from a particular geographical location that boosts the production and sales of the host country (Verme, 2023; Afashe and Constant, 2019). Legrain (2016) opines that while welcoming refugees implies an initial investment on the part of the host country, this capital acts as a fiscal stimulus that yields 'demand dividend', which further makes a multi-fold economy boost with 'deftness dividend' from high skilled refugees, 'dynamism divided' from enterprising refugees who start their own businesses and trade investments, 'diversity divided' by refugees who spark creativity and innovation by bringing fresh ideas when exposed to a foreign environment, 'demographic dividend' brought by the arrival of young refugees who can complement the skills of the experienced workforce, thus helping ageing societies, 'debt divided'

from refugees who contribute by paying taxes once they are established, and the 'development dividend' that refugees provide themselves, their children and the host country (Legrain, 2016).

2.5   EU's take and response to the conflict.

The European Union is a unique entity which began with six Western European states and has grown to twenty-seven states. It has enabled deepening of ties between the members to overcome hostility and rivalry after the two devastating World Wars and integrated their societies and economies with common policies, transforming governance in Europe and altering global politics (Karns and Mingst, 2004).

The EU has responded to Russia's unprovoked military aggression with numerous unprecedented sanctions against Russia, to destabilize their economy by depriving them of arms, military equipment, and technologies needed for war. It has also restricted Russia's access to EU's financial markets, suspended visas for Russian diplomats and officials, and banned transactions with Russian banks. It has prohibited the import of fossil fuels, petroleum products and crude oil from Russia, and closed it ports to Russian ships in an attempt to condemn Russia's actions. The EU has also imposed sanctions on Iran for the supply of drone to Russia and Belarus for its involvement in the Ukraine invasion. Individual restrictive measures have also been adopted to freeze the assets of 1473 individuals and 207 entities including Vladimir Putin, Russian ministers, governors, politicians, oligarchs, high ranking officials, military personnel, businessmen and many others who have contributed to the invasion. Wagner group, armed forces, military and defense sectors, Russian banks, political parties, media outlets, aviation and shipbuilding companies also have their assets frozen, and a travel ban imposed on them. Restrictions on business with Russia are in place by prohibiting export of luxury goods and import of iron, steel, paper, gold, wood, cement, cigarettes etc. Rejection of energy from Russia by banning the import of Russian coal, oil, goods and technologies and export of drones, ammunitions, technology, firearms, and military equipment are also undertaken. Diplomatic and visa restrictions like Russia being uninvited to G8 meetings henceforth, Russian diplomats no longer being able to benefit from visa facilitation provisions, suspension of summits and visa facilitation between EU and Russia are other steps taking my EU to

condemn Russia. EU has also cancelled broadcasting media from Russian outlets that spread false propaganda. All EU banks have suspended loans, public financing, and investments in Russia. Other services to Russia like crypto wallets, engineering services, IT consulting and legal services, advertising, market research etc. have all been terminated. UK, USA, and Canada are other countries that have followed EU's suit and placed economic sanctions on Russia and Russian individuals by banning the import of Russian diamonds, oil and gas, luxury goods and services, restricting and cancelling visas of Russian diplomats and businesspeople. (Council of the European Union, 2023; BBC News, 2023; US Dept of Treasury, 2023; Govt. of Canada, 2023)

Additionally, the EU has also displayed solidarity with the Ukrainians by providing military support, financial and humanitarian aids. It has introduced the temporary protection scheme for Ukrainian refugees entering other EU countries which enables them to access housing, a temporary residence permit in the country receiving them, medical assistance, entry into the labor market, and social welfare. Children and teenagers who are not accompanied by parents are allotted a legal guardian, with access to shelter, food, clothing, medical facilities, and education. This scheme lasts for up to three years, depending on the war situation. (Council of the European Union, 2023)

2.6 Governance

The definition of Governance is open to several contextual interpretations by different authors and experts. Broadly speaking, governance is "the process of steering society and the economy through collective action and in accordance with common goals" (Torfing et al., 2012, cited by Ansell and Torfing, 2016, p. 4). Saunier and Meganck (2007, p.149) define governance as a "concept that explains the way power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources through application of responsibility, participation, information availability, transparency and the rule of law". They further explain the difference between governance and government by stating that governments coordinate administrative actions at a given level of power, whereas governance involves administrative actions taken between different territorial levels which could also be global.

2.6.1 Global governance

Globalization has been playing a key role in shrinking the world, increasing interdependence between nations, and necessitating the formation of a transnational civil society to that is involved in the social, economic, environmental, political, technological, and cultural spheres (Karns and Mingst, 2004). This has led to the development of Global governance. Global governance gained traction internationally after the Second World War with the emergence of NGOs and multinational corporations, after the League of Nations which was set up in 1920 failed to have the desired impact on bringing the agencies of the world together "to promote international cooperation and to achieve international peace and security" (UN, 2023). According to Bevir (2009), Global Governance is the convergence of various international stakeholders and governments with the goal of addressing common world problems. They set up rules and processes in the interest of world peace, security, and progress. The United Nations, which was formed in 1945, is an excellent example of Global Governance. The UN was formed with the goal of maintaining peace throughout the world, encouraging friendship between nations, to enable nations to work together to solve world problems like poverty, hunger, illiteracy etc. and respect each other's rights, sovereignty, and freedom, and to be the centre for harmonizing actions (UN, 2023). Global governance transcends national boundaries by attempting to tackle social, economic, legal, judicial, and environmental problems like the climate crisis, curbing terrorism, mitigating poverty, promoting human rights, cross-border issues, war crimes, drug abuse, human trafficking, genocides, trade, migration, diplomatic relations, and health concerns like pandemics, endemics, HIV and blocking the international spread of diseases etc. that plague the world by defining collaborative guidelines, processes, and relationships between different actors (Bevir, 2009; World Economic Forum, 2023; Karns and Mingst, 2004). Figure 12 is an infographic designed by the World Economic Forum (2023) to capture the various elements of Global Governance.
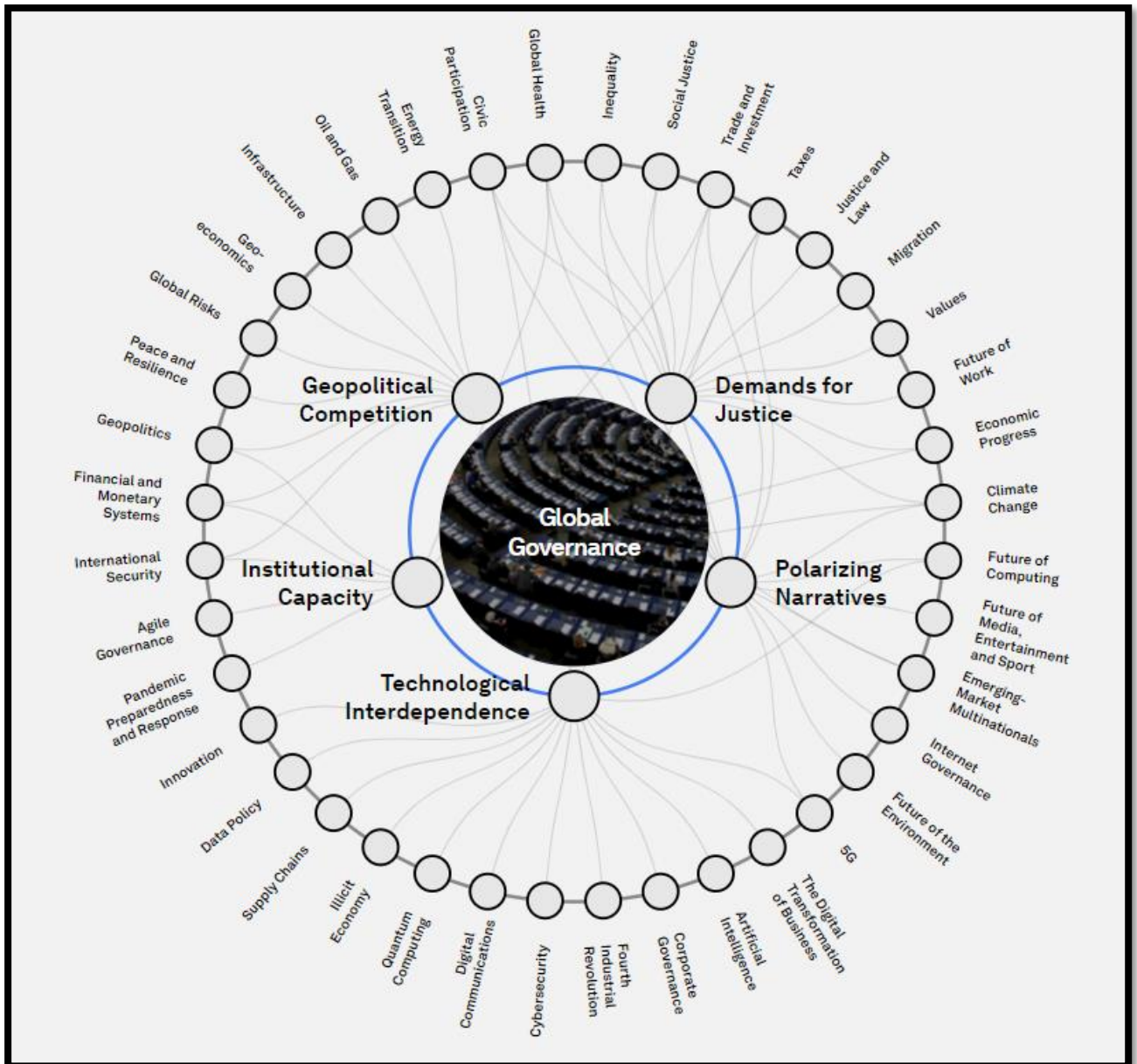
Figure 12: The elements of Global Governance. Source: World Economic Forum., 2023

2.6.2 NGOs, INGOs, and IGOs

The end of World War 2 witnessed the emergence and spread of NGOs on local, national, and international levels. According to Beer et al. (2012, pp. 325-26) NGOs have become prominent catalysts in resolving social conflicts, upholding human rights, advocating

world peace, supporting societies through natural calamities and wars, enabling developmental assistance, providing services like disaster relief, providing humanitarian aid, and governance with an orientation towards public interest, and building an expert knowledge base by coming together (Karns and Mingst, 2004). Saunier and Meganck (2007, p. 197) define NGO as "a non-profit group or association organized outside of institutionalized political structures to realize particular social objectives or serve particular constituencies".

Political scientists believe that non-profits influence political processes and "provide avenues to the community for civic participation and representation of interests in the pluralistic political system of a heterogeneous society" (Boris and Steuerle, 2006, p. 18). The civic-society outlook explores the role of non-profits from the perspective of the social capital it generates, and thus connects people and communities. The economic approach to non-profits examines the creation of jobs, income, and knowledge to boost the GDP while collaborating with the government. The code of ethics for non-profits aims to reduce poverty and promotes the maintenance and preservation of arts, cultural and social values, ideologies, religious beliefs etc. Every approach to understanding and defining non-profits and NGOs has merits and reveals their relationship with the government (Boris and Steuerle, 2006). Some of the roles NGOs play include performing functions of governance in the absence of state authority, monitoring human rights, collecting, and publishing information, creating networks and connections, advocating for modifications in policies, enabling and enhancing public participation, providing humanitarian aids and implementing developmental ventures (Karns and Mingst, 2004).

International nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) are NGOs that operate across country borders and within other countries. They seek to raise funds for disaster relief, advocate for human rights, collaborate for economic growth, environmental protection, resolution of conflict between nations etc. (Boris and Steuerle, 2006). Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) on the other hand are "organizations whose members include at least three states, that have activities in several states, and whose members are held together by a formal intergovernmental agreement." (Karns and Mingst, 2004, p. 7) IGOs range from North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that consists of three members to United Postal Union (UPU) that consists of 190 members. The United Nations (UN) is an excellent example of an IGO that has been developed to handle multiple tasks.

The World Trade Organization (WTO), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), European Union (EU) etc., are all IGOs that serve different functions which are vital in enabling cooperation between members through regular meetings, dispute resolution, summits, conferences etc. NGOs and IGOs often connect and collaborate with the EU in an advisory role with the Social and Economic committees (TWU, 2023; Ajal, 2023; Karns and Mingst, 2004).

2.6.3 Social capital and social inclusion

Social capital is considered to be a positive result of human interactions. It is a shared set of values that enables a group of people to work together to accomplish a common goal (Kenton, 2022). Social capital is a vital force for non-profits to flourish. It enables them to create networks and connect people with one another and to organizations with the aim of fostering bonding and harmony. It includes all associations and interactions between members of a community building a sense of mutual respect, trust, cooperation, and relationships, thus boosting the overall capacity of the community to influence political change (Boris and Steuerle, 2006; Bevir, 2009).

The World Bank (2023) defines social inclusion as "the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society – improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity". Social inclusion is the concept of involving every member of the community to participate in decision-making processes. This encompasses voting, employment, education, and cultural involvement to create a society that is cohesive, equal, and fair (Bevir, 2009).

Displacement of people from their homes during wars often fragment families and separate people from those that they love while trying to navigate life in a new country. Suspicion, fear, grief, anxiety, uncertainty, and mistrust of the authorities are common emotions that a refugee experiences in a new environment. Hence, it is imperative for leaders, NGOs, and organizations to foster a strong community that enables social capital thus binding the communities together. This allows people to access resources, contribute positively to society, address concerns affecting them and promote everyone's wellbeing (Doney et al., 2013). This also implies adopting social inclusion policies. After ensuring

the refugees' human rights are met with education, housing, and employment, it is necessary to have their voices heard. This is done by enabling participation in social, cultural, and political spheres by including them in the decision-making processes (Bianchi, 2021). It is however crucial to not confuse refugee integration into the society as cultural assimilation, which causes the erasure of the refugee's religious beliefs, traditional practices, and cultural past in order to fit into the new society (Pacifico and Maria, 2009). Enabling refugees to embrace their own identities and thrive in a new environment is vital for them to flourish. Encouraging bonding between co-ethnic members, people belonging to the same religious groups and genders often allows distressed refugees and asylum seekers to cope with their grief, isolation, trauma, and fear by promoting social cohesion and a sense of belonging, thus having a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing (Ziersch et al., 2023; Jesus et al., 2023; Fiet et al., 2022).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the methodology adopted for the current research to answer the research question "What role do Austrian NGOs and organizations play in integrating Ukrainian refugee children into their education system in light of the Russia vs Ukraine conflict?" It explores the qualitative research principles considered and describes the rationale behind choosing this method. It also explains how the data collection was carried out and who was considered to contribute to it. It is divided into five parts - selection of the research design, research approach, development of the interview guideline and selection criteria for interviewees, data collection and research ethics.

3.2 Research design

The research process is linear, with each step clearly defined. After an exhaustive literature review process where relevant literature is identified and incorporated, the gap in the literature is recognized and addressed in the next steps. The theoretical background of this research involves exploring the war induced humanitarian crises Ukraine is inflicted by and how the neighboring EU countries are managing the crises. It also explores conflict management, resilience displayed by Ukraine and host countries, global and NGO governance, refugee management and institutional factors of education. Further, the conceptual framework is based on these theories which guide the author's observations and methodological choices. The aim of the research is to collect empirical data and identify patterns to understand the role of NGOs and other stakeholders in Ukrainian refugee integration in Austria. The empirical research follows the five-step research cycle proposed by Dutch researcher - De Groot (1969) that involves Observation, Induction, Deduction, Testing and Evaluation (De Groot, 1969 cited by Steenhuis and Bruijn, 2006). After identifying a contemporary problem that the world is currently facing, initial observation and induction are carried out through the literature review. Interviews with suitable people are conducted to gather relevant data. The collected data is then analyzed, and the results are presented with the conclusion to answer the research question.
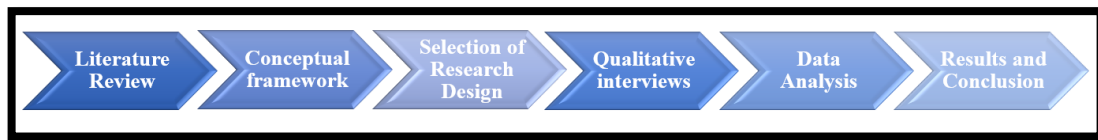
Figure 13: Research Process

3.3 Research approach

A qualitative research approach is adopted for this study. Qualitative research involves non-numerical data collection and analysis to get an insight on the opinions and experiences of selected people (Bhandari, 2023). Qualitative studies are centered around human behavior and explore the meaning ascribed by people to social and human problems (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 42). The philosophical world view presented in the study is the 'Social Constructivist Worldview' proposed by Creswell (2009, p. 26) which explains "that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work; Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences – their meaning negotiated socially, culturally and historically; They are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others." The opinions shared by the interviewees in this study who are teachers, social workers, public servants, volunteers, and the refugees themselves are all individuals whose perception about the ongoing crisis and management is formed based on their interaction with refugees and the system currently supporting them. Hence, the study ascribes to the Social Constructivist Worldview.

The research is partially exploratory in nature since the conflict between Ukraine and Russia is still ongoing. So, while current events in the form of literature from news outlets and other journalistic avenues are available for reference, the role played by NGOs is limited to the information put out on their websites, and the role of social workers, volunteers, and teachers in Austria remains largely unknown. Swedberg (2020, p. 17) argues that it is impossible to know the exact result of an exploratory study until we get well into the research. Stebbins (2001, p. 5) explains that exploratory studies are also "characterized as a brief, fleeting, preliminary stage" that leads to concrete results. An exploratory study also enables the author to understand the groundwork of the research without attaching assumptions or a preconceived notion about the results (George, 2023).

Bryman (2004) argues that the best approach to qualitative research is through structured and semi-structured interview methods. According to Mueller and Segal (2015, p.1), structured interviews "conform to a standardized list of questions (including follow-up questions), and a uniform sequence of questioning". Semi-structured interviews combine structured and unstructured interview methods. They are open ended and partly sponta-neous, where the interviewee's answers guide the interviewer to ask follow-up questions. This is also an excellent instrument when research is exploratory in nature (George, 2022). This research adopts a flexible strategy with structured and semi-structured inter-view approaches with adaptations and modifications to the existing set of questions as need arises.

3.4 Development of the interview guideline and selection criteria for interviewees

According to DeCarlo (2018), an interview guideline is meant to guide the interviewer throughout the course of an interview. It is a list of questions and topics that the inter-viewer seeks answers to from the interviewee. While the opening questions from the guideline could be common to all interviewees, it is the answers that are given by the interviewees that shape the interaction. After a good understanding of the research prob-lem and objectives; and identifying the topics that needed to be addressed in the interview, an interview guideline was designed in line with recommendations from DeCarlo (2018). The wording and language of the questionnaire was kept simple, concise, and easy to understand. An interview guideline consisting of structured, open-ended questions was prepared by broadly considering who the interviewees would be. This, along with the interviewee consent form was then submitted to the Modul University Interview Review Board (IRB). The interview was then carried out upon the approval of the IRB.

The interview guideline (Appendix 1) begins with a short briefing by addressing the par-ticipant's need for identity protection, with an overview of the interview topic, structure, duration, data policy, and informed consent before diving into the questions. The inter-view guideline was divided into five different sections with the aim of covering important topics related to the research question. The sections begin with general questions asked to all the participants to understand their role in the organization supporting refugees to

get an overview of their work. The other sections include questions related to child-specific services, psychological and educational aspects, with the final section aimed at understanding the participant's view of the crisis and the challenges they face, enabling a free flow of conversation. The interview ends with the interviewer encouraging the participant to share any other details not covered in the interaction thus far, to capture candid information which could be relevant to the study.

The selection criteria for participants in qualitative research is one of the most crucial aspects of the research that determines the quality of the data collected. Selecting potential interviewees with experience in the area of study who are willing to share their experiences, knowledge and perspectives is at the heart of qualitative research. According to Joan (2012), the selection criteria for qualitative research should be purposeful and the selected interviewees should be able to contribute to answering the research question and enable the enhancement of the study with important insights and thoughts related to the phenomenon under study. Using a thorough understanding of the research question's objectives, the literature review process, and theoretical perspectives, a list of ideal participants for the interview was decided. This included stakeholders who were directly or indirectly involved in Ukrainian refugee education in Austria. The list included educators, NGO leads, volunteers, social workers, and parents of refugee children who were decision makers in the child's education. Once the ideal participant list was prepared, NGOs and volunteers were contacted through social media, websites, references, and telephone calls to NGOs to check their availability and willingness to participate in the study.

The first set of willing participants for the interview included a teacher, a public affairs head, and an NGO volunteer, who work closely with Ukrainian refugee children. The research then adopted the snowball sampling technique to select similar contributors for the study, since it became a challenge to locate suitable interviewees due to non-responsiveness from other participants and organizations that were previously selected. Snowball sampling is a type of convenience sampling where the initial participants of the survey propose other potential participants who possess experience or knowledge relevant to the study. The new participants then refer more participants from their contacts and so on (Bryman and Bell, 2008; Creswell, 2003 cited by Rahi et.al, 2019). This selection process was cost-effective, time-saving, and convenient. Using these techniques, a total

of ten interview participants from various walks of life working closely with Ukrainian refugees and NGOs were selected to take part in the interview.

3.5 Data collection

According to Gill et al. (2008), the goal of interviews is to gain a deeper understanding of the opinions, experiences, insights, beliefs, and motives of the individual on specific topics. Structured and Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, with scope for follow up questions formed the foundation of the interviews. An in-depth interview strategy was adopted for the study, where participants were encouraged to recount their personal experiences, make extensive comments, and were allowed the freedom to steer the conversation in their desired direction to explore the rich insights they offered. This interview technique was chosen because it allowed the researcher flexibility and the opportunity to adapt and modify subsequent questions based on the participant's replies to gather more information relevant to the research question (Bryman and Bell, 2008).

Face to face conversations, telephone and video call interviews lasting 30 to 40 minutes were conducted based on the participant's convenience and availability. The interaction began with a short welcome greeting and an introduction about the researcher and the objectives of the study, followed by providing the participants with the consent form, explaining the structure of the interview, and making them aware of how the data provided by them would be incorporated in the study. Some participant names were anonymized as per their request to protect their identity. To mitigate the natural limitations of the human memory and to enable the researcher to repeatedly examine the interviewee's answers, the interviews were recorded and transcribed with the consent of the participant.

3.6 Research ethics

Ethics are paramount to this research. Ethical concerns have been duly considered from the early stages of the research, throughout the interview guideline development, the interview and post interview phases. The interview process was carried out after approval was received from the IRB. For some of the participants in the study, a few questions involved sensitive topics of war, suffering, separation from families and trauma. For these

participants, mindful interviewing was carried out by following the guidelines for sensitive interviewing by Melville and Hincks (2016). Participation in the survey was on a voluntary basis. The participants' need for privacy was respected. Consent was taken during every step of the interview. Participants were encouraged to answer only those questions that they were comfortable sharing without prying for additional details. The interview stuck to the time frame promised. The data collected from the participants was protected, handled with care, and used only for the purposes of academic research. The audio recordings from the interview were deleted upon the completion of the research and thesis report.

4 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter presents the qualitative data collected from the structured and semi-structured in-depth interviews. The analysis of the findings and interpretation of the results are also discussed in this section.

4.1 Data preparation and analysis

4.1.1 Interview candidates, Translation and Transcription

Qualitative data analysis is the process of collecting, organizing, and deciphering qualitative data to interpret its meaning (Dye, 2023). The analysis of the qualitative data is carried out as per the five-step process outlined by Dye (2023) that involves gathering, organizing, coding, analyzing, and reporting of the data.

For gathering the data, various stakeholders who are directly and indirectly involved in Ukrainian refugee education in Austria were contacted and interviewed to help answer the research question.

All interviews except one were conducted in English. One interview was conducted in German to accommodate the participant who was most comfortable conversing in German. Face to face interviews were recorded using an audio recording application on a smart phone. Video calls held on Zoom and Microsoft teams were recorded using the respective applications. They were transcribed and translated using quick digital tools that were downloaded onto the desktop, to avoid the risk of compromising data privacy by sharing or uploading them onto an online tool. The audio and video call recordings were supplemented with the researcher taking field notes of important observations during the interview. All the data collected and transcribed were carefully saved with backup copies of each interview on to an external hard disc to avoid the risk of losing any data throughout the thesis process.

Each participant in the interview is given a code (P1 for Participant 1, P2 for Participant 2 etc.) and are referred to using their code in the analysis and inferences. Table 1 below provides the details of the interview participants, the respective code assigned to them,

their location, the NGO, or organization they represent, the role they play, and the interview method with which data was collected from them. Some of the participant names have been changed upon their request to protect their identity. This is indicated with an Asterisk*.

Sl. No	Name	Code	Role	NGO/ Organization	Location (City,Federal Province)	Interview Method
1	Nina Glentzer	P1	Teacher	Volksschule (Public school)	Klosterneuberg, Lower Austria	Face to Face
2	Birgit Schatz	P2	Public Affairs Head	SOS Kinderdorf	Vienna, Vienna	Video call
3	Marion Bock	P3	Co-founder and board member of the association "Graz: Donation convoy", Volunteer	Steiermark hilft	Graz, Styria	Video call
4	Anya Petrenko*	P4	Refugee-Care Lead	Volkshilfe	Vienna, Vienna	Face to Face
5	Elena Ivanov*	P5	Teacher	Volksschule (Public school)	Sankt Lambrecht, Styria	Video call
6	Tanja Maier	P6	Founder,Blogger, Volunteer	Cards for Ukraine and Weight of the world	Vienna, Vienna	Face to Face
7	Anna Androvik	P7	Student/ Refugee	-	Vienna, Vienna	Telephone call

8	Victoria Kravchenko*	P8	Student/ Refugee	-	Vienna, Vienna	Telephone call
9	Julia Olyinyk*	P9	Mother/ Refugee	-	Glinzendorf, Lower Austria	Telephone call
10	Isabella Schmidt*	P10	Project Manager	SOS Kinderdorf	Vienna, Vienna	Video call

Table 1: Details of the interview participants

4.1.2 Exploration and adoption of qualitative data analysis techniques

Begun (2018) explains that qualitative data coding is a systematic approach to the data interpretation process. It is a technique of grouping terms, concepts, ideas, and views shared by the interviewees into different categories and themes to organize the data collected and find meaningful patterns in them. The transcribed and coded data from the interviews is attached in Appendix 2. For coding of the data, all the interview audios were played multiple times to transcribe them and capture their essence. This was recorded in an excel file with individual pages dedicated to encapsulating each interview participant's responses. Next, recurring themes, repetitive words, commonly shared challenges, and similar answers to certain questions were noted while aligning to the interview guidelines and common questions across all participants. This enabled the researcher to map out a pattern and identify key topics of importance and label them which would help answer the research question. This coded and analyzed data was recorded with key words in the excel file and was elaborated later in the report after carrying out a combination of deep qualitative data analysis approaches like content analysis, thematic analysis, and narrative analysis by revisiting the interview audios and transcripts again.

According to Jaspal (2020), all empirical research involves a certain amount of content analysis since the data sets at their core comprise content. After grouping the transcribed interviews into words, concepts and themes, content analysis helps quantify the relationship between the various groups (Palic et al., 2016; Dye, 2023). Content analysis enables

researchers to draw inferences about the purposes, messages and semantic relationships between words and ideas. Luo (2019) argues that content analysis not only enables finding correlations between concepts, but also helps quantify the occurrence and frequency of certain phrases, words, and subjects while also enabling the researcher to eliminate bias and identify propaganda.

Vaismoradi et al. (2016) describe that a theme is used as an "attributor, descriptor, element, and concept" which is "an implicit topic that organizes a group of repeating ideas". Thematic analysis, a concept developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke in 2006 for their research in psychology closely examines patterns and common themes in interviews to grasp the meaning of people's ideas, knowledge, experiences, values, and perspectives (Caulfield, 2022). Braun and Clarke (2008) also outline six steps to approach thematic analysis which are data familiarization, coding, theme generation, review, theme definition, and write up. Content and thematic analysis share a common objective of analytically identifying material from interview interactions "by breaking the text into relatively small units of content and submitting them to descriptive treatment" (Sparker, 2005 cited by Vaismoradi et al., 2013). During this research, while a few common themes about the challenges faced by refugees, the academic approach, the protocol for refugee education etc. were apparent on the surface, analyzing the data from a thematic approach revealed deeper themes and patters which were commonly shared by many participants but with different perspectives of the same problem. Hence, this situation employed a narrative approach additionally.

Narrative analysis is based on the premise that human beings at their core are inherently storytelling creatures. It is a technique of data analysis where core narratives from the interviewee's personal stories are interpreted (Murray, 2018; Delve and Limpaecher, 2020). Narrative analysis does not just consider the words and phrases shared by the interviewee but pays attention to their language usage and their form of expression (Kaluza, 2023). The semi-structured interview approach with open ended questions adopted in this research created space for the interviewee to go their narrative tangent to convey their experiences and stories. A few participants in the study shared personal stories of traumatic events from the war that they witnessed or were simply at a loss for words at certain times while recounting the trauma. This ranged from loss or separation from family members, fear, disruption in their lives, uncertainty about their future etc. Here, the narrative

analysis of the interviewee's personal account not only focuses on the content, language, and form of expression, but instigates the researcher to confront questions about the purpose of the story shared, the reason for the interviewee sharing the details in a particular way or at a particular point during the interview conversation (Earthy and Cronin, 2008). Using the above approaches, the prepared data was analyzed thoroughly.

Apart from the above approaches, the collected data was also processed to create a list of words frequently and commonly used among all the interview participants, which was subsequently used to construct a word cloud to highlight the most prominent words used by the interviewees. This is displayed below in figure 14.

Figure 14: Word Cloud representing frequently used words by the interview participants.

4.2   Evaluation and interpretation of results

Following the context of the literature review and the objectives of the research question, this section of the paper will evaluate the coded qualitative data by adopting the strategies and techniques described in the previous section. Appendix 2 captures the essence of all the interviews and presents the coding of the qualitative data collected. Accordingly, the findings from the study are presented below.

4.2.1 General conditions of the refugees in Austria

Based on the interviews conducted with various stakeholders involved in NGOs, schools, and the refugees themselves, and the information available on the official website of the Austrian government, City of Vienna and other organizations supporting the Ukrainian refugees, this section explores Austria's reception to Ukrainian refugees in terms of their allowance, childcare, housing, food, education, health care, labor integration, transportation and other emergency services.

Austria, like other nations in the EU has welcomed Ukrainian refugees and has taken in almost 90,000 refugees (Council of the European Union, 2023). A combined effort from the Austrian government and its NGOs are helping Ukrainian refugees settle into Austria. Refugees can enter Austria and stay for up to 90 days without a visa. The Austrian government has set up a temporary right of residence for refugees who wish to stay longer than 90 days, which enables them to reside in Austria till March 4th, 2024, and receive social support (Österreich gov, 2023; Visit Ukraine, 2022; UNHCR, 2022). The Federal Agency for Reception and Support Services provides the list of registry offices with contact details for Ukrainian refugees and regularly updates them (BBU Gmbh, 2022).

The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), Österreichische Integrationsfonds (ÖIF) and a team of student volunteers from Vienna University of Economics and Business have all compiled useful information and comprehensive documents to help refugees that can be easily accessed with a simple google search. ÖIF has an FAQ page with a Ukrainian translation that is regularly updated. It details the entire procedure step by step for refugees seeking shelter and asylum in Austria right from the moment they arrive in the country, the procedure to access temporary protection, the documentation needed for it, their rights as a beneficiary, temporary housing, food allowance, etc. Emergency contact numbers like the police, crisis hotline, ambulance service, women's emergency, hotline for children, emotional support, helpline for the disabled, etc. along with contact details of the Ukrainian embassy are outlined in the document (EUAA, 2022; ÖIF, 2023; WU, 2022)

ÖBB, Austria's largest mobility service is contributing towards bringing refugees and displaced people to host countries in their trains. Since November 1st, 2022, ÖBB has

been offering free tickets for 24 hours to displaced people coming from Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic with the First arrival Ukraine Ticket or 'Erstankunft Ukraine-Ticket, transporting them to safety. Their website also details all important information needed for passengers with an FAQ page to help them move to Austria or with their onward journey (ÖBB, 2022). Vienna's public transport system, Wiener Linien also offers free transport within the city of Vienna to Ukrainian refugees. Major Austrian telecommunication companies like Drei, A1, Yess and Magenta have been contributing to the refugee cause by providing services like calls and SMS, roaming and international calling to and from Ukraine free of charge. The free SIM cards by Magenta come with 1GB of data volume to access the internet, with 500 minutes of calling and 500 SMS within Austria free of charge. Banks in Austria like Erste Group, UniCredit Bank Austria, Raiffeisen Bank, 26, Revolut, and BAWAG Group are enabling refugees to set up accounts with them with minimum requirements and free online bank accounts with no minimum balances, no maintenance fees, no minimum opening deposits, and conversion fee. Western Union, Remitly and PayPal are also offering free money transfer to Ukraine (WU, 2022; ETNO, 2022)

As beneficiaries of temporary protection, Ukrainians seeking asylum in Austria have the right to a residence and work permit, accommodation, basic care or 'Grundversorgung', access to labor market, means of subsistence, access to medical care, access to education, family reunification and family allowance (EUAA, 2022). An Austrian residence ID card is provided with a hotline offered in German, Russian and Ukrainian languages to answer any questions that the refugees may have. Additionally, all refugees are provided with an e-card and social security number to avail medical assistance in Austria. The ID card also provides access to the labor market and education. Every federal province in Austria has set up its own guidelines to cater to the refugee crisis (Österreich gov, 2023; ÖIF, 2023).

Displaced Ukrainians with children, irrespective of their employment status are eligible to receive family allowance and childcare allowance every month in Austria from March 2022. Family allowance is based on the number of children and their age. Children up to 3 years of age get € 120.60, those above 3 years get € 129, those above 10 years get € 149.70 and those above 19 get € 174.70. Families with two children get an additional € 7.50 per child, three children get € 18.40, four children get € 28 and so on. Once the family is registered, the children are also automatically eligible for a school start fee of €

105.80. Disabled children get an additional amount of € 164.90 per month. All children are eligible for this allowance till they reach the age of 24. Working refugee parents get an additional € 61.80 per child per month as child tax credit (Bundeskanzleramt, 2023; ÖIF, 2023)

Medical care to refugees is provided with Austria's Primary care system 'ÖGK'. This also entitles everyone living in Austria to free Covid-19 vaccination. Special vaccination is offered for children who are at a higher risk of contracting infections. Project 'NEDA' offers psychological support through counselling sessions in Ukrainian, 'NIPE' is a network of organizations that provide intercultural psychotherapy. The Psychologischer Dienst which is Vienna's largest provider of psychosocial and psychiatric care is accessible to Ukrainian refugees. The Diakonie hotline 'AMIKE' also provides psychosocial comfort to people anonymously. The University of Vienna is also committed to supporting their Ukrainian students with crisis intervention with psychological counselling sessions. For people with disability, Austrian Disability Council 'Österreichischer Behindertenrat' and Austrian Life Aid '(Lebenshilfe Österreich' provide support like medical care and special accommodation. The Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection allows entry to pets to be accompanied with their families and entitles them to Veterinarian services (EUAA, 2022; ÖIF, 2023).

Austria provides free public education system. It is compulsory for children aged 6 to 16 receive primary and secondary education in Austria at the 'Volksschule', along with obligatory training till the age of 18. This applies to the Ukrainian refugee children regardless of their plans to stay back in Austria or return to Ukraine. The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research provides an extensive guide in Ukrainian detailing the educational journey of the child in Austria. The Vienna Integration Center provides counselling services to parents to support them with online application forms for school allocation for their children. University students from Ukraine are exempt from tuition fees at the Austrian University. The Österreichische Hochschüler/ innenschaft (ÖH) which is the Austrian National Union of Students also offers special emergency aid to all Ukrainian students affected by the war. The Vienna Department of Education and ÖIF registers displaced children and their parents with German language courses respectively from levels A1 to C1 at more than 80 locations in Austria for free since the medium of instruction in schools is German. All Ukrainian refugee children have to pass the standardized

MIKA-D test which is an assessment of their German language capabilities before being integrated with the rest of their classes. Students failing to pass MIKA-D are to attend German support classes (Stadt Wien, 2023; EUAA, 2022; ÖIF, 2023).

The Labour Market Service (AMS) details the requirement for Ukrainian refugees to gain a work permit in Austria. The ÖIF also provides a number of platforms for Ukrainian job seekers on their website. Refugees were required to gain the Blue card to access Austria's labour market. Since April 21st, 2023, a work permit from AMS is no longer necessary. Refugees can also receive financial aid amounting to € 110 + € 80 per family member while working part time. Refugees can pursue an online job in other countries while staying in Austria. There is also the possibility of registering their business to obtain a trade license that enables Ukrainian refugees to become self-employed. There is however a challenge to most Ukrainian refugees who do not speak German to access the labor market since most jobs in Austria require business fluent German (ÖIF, 2023; AMS, 2023). The proposed change to Austria's Foreign Employment Act or the 'Ausländerbeschäftigungsgesetz' will enable Ukrainian refugees to find employment easily. This is also a positive step towards integrating them seamlessly and to reduce conflicts (Rosen, 2023).

At the beginning of the war in March 2022, according to a survey by the Peter Hajek institute, 85% of the 800 Austrians interviewed were in favor of welcoming refugees and displaced people from the war, with the platform of the Federal Support Agency having already provided 27,000 places of housing, with 100 hotels offering up their space for free. Of the interviewees, 75% of right-wing populist FPÖ party voters were also in favor of accepting Ukrainian refugees stating that they felt the crisis felt much closer to them (ORF, 2022; Haderer, 2022). But like many EU nations, Austria has also been displaying signs of host fatigue. Host fatigue is also referred to as Asylum fatigue or Refugee fatigue. Saunier and Meganck (2007, p. 59) explain asylum fatigue as "the reactions or policies of governments that negatively affect asylum seekers, which cloud the concepts of who asylum seekers are and what needs to be done to help them". This fatigue was displayed when the Mayor of St. Georgen im Attergau, Ferdinand Aigner shared his displeasure about wanting to end refugee support by ordering the dismantlement of refugee tents and temporary housing of 100 refugees in November 2022, leading to the UN refugee agency stepping in to request a compromise with the mayor so the refugees would not end up

homeless in winter (Euronews, 2022). The Austrian right-wing populist party, FPÖ has expressed its support of Kremlin politics and views Vladimir Putin's Russia as an effective measure against western liberalism and economic policies, going as far as signing a cooperation agreement with Putin in 2016. The political party has however not openly defended Moscow's aggression towards Ukraine but has chosen to portray Austrians as victims of European Union policies and western political elites (ECPS, 2023).

4.2.2 Organizational role of NGOs, public schools, and their respective interview participants

To enrich the data collection process, various NGOs represented by people in different roles were selected for the interview to gain a wide range of perspectives and opinions. Each of these NGOs, their representatives and how they cater to the needs of the refugees including housing, food, physical and mental health care, education, labor integration, emergency services etc. are discussed below.

4.2.2.1 Volkshilfe

According to their website, Volkshilfe is a "non-profit, non-partisan, and non-denominational welfare organization" that was established in 1947 (Volkshilfe, 2023). They are actively involved in various social movements, humanitarian aids, crowd funding, and volunteering work for the Ukraine refugee cause.

Interview participant - P4, the Refugee Care Lead at Volkshilfe was interviewed to understand the role of the NGO further. Her account is presented below.

Volkshilfe is the first organization and P4 is the first contact person for any refugee arriving in Vienna. She has been in the role for over a year and was specifically hired by the NGO for the Ukraine refugee project. P4 speaks Russian, Ukrainian, English, and German making her a suitable person to translate requests and communicate with incoming refugees and putting them in touch with services in Austria. Volkshilfe is the arrival centre for Ukrainian refugees and functions 24 hours and 7 days of the week, ready to receive refugees even in the middle of the night. They have been providing emergency and temporary accommodation at a building in Hütteldorf that used to be a former hostel

for over 100 Ukrainians until they can find something more permanent. People come to them for accommodation, information about schools and other services, basic care, emotional support, or a temporary place to stay while transiting on their way to another city. Volkshilfe has a wealth of information about volunteers and is well connected with other NGOs in Austria like Caritas and SOS Kinderdorf and redirect the refugees to them for requests that they're unable to cater to. For e.g., refugees who need assistance with paperwork and documentation are put in touch with the 'Beratungszentrum' or the advice center which is legally eligible to help schedule appointments with the Embassy and help them with the paperwork. At their accommodation center, Volkshilfe takes care of all meals, snacks, beverages, toiletries, and hygiene needs for the refugees staying there. They also receive a lot of requests from parents of children who have suffered war trauma to provide services of a psychotherapist. Volkshilfe has been able to put them in touch with psychotherapists who live in Ukraine and provide online counselling so there's no language barrier. They also have partners within Vienna who provide the service and refugees are sent to them. German language classes are provided for registered refugees by either AMS for labour integration or schools for children. Volkshilfe helps connect them with these offices and helps with registration.

Volkshilfe has made provisions for children and students staying with them by organizing study rooms for children pursuing online school in Ukraine. Younger children who are not of school-going age are given toys and an exclusive playroom to keep them engaged. The hostel where the refugees are accommodated is equipped with a badminton court, ping pong table and a play area. P4 further elaborates that children who have suffered severe war traumas are mostly quiet, distant, not sociable and do not wish to engage in play. This is especially seen in teenagers and young adults. While demand for therapy has been rising, people providing the service are limited. So, refugees are often put on a waiting list for many weeks before they can see a counsellor. To ease this burden, Volkshilfe has introduced a buddy program where volunteers provide companionship to teens and young adult refugees who are lonely with football games, movie night, playtime etc. Children are also sent to Sunday schools held by the church in Vienna which is exclusively for Ukrainians. This provides an opportunity for children to socialize and meet other Ukrainians. They also have a library with Ukrainian books that children can access.

4.2.2.2 SOS Kinderdorf

SOS Kinderdorf is one of the most proactive and prominent NGOs working extensively towards the betterment of children in Austria since 1949. The organization is active in 137 countries and operates more than 550 SOS Children's Villages with over 1500 programs dedicated to children, youth, and family welfare (SOS Kinderdorf, 2023).

Two participants, P2 and P10 performing the role of Public Affairs Head and a Project Manager respectively at SOS Kinderdorf were interviewed to understand different perspectives of people working for the same NGO and the role they play in handling the refugee crisis.

Interviewee P2, the Public Affairs Head at SOS Kinderdorf has been working on the Child rights policy by representing the interests of children and adolescents in politics and public administration. She has been working at SOS Kinderdorf for 5 years on strategies for policies, programme ideation for refugees, and as a spokesperson for the media by engaging with journalists about the current situation and the need for change. She has exclusively been working on the issue of the rights for displaced children and adolescents since the war between Russia and Ukraine began. The functions of SOS Kinderdorf as per her account are described below.

Ever since the war broke out, SOS Kinderdorf has taken in over 300 Ukrainian refugees. 220 of these refugees are children. 80 are adolescents and adults who are either the parents or companions of these children. Children of all ages until 18 are taken in at SOS Kinderdorf. SOS Kinderdorf takes all round care of refugees by housing them, connecting them to other sources, paying for their medical and therapy needs, addressing their socio-educational needs, providing a support system for families, and supporting unaccompanied children. SOS Kinderdorf has their own inhouse psychiatrists and psychotherapist outpatient clinics in Vienna and Carinthia where refugees can get therapy for free. In Upper Austria and Tyrol where they do not have in house services, they have partners who provide the service.

SOS Kinderdorf currently has three major programmes for refugees. They are:
1. The "Guest Family Program" where the NGO connects the refugee kid with Austrian families that are willing to take them in. The NGO supports and advises the family on refugee care.

2. The "Family Program" aimed at families where they provide information and advice to refugee families on how they can organize their life in Austria. They also take care of medical needs and special needs like connecting them to therapists to deal with trauma, and education of children.

3. The "Caregiver program": SOS Kinderdorf has taken in a group of 50 children who fled Ukraine from a children's home/ orphanage along with three of their Ukrainian caregivers. All of them have been accommodated in a boarding house in Tyrol. The Ukrainian caregivers have been employed and paid salaries by SOS Kinderdorf to care for the children with additional Austrian caregivers hired to support the Ukrainian caregivers to bring up the service provided to meet Austrian standards of modern pedagogy.

SOS Kinderdorf connects children to the nearest 'Volksschule' or public school for education. Additionally, they provide self-organized extra German classes with SOS Children's village. This also enables Ukrainian adults to improve their German.

Another participant, P10 was also interviewed. She is the Project Manager at SOS Kinderdorf, and her team called the "Moving society" undertakes projects that help raise awareness about the rights of youth, children and their families and aims to motivate society to do the same. This includes the current refugee crisis for children. Their objective is to stand for the rights of children, to help children without parental care by taking care of them and making a positive impact on them. They also hope to make SOS Kinderdorf more recognisable and accessible for everyone. The team is also working towards building the organization's image as modern and progressive, and one that stands for children.

Their current project involves activism in public with a bike rally in Austrian cities by making noise about allocating more public spaces for children. They also have a campaign seeking politicians and society to enable children in schools to have bigger voices and to have those voices heard to make them comfortable and happy in schools and understand their needs. Many children were interviewed by this team who realised that children don't have a lot of say in their daily life in school and aim to change that.

They also have emergency help for Ukrainians with the 'Family Café' at Hauptbanhoff for refugees travelling to Vienna or transiting through to get together and seek help from volunteers. Their school Project 'SOS Herz Kiste' or Heart box has designed toolboxes

for children to enable them with social learning. This helps children understand the importance of expressing their feelings, and understanding empathy, strengths, weaknesses etc., to help them with emotional growth. P4 shares that workshops can become a little challenging to navigate for volunteers in the project while dealing with refugee children since the topic of feelings also brings up heavier emotions like fear, uncertainty, and trauma that they've encountered, which the volunteers are often not qualified enough to handle.

4.2.2.3 Steiermark Hilft

Steiermark hilft, an organization founded by a group of 7 women in the Styria province of Austria began in 2015 to cater to the needs of refugees coming from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The organization has been actively involved in supporting Ukrainian refugees by housing over 300 refugees since the war began (Steiermark hilft, 2023).

Interview participant P3 is the Co-founder and board member of the association "Graz: donation convoy" for refugees. She holds a full-time employment position at the coordination office Arbeit plus - Soziale Unternehmen Steiermark, which networks non-profits throughout Styria that strive to reintegrate people into the labour market. Apart from her employment, she volunteers to coordinate donations at Steiermark hilft. She is a distinguished humanitarian who received the Human Rights Award from the City of Graz this year for her commitment to the "Weekend for Moria" campaign committed to a humane and human rights-compliant asylum policy (Steiermark hilft, 2023). Interviewee P3 details her duties and the functions of Steiermark hilft at supporting Ukrainian refugees in the interview which is described below.

P3 has actively been engaging with politicians and law makers in light of the Ukrainian refugee crisis for policy information, help, and need for change through emails and campaigns. Steiermark hilft has set up a Facebook group for Ukrainian refugees where questions and enquiries are posted by the refugees which are answered and handled by them.

Steiermark hilft took in 300 refugees of which 200 are children. They began with housing the refugees in organized apartments with furniture and other amenities to make them comfortable. They are supporting 300 other refugees with online guidance. P3 explains that the aim of Steiermark hilft is to help refugees in every way they can when a request is put forth. Like Volkshilfe, they are also a hub for information and putting the refugees

in touch with their contacts and network of experts, doctors, schools, therapists, governmental aid, and a wide range of refugee requirements when they are unable to cater to the service themselves. They also connect traumatized victims with therapists who speak Ukrainian and Russian.

Steiermark hilft supports children from ages 0 till they attain University age. The NGO took in four pregnant women who arrived at the beginning of the war and supported them by providing them maternity care and footing their medical bills and infant needs including formula, clothing, and diapers. They also put families and children in touch with public schools and help them enrol there. They also provide online German courses for refugees outside of Graz in rural areas of Styria that have no access to courses. The NGO went an extra mile to make the lives of the refugees better by organising a summer camp for two weeks for 200 children in 2022 where the children spent their time playing by the lake and getting German lessons, with an aim to distract them from the war suffering and to give their distressed parents a much-needed break.

4.2.2.4 Cards for Ukraine and Weight of the World

Cards for Ukraine is single handedly led by Tanja Maier to provide basic needed for Ukrainian refugees in Austria. She not only founded this initiative but also details the war, the refugee crisis, and the lack of resources to feed them to reach out to more people by writing in her blog, Weight of the World. A mother of three, she is an exemplary example of Austrian citizens taking up volunteering work when the need arose to support refugees. Tanja who is interview participant, P6 began by helping refugees arriving in Vienna or transiting through Vienna at the Hauptbahnhof or central train station by literally running around the platform and providing immediate assistance, food etc to Ukrainians. By April 2022, she noticed that the food stand by the NGO Caritas at the Hauptbahnhof was meant to feed only those refugees who would travel onward from Vienna and not those who chose to stay. Meanwhile the refugees in Vienna still did not have access to an allowance. Refugees sometimes had to wait weeks and months before receiving any kind of financial aid from the Austrian government. This urgent and disproportionate demand and supply in refugee needs, and watching refugees being turned away from a meal inspired Tanja to start Cards for Ukraine. She soon amassed a following of almost 10,000 people on Twitter (Tanja Maier twitter handle, 2023) while posting about

the crisis. She also made a Telegram group with all her contacts and began posting there for crowd funding.

She began as a volunteer by handing out money to those who needed it most to buy food and groceries. Soon, with the help of the internet, Tanja began receiving messages about other willing contributors who began sending her money. She decided there was more dignity in giving out gift cards to people, so they would have the power of choice. She bought € 50 gift cards from supermarket chains like Hofer, Spar and Billa and began handing out or sending these gift cards in an envelope to refugees sending their temporary addresses with a focus on mothers and children, the disabled and the elderly.

A computer savvy volunteer, Mario came forward and helped her set up a website with bank details and an address where people could send her their contributions or ask for donations (Cards for Ukraine, 2023). More than a year after the war began, Tanja is still able to provide for refugees due to her accountability and transparency. She posts pictures of the receipts from groceries, the food cards, and their happy recipients on her Twitter account for her donors to access and to inspire more people to donate to this cause. She also has a wealth of information about the services other NGOs provide and guides refugees to the exact service and people who can help them. Tanja has been extensively rallying for change against outdated and rigid laws that are detrimental to refugees by connecting with politicians and policy makers. This is explored in depth in the next section. Figures 15 to 19 below capture Tanja's work on Twitter.

Figure 15 and 16: Gift cards from supermarket chain Hofer sent out by Tanja to pensioners who only receive an allowance of €40 per month by the Austrian government.

Figure 17: Tanja shares a copy of a receipt of groceries from supermarket EuroSpar.
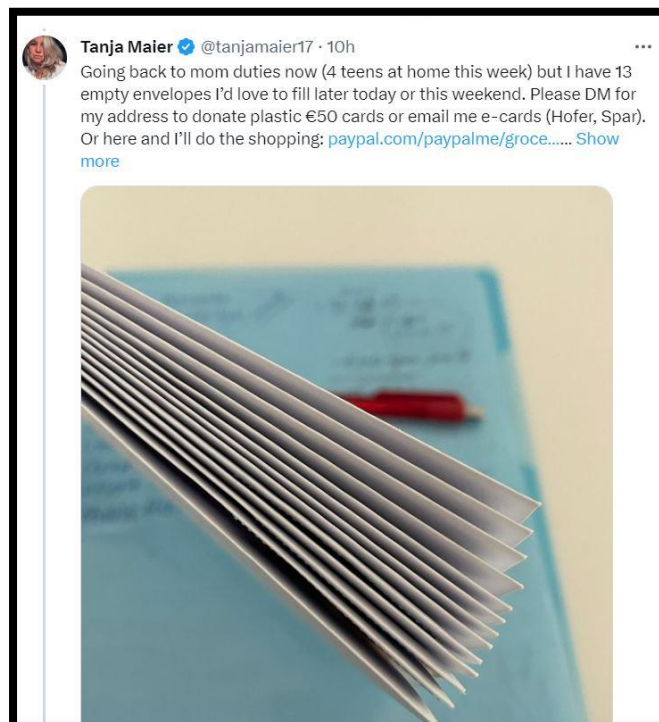
Figure 19: Tanja shares a picture of a happy recipient of the food and groceries.

4.2.2.5 Volksschule

It is compulsory for all children between the ages 6 and 16 in Austria to attend school (Österreich gov, 2023). Ukrainian refugee children will need to enroll themselves in the Volksschule in Austria along with everyone else. However, these children are taught in a separate classroom till they are able to pass the mandatory MIKA-D test before being integrated with the other Austrian children. This issue is explored in depth in the next section. For this study, two teachers, P1 and P5 were interviewed to get perspective from the teachers who are directly involved in educating refugee children.

Interviewee P1 is a teacher at the Volksschule in Klosterneuburg in the federal province of Lower Austria. She teaches German to nine Ukrainian refugee children aged between 6 and 11 from grades 1 to 4. She also provides 1 on 1 tutoring to children who need special

care. Children enrolled here came to Austria early on with their parents before or at the beginning of the war, and hence were spared war trauma. Since most children enrolled here are very young, they have been able to quickly grasp German and were integrated into regular class with Austrian child. They study Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. They also learn English as a second language. During their initial day, most children preferred going back to Ukraine, but with the class integration, the Ukrainian children now have friends and show an inclination towards learning German and wanting to stay in Austria. The teachers are in regular touch with Ukrainian parents to understand the child's needs and leaning environment via text messages using a designated smartphone app that can be translated to Ukrainian from German by the parents. The children and teachers report a positive integration experience here.

Contrary to P1's experience at Volksschule in Klosterneuberg, interviewee P5, another teacher who also works at Volksschule in Sankt Lambrecht, a small town in the federal province of Styria, reports a different experience.

P5, who is also a teacher of Ukrainian-Russian origin speaks Ukrainian, Russian and German. Her niche expertise was sought after by the Ministry of Education when she was referred by volunteers from her previous organization. She began teaching 11 Ukrainian students in April 2022, between the ages of 11 and 16 years, but the numbers have since dropped in the last few months because most Ukrainian students have been returning home. P5 recounts episodes of frustrated children struggling and lacking the motivation to learn German. This has been explored in depth in the next section.

4.2.2.6 Caritas

Caritas is one of the biggest NGOs doing extensive work in the refugee aid space in Austria. But due to the lack of response from volunteers and representatives from Caritas for this study, this section is based on the details available on their website and the input provided by interview participants P7 and P8 who are students holding refugee status in Austria and are recipients of the humanitarian aid provided by Caritas.

Caritas focuses on four major areas to support refugees – counselling, housing, education and job integration, and society integration. Caritas Asylum Centre provides basic care

for all eligible refugees to cover rent and food allowance or accommodation in a basic care facility, clothing allowance, health insurance and medical benefits. It also provides social counselling to assist refugees in official matters, advice on asylum and immigration laws, childcare, education for children, information on the housing market, job search and training. They also offer Mobile Refugee Support in Lower Austria where they meet refugees to counsel them on the above-mentioned matters. Caritas has launched project TÖBÖ or Meeting Point Austria in Lower Austria where people eligible for asylum, subsidiary protection and migrants are provided advice on German courses, German examinations, educational matters, courses for children, social counselling, and advice on job market integration. The NGO also offers return assistance to those refugees wanting to return to their home countries with advice on legal and social circumstances, basic care, obtaining travel documents, establishing contact with family members or relatives in their home country, airline ticket booking, and mediating with local aid organizations in the home country. The NGO also arranges German courses for children and adults to learn German from elementary to advanced levels. Caritas is also working to provide housing to refugees, especially minors who are unaccompanied by adults in shared flats and dormitories. They also provide psychosocial offers to refugees suffering from war trauma and mental health issues with free psychotherapy and psychological care. Caritas also aims to integrate refugees into society with cultural events, games and sports and other get-together to bring people of different backgrounds together to coexist and thrive together (Caritas, 2023). Interviewees P7 and P8 share their experience of having received rent and food allowance of € 800 once every three months and clothing allowance of € 50 from Caritas since they hold the Blue Card which is the equivalent of refugee status in Austria.

4.2.3 Institutional drawbacks in the Austrian government.

The ten qualitative interviews conducted with people directly involved in or affected by the outcome of the current refugee policy in Austria throw light on the shortcomings of the laws and policies on the institutional level. Austria, like other EU nations has seen a spike in refugees in the last decade with over 88,340 applications seeking asylum in 2015. Austria signed the Geneva convention in 1955 for the fundamental and human rights of the refugees which was supplemented again in 1973 (Josipovic and Reeger, 2019). The

interview participants P2, P3 and P4 trying to work with policy makers and politicians claim that Austrian laws for refugees are outdated, rigid and no longer suit the current need, specially criticizing the amendments made in the education space for refugee integration in schools passed by the conservative government in 2016-17. Institutional failure of the policies and laws often translates into challenges for social workers, volunteers, and NGOs. Based on the opinions and struggles shared by the interviewees, this section describes the laws and status quo of policies that are detrimental to refugees.

A common criticism voiced by all interview participants who ran NGOs or volunteered with refugees was the lack of a solid legal framework on how to approach the incoming refugees. Interviewee P2, a Public Affairs Head at SOS Kinderdorf shares that legal policies for refugee children were unclear at the beginning of the war for the first 3 to 4 months. There was a lack of clarity in the accommodation needs, food supplies, childcare policies, education, and laws governing the treatment of refugee children. She recalls 80% of the work in the first 3 months being spent on finding a solid framework, having to intervene with the public policy on how refugee care can be regulated, how to connect the kids to schools etc. An actual framework was given by the Austrian government only by September 2022, almost 7 months after the war began. Her criticism of the system extended to the treatment meted out to Ukrainian children in the SOS Children's Village compared to the care Austrian children received. Ukrainian refugee children received lesser donations from Federal states for SOS Children's Village compared to their Austrian counterparts. P2's team has since been fighting this discrimination.

Interviewee P6 recalls the summer 2022 to be chaotic when it came to organizing schools for refugee children by the Austrian government without a legal framework on how to proceed, with refugee parents trying to enroll their children for the next academic year in September. An entire dormitary of Ukrainian children who were unaccompanied by adults were forgotten while places in schools were being allotted. When volunteers and NGOs approached Stadt Wien, P6 claims that the authorities were "clueless" about the statistics on the number of refugee children seeking a spot in school and had to rely on the information given by the volunteers. The burden of connecting these children to schools fell on the shoulders of the volunteers.

One of the biggest criticisms expressed by the interviewees was the way education for refugee children is handled in Austria. The requirement to pass the MIKA – D, a German

test that determines whether refugee children are eligible to be integrated along with Austrian children is harshly condemned by them. Interviewee P2 - a Public Affairs Head, P3 – the co-founder of an NGO, P6 – the founder of an NGO, a volunteer and a blogger, P1 and P5 who are public school teachers and P9, the mother of a refugee child severely critiqued the Austrian integration system of education, saying they don't believe that separating Ukrainian children from Austrians is the most efficient model for refugee integration and have been trying to raise this with policy makers. The integration model takes a bunch of children of different age groups, none of whom speak German and puts them in one classroom and expects them to become proficient in German by separating them from their German speaking peers. P6 argues that the Austrian school system hasn't been reformed in decades and that it is extremely rigid. The MIKA D test is particularly problematic in Vienna due to the high number of Ukrainian refugee children here. Additionally, P6 explains how the MIKA - D is mostly a verbal test, not backed by a publicly available scale on how it is graded and is the subjective decision of the teacher who discerns whether or not a child is eligible to be integrated with other Austrian children. Sometimes, this decision could even stem from personal bias and prejudices. For the 'social workday' project given by the teacher in her daughter's Gymnasium, interviewee P6 tried finding an integration class of native German speakers with Ukrainian refugee children to pursue the project together but claims that none of the teachers were willing to help.

The children are also not being graded or taught subjects other than German because they are not placed in the normal class. The presence of the MIKA-D enables teachers to hold back or detain children in the same grade and make them repeat the year. This has been traumatizing for children who are pushed to pursue 3rd grade for the 3rd time, or a 10-year-old being forced to go into 2nd grade. This decision is pushing more and more moms to go back to Ukraine this summer irrespective of the war situation. There are positive cases of children picking up German fast and integrating into schools as per interviewee P1. But this is a small number, and mostly applicable to very young children under the age of 8. It becomes increasingly harder for older children to learn German due to inherent technical differences in the grammar between German and Ukrainian languages. Since it is not compulsory for children over the age of 15 in Austria to attend schools, P6 claims that many children who are not academically sound and are deterred from failing the MIKA-D test multiple times as 13- and 14-year-olds, simply end up doing nothing. They

do not attend schools regularly, or end up going every other day, and are often herded to the polytechnic schools against their interests simply to keep them occupied. Figure 20 shows the note handed to a refugee parent informing her about her child failing the MIKA D and must therefore repeat the 5th grade. The parents are asked to acknowledge the note with a signature below without room for discussion. The blog, Weight of the world explores this problem in depth (Maier, 2023).
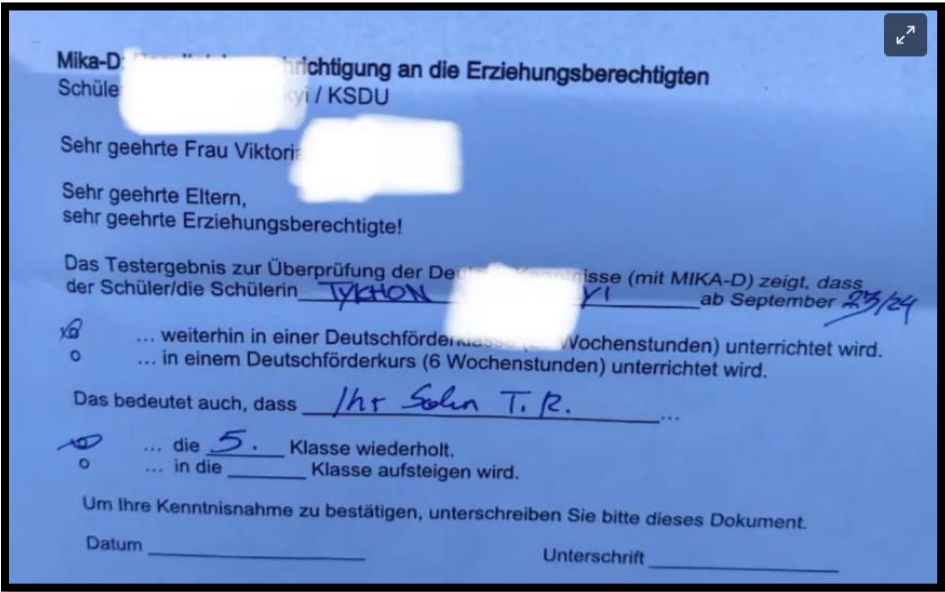
Figure 20: The note handed to parents when their child fails the MIKA-D test.

Additionally, for older Ukrainian refugee children cannot attend 'after care' lessons following regular school. They are sent home at 12 in the noon, and it is sometimes a whole afternoon of lost language practice. P6, who is a mother to three children at the Gymnasium level shares that even regular Austrians whose children are in Gymnasium level and above complain about this broken system where they need to put children up with private tutoring after regular class to keep up with their academic load. Private tutoring is often expensive and not something the refugees are able to afford.

Figure 21: Tanja Maier (P6) shares her criticism of the MIKA-D on Twitter.

Austrian laws state that children above the age of 6 must compulsorily attend Austrian schools and the only exception to this is being home schooled in the German language. This is a huge disadvantage for Ukrainian refugee parents since they do not know German and their children do not have the provision of attending Austrian schools until they pass the MIKA-D test. Additionally, there is no provision for kindergarten in rural Austrian towns. So, the responsibility of home-schooling children falls on the parents.

Most Ukrainian children have been continuing their education online in their Ukrainian schools. Ukraine currently has a great online school system. After tackling the Covid pandemic, going into war, and educating children in shelters, Ukraine has transformed its educational model completely to suit the online medium. They have developed a great online education system and have grown accustomed to it by making it flexible through live lessons on applications like WhatsApp, Telegram, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom and even sharing assignments and pre-recorded videos for children to revisit at a later time. But with Austria's compulsory school model, refugee children are forced to attend 5 hours of Austrian school every morning in addition to 6 hours of Ukrainian school in the after-noon which is extremely demanding.

Interviewees P2, P3, P6 and P9 expressed severe disapproval about children having to pursue two schools every day with double the assignments leaving them no time to spare for play, recreation, or extracurricular activities. In the middle of an ongoing war, with the anxiety of the safety of their family members retained to fight the war, the kids are put under incredible pressure to pursue two schools, causing them mental and psychological distress. This issue was brought up by the volunteers with Daniel Landau who is working on the official side of the project at WU from the Federal Ministry for Refugees, requesting that the law be amended to accommodate the refugees asking them to not make it mandatory for Ukrainian children who are already doing Ukrainian school to also pursue Austrian schools, but were turned away by the authorities claiming "the law is the law" even to those refugees who want to go back home. Hence, there is no flexibility for children even at the cost of their mental health.

The challenge magnifies for older children who are unable to quickly learn German. They are held back from secondary and higher education without passing MIKA-D and are instead directed to pursue apprenticeships. But this too comes with a disadvantage. According to interviewee P3, B1 level German is expected of older children for apprenticeships since all the apprentice work available in Styria are a blend of practical learning in the company with theoretical learning in vocational school. But companies are skeptical about hiring refugees due to uncertainty in the time they are allowed to stay in Austria. P3 claims that most companies are unwilling to invest time, effort, and resources into refugee children for apprenticeships since they are unsure about the duration of their stay.

Interviewee P6 also shares that some of the refugee parents who don't have a home to go back to, especially in the occupied territory in the eastern regions of Ukraine have been trying their best to persist in Austria if their children are to be educated and putting in an immense effort to focus on Austrian schools. Some of them are even using their allowance to get personal tutors in German to push their kids to learn the language, and doing everything they can to ensure their kids get an education. But it is difficult to become proficient in German when children are not surrounded by others who speak German. The system is counter intuitive.

According to interviewees P2, P3 and P6, there is no contact or collaboration between NGOs, the municipality, the Austrian government, law makers and politicians. There is no flow of information or framework within the system. Their requests often fall on deaf ears and authorities do not bother to respond. They argue that many local politicians are removed from reality and have no idea about the challenges faced by the refugees or NGOs and volunteers on the ground. After sharing a post about the terrible living conditions of children in an Austrian town on Twitter which went viral, P6 was able to grab the attention of the deputy mayor of the town who reached out to her and requested the address of the said accommodation. She recounts that after inspecting the property, the mayor requested the NGOs to get together and help fix the issue instead of offering support from the state. According to the interviewees, NGOs are overworked and frustrated and believe that many right-wing politicians couldn't care less because they believe the refugees will leave on their own if the conditions are made unbearable for them to live.

Refugees seeking asylum are temporarily housed in hotels, dormitories, or hostels by the Austrian government. A lot of these facilities lack access to a kitchen and are not equipped with necessary amenities. Figure 22 elaborates this problem. The provision to be eligible for refugee status, and subsequently an allowance requires strict documentation and paperwork which most refugees lack. Pensioners are eligible for an allowance of € 40 per month which barely makes ends meet. The same goes for families who receive €260 and €330 for food and rent per month respectively in Vienna (Asylum database, 2023). Figure 23 elucidates this problem.

Figure 22: Tanja shares a message from a pensioner living in a hotel without kitchen access.
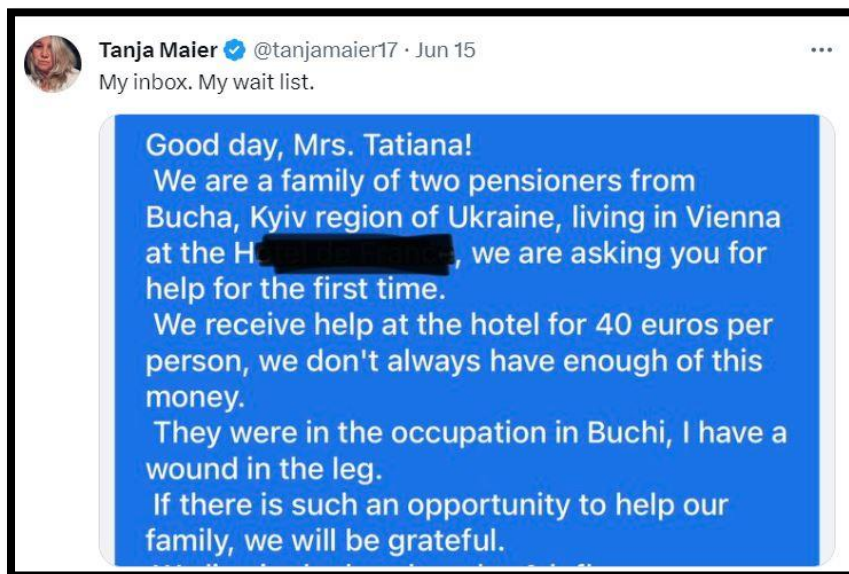
Figure 23: Tanja shares a message from pensioners requesting help.

Interviewee P3 shares that refugees with disability are excluded from the disability law in Austria and therefore have no access to services and special treatments and therapies they need in their daily life making their lives difficult. Many refugees specially the cancer patients and diabetics chose to come to Austria specifically for their health care system. They are supported by NGOs while they await asylum and accommodation. Gaining the blue card status also needs documentation from the refugees. Many mothers complain of the immense paperwork and bureaucracy involved in the process. They forget certain documentation while fleeing their country under duress, and often have to go back to retrieve it for allowance and other purposes. But school systems allow them no flexibility in this regard. Mothers are being fined in Austria if their children miss school. Some refugee mothers are forced to go back and forth between Ukraine and Austria to pick up their new passports, paperwork and important documents or see loved ones back home for a week and take the children with them. But when they return, they are slapped with a fine of 200 € for the child missing 8 days of school. They can neither leave the children alone in Austria nor are spared from submitting documentation.

P6 also explains that if refugees take an allowance from the State and are also given temporary housing, it prevents them from working and limits how much they can earn. If their salary is above the bracket issued, then they lose their allowance and housing. Thus, it is counter intuitive for labor integration. This law used to be applied to Syrian Asylum seekers. Ukrainian refugees are put in the same category as asylum seekers even though it has been mandated by the EU that they already have temporary protection which means they are entitled to Mindesteinkommen or the basic minimum level of income which is about € 800 per month. But instead, they can only receive € 200. This is pushing some refugee parents to work illegally for little cash to counter the enormous financial stress. Figure 24 throws light on a combination of financial, educational, and bureaucratic challenges of a refugee mother.

Finally, all interviewees complain about the absence of a clear, legal framework in place in Austria on how to proceed with the refugee situation post March 2024 which is the due date mandated by the EU for refugees in European host countries.

Figure 24: Challenges faced by a refugee mother.

4.2.4 Challenges faced by Ukrainian refugee children under the age of 16.

As per the account of all the interviewees in this study, Ukrainian refugee children are tremendously distressed by the effects of the war, being separated from their families, having their fathers retained in Ukraine either to join the army or to continue working to provide financially for them and the fear of losing them. The children who left after the war began have witnessed immense tragedy and trauma from the bombing and shelling. They are also separated from their friends and peers to seek safety in a different country. Thus, the mental health of the children has already taken a hit. This is exacerbated in those that have suffered war wounds, injuries, or lost limbs according to interviewee P4. Additionally, disabled children do not receive treatment or special therapies that they need since Austrian disability law does not extend to refugee children. In the age of digital technology, most children have access to online news, and watching the war continue to unfold every day, destroying their homes and cities, killing their loved ones puts them under a lot of stress. Processing emotions like grief, stress and trauma is especially hard for children. Organizations like Caritas are offering psychotherapy for children. But due

to the stigma around mental health, most parents opt out of the option. According to interviewees P4, P5, P6 and P9, some children have been displaying worrisome physical symptoms like losing their hair or a decrease in their weight. P5 recalls one particular 12-year-old child rapidly shed her hair in a matter of weeks while being moody, distracted, and gloomy with no interest in class, and has been complaining about wanting to go home despite the war. Since Sankt Lambrecht is a small town, the children do not have a lot of extracurricular activities to engage in. Football fields and playgrounds require commuting by bus and are far away. Their only form of entertainment was skiing in the winter since Sankt Lambrecht is a ski resort.

While it is already a challenge to move to a foreign country, getting accustomed to life there, and make new friends, the children are confronted with the added struggle of being separated from the Austrian children at school. German is harder when the children converse in Ukrainian with each other. They are put in a class with other refugee children who are Turkish, Afghan or Serbian who also need remedial German lessons. Failing the MIKA – D test and being retained the same grade multiple times crushes the confidence of children. They cannot harness their full potential until they learn German. They could be extraordinary in Mathematics and Science but unless they learn German, they are not integrated into regular school or technical school. Academically proficient kids with excellent grades from Ukraine in their final year of Primary school are forced to repeat their years for not passing their German test, thus preventing them from being promoted to secondary schools which is causing them mental distress and frustration and taking a toll on their self-esteem to an extent where they've been urging parents to go back to Ukraine. Ukrainian parents want their children to finish secondary school or Matura instead of taking on apprenticeships, but older kids have no chance of managing this final exam in Austria without German. So, NGOs and volunteers have been trying to convince parents to put their children in this training programme, so their children have a chance in the labour market, but due to cultural taboo, most parents are not willing to let them pursue this training and are pushing their kids to attend online classes in Ukraine and write their final exams in Ukraine. Older children must attend Austrian school from 7:00 to 13:00 and Ukrainian school online from 14:00 to 18:00 which can be hectic leaving them no time to play or relax. Additionally, older children willing to take up apprenticeships also find it difficult to land companies since companies are unwilling to invest in these chil-

dren without a 3-year guarantee that they would stay till the end of the training. The current timeline decided by the EU for refugees to stay in host countries is March 2024 and this makes companies wary of hiring older children for apprenticeships since they do not want to invest time, resources, and effort in training them. Most children want to go back to Ukraine and hence are not motivated enough to put in effort to learn German. The prolonged war is also causing frustration in children who have begun to lose interest in academics.

4.2.5 Challenges faced by Ukrainian refugee students over the age of 16.

To understand the challenges of students over the age of 16, two participants P7 and P8 were selected for the interview. P7 and P8 who are currently 18 and 21 years old respectively come from Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital and hold refugee status in Austria. P8 who arrived on a student residence permit four years old now holds a blue card while putting a pause on her bachelor's degree. P7 arrived as a refugee in September 2022, and is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree at Modul, University in Vienna. She claims to have chosen Modul, a private university because the medium of instruction is English. Since Ukrainian schools teach English as a second language, she decides to opt for it, to avoid the hassle of having to learn German to be educated. Both P7 and P8 have parents and younger siblings who remained in Ukraine despite the war. P7's mother works as a beautician while her father is employed at a private firm. P8's situation is even more challenging given that her mother is a targeted journalist covering Russian atrocities while her father is a businessman who works in Moscow. Due to diplomatic complications, P8's father's passport is currently blocked, prohibiting him from leaving Russia. The entire family has been fragmented because of the war. Both interview participants speak about their fear of their families living in Ukraine amidst the shelling and bombing, with rockets and drone attacks on Kyiv every other day. They share details about their deteriorated mental health condition accompanied by anxiety, loneliness, and depression. They claim to have panic attacks each time their phones ring fearing the worst about their families. Since the air traffic is closed in Ukraine, the only means of transport to Austria is by road. P7's parents have been able to make the trip to see their daughter only once in nearly two years - by driving all night and leaving the next day to get back to work while P8 hasn't

seen her parents or siblings in over two years. Both P7 and P8's siblings aged between 12 and 14 refuse to leave Ukraine despite the war for intimidation of having to learn a new language and potentially missing out on education for 1-2 years. They are adamant about staying in Kyiv and are doing online school in Ukraine. Stadt Wien offers free German classes to refugees according to their website. P7 wrote to the Integration Foundation courses offered by them to register for the class multiple times but was met with no response.

P8 claims finance has been especially hard since the war began, and hence has picked up a full-time job instead of opting allowance to make ends meet and save up for her tuition. Her student residence permit was converted into a blue card, she was also provided with free ÖGK public health insurance by the Austrian government following her refugee status. She is however not entitled to any other type of allowance from the government. Since both P7 and P8 are over the age of 18, neither qualify for minor allowance or family allowance. P7 receives financial aid from Carita for rent and food amounting to € 800 and a second allowance of € 50 for clothing once every three months. She is also prohibited from taking on a part-time or full-time job if she is to have access to her food and rent allowance. This goes for paid internships too.

P8 shares that the rent allowance from Caritas is only eligible to those refugees who have crossed the Ukraine border after February 24th, 2022, and whose rent costs less than € 500 per month in Vienna. This makes her ineligible for rent and food allowance. This also implies that P7 and a lot of refugees who currently pay less than € 500 for rent will be losing their rent allowance from Caritas from September 2023 because apartment rents in Vienna are being increased to € 550 due to inflation while the allowance remains the same and does not factor in the inflation. The refugees have received no communication from Caritas regarding this as of June 2023.

The allowance from Caritas is also subjected to proper documentation and paperwork for refugees. Refugees who fled overnight or in a hurry, who lack documentation will not be able to access this allowance. P7 took a trip to Ukraine during Christmas break for 30 days to see her family and bring back her documents since she was denied allowance the first time owing to lack of paperwork. But Caritas' provision for leaving Austria is a maximum of 20 days. The refugees are expected to confirm their presence in Austria every 21 days to be able to receive allowance by showing the stamp on their passports. Hence,

P7 lost out on her allowance twice - once for the paperwork and once for being outside Austria for more than 20 days at once. These rules and guidelines are also not communicated to the refugees in advance. There is no written document circulated to inform refugees. So, most refugees often lose out on the allowance out of ignorance of the rules.

Both the students claim to have a good support system with their Ukrainian community in Austria on Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram. Any request for clothes, food, basic amenities or help with paperwork in the group is met with kind, willing people who are united with a strong sense of community. Both the girls show a strong inclination to go back to Ukraine once the war has ended to help rebuild Ukraine.

4.2.6 Challenges faced by NGOs, volunteers, founders, teachers, and social workers.

The institutional challenges of NGOs can be understood by the interviews conducted with their representatives. Some of the institutional challenges of NGOs translate into personal challenges for those working there as well. A common struggle reported by the interviewees is that NGOs are severely understaffed which can lead to heavy workload and stress for their employees. Interviewee P4 from Volkshilfe shares that she sometimes has to work 6-7 days a week including late night shifts to receive refugees since they are the first point of contact to those coming into Austria. The amount of people they receive daily is often more than they can handle. They are at full capacity in their accommodations and are overflowing already. P4 narrates that receiving traumatized refugees can be emotionally exhausting for the employees since they lack psychological skills on how to approach refugees afflicted by trauma. While they provide a comforting shoulder to cry on, they always recommend therapy. She also recounts the challenges of dealing with difficult people. Economically sound Ukrainians who had comfortable lives in Ukraine are unsatisfied with the services they receive as refugees. This is both understandable and exasperating for volunteers and employees. She also elaborates on experiencing emotional upheaval while confronting people who are missing an eye or a limb. Tending to cancer patients and people in wheelchairs and their needs can be very demanding and they don't often have the skill set or resources to help them.

According to P2 from SOS Kinderdorf, navigating the initial days of the war by setting up internal policies and provisions without a legal framework for refugee children was extremely challenging. P3 from Steiermark hilft shares about how intense volunteering work became post war. Putting together housing for 300 refugees who came into Graz from searching apartments, cleaning them, assigning them to families and being the point of contact for all requirements, catering to a wide range request like accompanying them to the doctor, helping with translation and Austrian paperwork, and fixing their broken gadgets amounted to a lot of work. Refugee laws have made it difficult for NGOs and volunteers to function. P3 and her NGO are fighting by writing letters and petitions to politicians for disability laws to be applied to Ukrainian refugee children with no success. They are currently funding their needs from fund raising and sometimes their own pockets but are upset that the volunteers are having to do what the state needs to be doing. According to P6 from Weight of the World and Cards for Ukraine, when the war began, no volunteer expected it to last this long. Most of them are burnt out physically and emotionally from the work they've been doing for over a year. Sometimes it becomes increasingly stressful with the flood of requests and emails she receives. Her donations come from all over the world and are dependent on a flow of regular donors who donate on a regular basis. This means being active on social networking sites to display her transparency and accountability with proof of their accomplishments which can get intense. Sometimes the requests outweigh the donations, and it becomes extremely hard to pick and choose who to send it to. P6 speaks Russian and Ukrainian and is one of the few volunteers who is able to converse with the refugees in Ukrainian. Hence, she is often overwhelmed by the emotional and psychological agony refugees are going through. The empathy can sometimes be exhausting and emotionally intense. The lack of collaboration between NGOs and the law makers and politicians puts extra workload on the NGOs and volunteers who are forced to clean up after the authorities. The therapy available for refugees is generally overflowing with demand and people often have to wait many weeks for an appointment. The responsibility of providing psychological comfort to distressed refugees falls on the network of volunteers. P6 has been reaching out to her therapist friend in New York to intervene and provide counselling. Due to language barriers, she must translate the therapist's words to the victims and vice versa. Figure 25 shows a heart wrenching loss faced by a refugee.
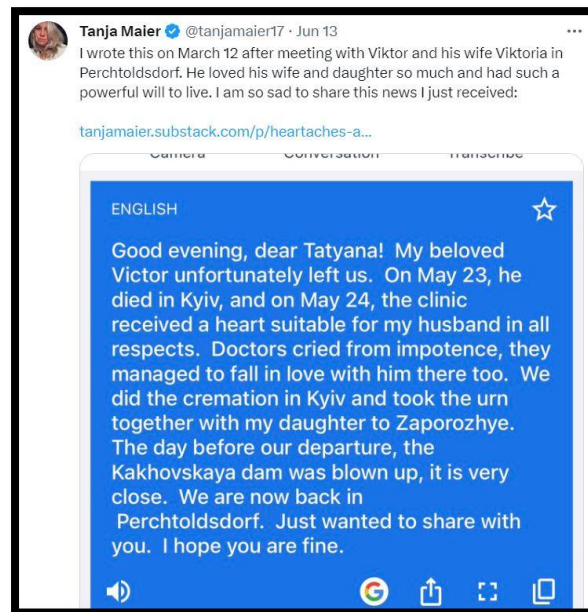
Figure 25: A refugee shares a heartrending message about personal loss.

Teachers P1 and P5 face different challenges. There is a dearth of teachers who can speak Ukrainian and German. P5 is the only teacher in the rural areas of Styria teaching 5 to 6 schools. Apart from German, she is also expected to cater to the holistic development of the child and communicate with parents as the only Ukraine and Russian speaking teacher. The students P5 teaches are teenagers and young adults exposed to war trauma and isolation from families with no access to therapy. Hence, they are often distracted or uninterested in school. It is challenging for her to hold their attention and motivate them to learn.

4.2.7 Personal challenges of refugee parents

Refugee parents face numerous challenges in the host country on a physical, mental, psychological, financial, logistical, bureaucratic and parental levels. Most refugee parents in Austria are mothers with their children who had to flee Ukraine. They are separated from the male members of their family either because they were mandated to join the army or to stay back and continue working to financially provide for their families. One such mother staying in Glinzendorf in Lower Austria was interviewed for this study.

Interview participant P9 came to Austria as a refugee with her then 12-year-old daughter in March 2022 after the war in Ukraine had begun. The father remained in Ukraine to provide for the family. P9 who used to work as a full time English teacher in Ukraine is unemployed in Austria. P9 recounts being taken in by a family friend in Austria while fleeing shelling and bombing. She received helped from NGO volunteers when they arrived in Austria to organize their paperwork and allowances. After a short stay with the family, they were able to get support from SOS Kinderdorf that connected them to another kind Austrian family who were willing to host a refugee mother and child duo. After staying with them for six months, the family supported them to get a rented apartment to move into and have been staying there since. She also counts on her Ukrainian community on Facebook for social and psychological comfort.

Interviewee P9 receives a basic refugee allowance and child support from the Austrian govt, along with an allowance from Caritas for food, rent and clothes which is barely enough to make ends meet. But according to her, the biggest challenge she faces is not being able to support her daughter with her academic demands in German. Her daughter, now 14, was made to repeat the same grade for the second time due to not passing the MIKA D test. While she attends classes for German every day, along with English, cooking, computer studies, and Mathematics once a week, she is still held back from other subjects till she can perfect German. She is also unable to attend Ukrainian school online due to scheduling conflicts. But interviewee P9 has made it a point to support her daughter in preparing for the 'Family education' system in Ukraine, a compulsory test held once a semester in Ukraine. Hence, the child is being home schooled by her mother in addition to Austrian school.

The child is in Mitte Schule with other refugee children of varying age groups from Syria, Turkey, and Serbia, where each child prefers the company of those belonging to their own nationality. They are also separated from the Austrian children. As the only Ukrainian child in her integration class in Glinzendorf, she is often on the receiving end of hostility, isolation, and loneliness. The lack of a social life coupled with war trauma has induced serious mental health deterioration in the child which greatly worries the mother. Having encountered shelling and bombing in Kherson before leaving Ukraine, the child carries trauma from war and displays concerning symptoms. The sound of thunder or fireworks

triggers her trauma and renders her paranoid and crying. Due to non-availability of therapists in Glinzendorf, the lack of a personal vehicle to commute and the infrequent public transport, the mother has been unable to take her daughter to a therapist and grows increasingly distressed by her child's mental health.

While her daughter's age is equivalent to the Gymnasium level in Austrian education, she is ineligible for it due her shortcomings with learning German. Interviewee P9 feels strongly about not letting her daughter miss another academic year and wants her to pursue higher education in a university in Ukraine. The uncertainty of an academic future for her daughter in Austria has pushed P9 to take a difficult decision to go back to Ukraine at the earliest possible opportunity before the start of the next academic year, despite the ongoing war.

So, the biggest challenge for refugee parents apart from the monumental task of survival itself is the education of their children.

4.2.8 How are volunteers and NGOs making the lives of refugees better?

NGOs, social workers, and volunteers in Austria have been working round the clock since March 2022 to make the lives of Ukrainian refugees better. They play a crucial role in enabling the refugees to have access to housing, food, clothing, health care and other benefits. But apart from the basic amenities, they have been going the extra mile to enrich the lives of refugees in Austria by creating a sense of belonging and community with church activities to foster social inclusion. Getting together in spiritual union with fellow country mates has been therapeutic for many refugees. This also enables them to find solace with each other and foster new friendships. Group therapy sessions have also been organized to enable refugees to openly discuss and process their loss and grief without being stifled with those facing a similar battle. Lots of generous donors have been donating to NGOs and volunteers to arrange day outs, boat trips, picnics, or get-togethers at leisure by the lake to bring the refugee community together for a few hours to ease their mental and psychological burdens. NGOs like SOS Kinderdorf arrange weekly café meets with members of the same community to evoke a sense of oneness and harness social

capital. Steiermark hilft arranged a summer camp for children for two weeks to enable them to cherish their childhood. Individuals like Tanja Maier have gone above and beyond in enriching the lives of refugees and to bring them momentary joy amidst a dark and difficult period. Inspired by the supermarket gift card idea, she bought McDonald gift cards for Ukrainian children and distributed them to those temporarily housed in hotels as shown in figure 26. Figure 27 captures an emotional message sent by a Ukrainian mother sharing her struggles, gratitude, and concerns with Tanja for her financial and emotional support.

Figure 26: McDonald gift cards for refugee children temporarily housed in hotels.

Figure 27: An emotional message shared by a refugee mother.

5 CONCLUSION

The study succeeded in answering the research question - *"What roles do Austrian NGOs and organizations play in integrating Ukrainian refugee children into their education system in light of the Russia vs Ukraine conflict?"*

The main objective of the research was to understand the challenges faced by Ukrainian refugee children, especially the disruption in their education due to the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia; and the various steps undertaken by Austrian NGOs, social workers, volunteers, and teachers to help mitigate these challenges. The study also aimed at exploring other barriers impacting children from being integrated into the Austrian education system which included war induced trauma, separation from families, language constraints, etc. The research was able to accomplish these set goals, while also additionally investigating institutional failure in Austrian laws and policies which severely impacted refugees. This section of the report concludes the study by summarizing the findings and discussing the limitations and future scope of the research.

5.1 Summary of findings

A few similar patterns, critiques and opinions were observed across interview participants performing different roles but working towards refugee upliftment in Austria. A deeper study of Austrian laws revealed many loopholes in the status quo. While Austria has been actively taking in refugees, the education sector for refugee children is fraught with unclear policies, outdated laws, and discrimination.

The most common criticism expressed by the interview participants was the absence of a solid, legal framework on how to approach the refugee situation in Austria when the war broke out in February 2022. This is imperative since there is still no valid framework in place about what is to be done about the refugees after March 2024, which is the current deadline issued by EU to the hosting countries. This absence of clarity is worsened by the lack of response and involvement by politicians, authoritative figures, and law makers. NGOs and volunteers working for refugee betterment have been striving to get the attention of policy makers to convey their challenges, but with no success.

There is also a paucity when it comes to interaction and coordination between different NGOs and organizations to streamline their services to address the needs of the refugees

better. If NGOs are united in their front and open to dialogue with one another, they could form a symbiotic relationship that benefits both the parties and the refugees.

The biggest hindrance to refugee children getting an education is rooted in the MIKA – D test and the separation of Austrian children from the refugees. It is counter intuitive to expect non-German speaking children to learn the language swiftly when they never come in contact with their German speaking peers. This policy is especially harsh on older children who struggle to grasp the language and are detained in the same grade. This has been taking a mighty toll on the mental health, confidence and self-esteem of children who have begun to doubt their academic capabilities based on their ability to learn a foreign language in a stressful, isolated situation. This also plays into the cultural stigma for Ukrainian parents for whom their children repeating a year is taboo and a source of great shame and humiliation since it is construed as a sign of failure on the part of the child and not the system. This has also led them to push children to pursue two schools – the Austrian and Ukrainian every day. The rigid and relentless Austrian laws for education have made it impossible for refugees to simply pursue their own system of online education from Ukraine. The attitude of the parents and the inflexible educational laws in Austria which are inconsiderate to the mental health of already distressed refugee children have a deep impact on them.

This study observes an unfortunate, lost generation for Ukrainian children who first had to battle the covid-19 pandemic, and then a life-changing war followed by a refugee life of living in limbo for more than a year and counting, with their futures looking bleak and uncertain, instead of a rich childhood with quality education to shape their lives.

While the NGOs in Austria play a crucial role in making the lives of the refugees better, their conditions on their eligibility of to access allowance and other services can make it challenging for refugees to navigate. But despite a few shortcomings, the study concludes that NGOs, volunteers, and social workers have contributed to providing Ukrainian refugees dignity and a decent life amidst the crisis in a new country. They have not only been striving to provide better services and opportunities for the refugees but have also been fighting for their cause with law makers and politicians. The role of NGOs in integrating Ukrainian refugees into the Austrian education system and society is paramount and beneficial.

5.2 Limitations of present research

This research explored the various roles played by NGOs, volunteers, social workers, teachers, and their contributions towards refugee integration into the Austrian education system. Despite the exhaustive literature review, and the extensive data collection process that yields important information about the ongoing crisis, the research suffers from certain limitations.

Firstly, the findings from the study are applicable to the Austrian system alone. It investigates the challenges of Ukrainian refugees, NGOs, and other stakeholders in Austria, impacted by Austrian policies, and cannot be replicated or assumed to be applicable universally, since socio-economic, political, and legal environments differ from country to country, and so does the challenges of refugees in those countries. So, the summary of the study and any recommendations or changes proposed holds good only for Austria and also for a limited group of people. The purpose of qualitative research is not generalization, it is collecting empirical evidence about the identified challenges, and it is interpreted on the basis of the underlying concepts presented in the conceptual framework.

Secondly, the sample size for the interviewees was taken as 10 based on the willingness and availability of the participants. The study included various stakeholders involved in refugee integration like NGO founders, teachers, employees, social workers, and the refugees themselves to get diverse perspectives of the crisis from every possible angle. For a qualitative study, the sample size and the nature of the stakeholder's contribution seemed reasonable enough to identify an exploratory gap in the existing literature. However, there are plenty of other NGOs and stakeholders in Austria who have a direct impact on refugee integration who were not considered for the study due to non-responsiveness and unwillingness to participate in the study. Hence, the research suffers from the shortcomings of not capturing their contributions which would better define the role of NGOs in the refugee integration process.

Finally, the study dealt with sensitive topics of war, isolation, suffering, trauma, fear, grief, pain, injury, and discomfort which are distressing and emotion-laden for not only the participants who were refugees or refugee parents, but also the volunteers and NGO employees dealing with them. The interviews with the refugees and the NGO employees

directly working with them were emotionally charged while narrating their harrowing experiences, which were navigated by pausing the recording, taking a break, changing the topic, and revisiting them later. Due to a break in the flow of data collection and the nature of the topic, some of the data could be withheld, avoided, or skipped over by the participant, which are common limitations of qualitative data collection involving sensitive topics.

5.3 Future research

This study provides a solid foundation in exploring refugee and institutional challenges impacted by legal and political manifestations in Austria. Given the limited sample size and approach to the study, there is immense scope for future research to expand the study to include several other NGOs in Austria working towards the refugee cause with a wider range of interview participants to include other stakeholders. Moreover, future research in this area can be expanded to dig deeper into the existing framework for refugees, further critique rigid and outdated policies that are detrimental to them and suggest changes to the laws to approach the refugee crisis in a flexible, beneficial, and pragmatic way by taking the present challenges into account and shaping laws to fulfill their current needs. The study can also investigate ways to tackle the institutional challenges of NGOs and personal challenges of NGO employees and volunteers to lessen their burden, streamline processes and coordination between the NGOs and the government, and find ways to invest in a symbiotic relationship favorable to all stakeholders involved.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guideline

General interview questions to be asked to teachers, volunteers, and social workers at NGOs working with Ukrainian refugees.

Note: All names will be quoted as anonymous unless the interviewee explicitly expresses the desire to be named.

****

Name of the organization:

Interviewee name:

Interviewee position at the organization:

Greetings, sir/ ma'am! I am Champaka Anantharamu, an MBA student from MODUL University Vienna. This questionnaire is regarding my master thesis to answer the research question, "*What role do Austrian NGOs and organizations play in integrating Ukrainian refugee children into their education system in light of the Russia vs Ukraine conflict?*"

The questions I would be asking are related to my research, and the interview should take no longer than 45 to 50 minutes. Please feel free to express your honest opinion, thoughts, and experiences. Before we begin, do you have any questions for me? If not, let us start the interview.

Informed consent:

By participating in the interview, you voluntarily consent to the collection and use of your information and to record the interview. Until the completion of the study period, the obtained data will be retained in my database and used only for the purposes of my master thesis (May 2023 - June 2023).

****

General questions to all interviewees:

1. What is your role at "name of the organization"? Please describe your job/ volunteering work.
2. For how long have you been in this position?
3. How did you find out about this teacher/ volunteering position?

   o General job application

   o Network connection

   o Platform

   o Word of mouth

   o Others - please specify.

4. How did your work change after the Russia versus Ukraine war started?
5. How does a typical day look like for you at "name of organization"?
6. How many refugees has "name of organization" taken in?
7. What kinds of services are offered for the different target groups (children, teens, young adults, adults)?

Questions related to children specific services:
8. How many of these refugees are children?
9. Which age groups of the children being supported are represented?
10. How would you describe your activities with the children being supported by you?
11. How is "name of organization" supporting children?

Questions related to psychological aspects:
12. Are the children you are working with confronted with war related psychological effects? Yes/ No
13. How many children in your groups are explicitly affected?
14. Is the organization helping them to cope with trauma?
15. Are they offering therapy? If yes, internal, or external?

Questions related to educational aspects:
16. Are there in-house educational offers provided or is "name of the organization" sending these children to public schools in Austria?
17. What is the current language of instruction for teaching?
18. Are there any teachers/ social workers/ volunteers interacting with the children in their native tongue – Ukrainian?

19. What are the challenges faced by children learning German?

20. Are there any other subjects like Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies taught as well, or are they paused temporarily to enable the children to master the language?

21. Are there any German courses offered in your organization?

22. Is German education integrated in schools or do the children need extra German classes?

23. How is the German education structured? Are there courses taught on A1/A2 format levels?

24. Are the children receptive to learning German? How are they coping with learning a foreign language in a foreign country?

25. Will there be any final exams for the children at the end of this academic year?

26. Is there a special program for older children (>16 years of age) to become skilled workers or apprenticeships? Is training available for them? What about the prospects of them entering the job market?

Questions related to the interviewees position in the organization:

27. As a teacher/ social worker/ volunteer, what are the challenges you are facing in your daily work?

28. What do you perceive to be the biggest barriers that are preventing children from transitioning to life in Austria?

29. Are you in contact with parents of the Ukrainian children to understand their personal environment and learning needs?

30. From your perspective, how does life look like for the refugee children now – after one year of war compared to the beginning when they had just arrived in Austria?

31. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Thank you very much for sharing your invaluable insights and time. They are much appreciated. Have a nice day!

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Appendix 2: Data coding and analysis

Sl. N o	Name	Code	Role	NGO/ Organization	Location (City, Federal Province)	Interview Method
1	Nina Glentzer	P1	Teacher	Volksschule (Public school)	Klosterneuberg, Lower Austria	Face to Face
2	Birgit Schatz	P2	Public Affairs Head	SOS Kinderdorf	Vienna, Vienna	Video call
3	Marion Bock	P3	Co-founder and board member of the association "Graz: Donation convoy",	Steiermark hilft	Graz, Styria	Video call
4	Anya Petrenko*	P4	Refugee-Care Lead	Volkshilfe	Vienna, Vienna	Face to Face

5	Elena Ivanov*	P5	Teacher	Volksschule (Public school)	Sankt Lambrecht, Styria	Video call
6	Tanja Maier	P6	Founder, Blogger, Volunteer	Cards for Ukraine and Weight of the world	Vienna, Vienna	Face to Face
7	Anna Androvik	P7	Student/ Refugee	-	Vienna, Vienna	Telephone call
8	Victoria Kravchenko*	P8	Student/ Refugee	-	Vienna, Vienna	Telephone call
9	Julia Olyinyk*	P9	Mother/ Refugee	-	Glinzendorf, Lower Austria	Telephone call
10	Isabella Schmidt*	P10	Project Manager	SOS Kinderdorf	Vienna, Vienna	Video call

Interview data coding/ labelling								
General condition of refugees	Housing	Allowance	Food	Education	Labor integration			
Organizational role of NGOs	Volkshilfe	SOS Kinderdorf	Steiermark hilft	Cards for Ukraine/ Weight of the world	Volksschule	Caritas - based on website details and interviewee's contribution about the NGO's work		
Role of the person being interviewed at that organization	P4	P2 and P10	P3	P6	P1 and P5	P7, P8, P9		
Current Approach to Education/ Institutional factors of education/ regulations in place	Contrast in education approach between different federal provinces. E.g.: between Vienna and Klosterneuberg or Sankt Lambrech Integration with other Austrian children versus Integration only after passing MIKA-D test.							
Institutional challenges of NGOs	Housing limitations	Under-staffed	Language barrier					
Personal challenges faced by - volunteers/ social workers/ teachers	Stress + extra hours	Dealing with difficult people	Unqualified to provide psychological support	Handling disability and serious health conditions	Language barrier			

Challenges faced by refugee children	Academic	Financial	Social life, Hostility	Not allowed to leave Austria for more than 20 days at once.	Language barrier	Attending two schools	Extra curricular activities	Future plans
Challenges faced by parents of refugee children	Financial	Mental	Emotional. separation from husbands and sons	Transport challenges	Labour integration	They want to go back to Ukraine and not stay here. On a subconscious level they don't want to integrate in Austria because this implies, they'll stay here forever. They don't care if their children integrate or not. They don't like their children being held back in classes. It is a source of great shame for them, and they see it as a reflection of their child's abilities.	Language barrier	

How are social workers, volunteers and NGOs making the lives of refugees better?	Church activities	Day at leisure (boat trip/ picnics)	Weekly Café meet with members of same community	Therapy	Finding solace/ friendship with other Ukrainian children			
Common pattern and perspectives seen across all educators/ volunteers who are involved in education:	The conservative government in Austria passed the law in 2016-17 for separating Ukrainian children from Austrians till they learnt German. All teachers and volunteers who are involved in refugee education strongly critique this law and separation because they believe it becomes harder for children to learn the language if they are separated form their peers. This gives rise to a host of problems.	They also critique the absence of a solid legal framework to approach refugees.	They are all directly or indirectly trying to get in touch with law makers, policy makers, politicians through various means to communicate their challenges.	They also believe mandating the MIKA-D test for all children to be integrated into regular classrooms is discouraging refugee children from pursuing school specially the older ones since they are made to repeat the year. This also plays into the cultural stigma for Ukrainian parents for whom their children repeating a year is taboo and a source of humiliation since it is construed as a sign of academic failure on the part of	Academically proficient kids with excellent grades from Ukraine in their final year of Primary school are forced to repeat their years for not having perfect German, thus preventing from being promoted to secondary schools which is causing them mental distress and taking a toll on their self esteem.	**Observation:** There can be better interaction and coordination between different NGOs and organizations to streamline services. NGOs aren't talking to each other enough. If they do, they could form a symbiotic relationship that benefits both and the refugees.	A lost generation for Ukrainian children - first with covid, then the war, then refugee life of living in limbo, not being certain of the future.	

				the child and not the sys- tem. Hence children are forced to at- tend two schools.					

Important responses from interview participants

P1:

Nina Glentzer - Current: Volksschule at Klosterneuberg; Previous: Volksschule at Marktgasse, Vienna.				
Role at the organization	Refugee children status	Challenges of children	Institutional factors of education	Challenges faced by Nina
Teacher at Volksschule - Teaches German, help with vocabulary. (Grade 1 to 4)	Kids here came here early on with their parents before or at the beginning of the war. Not providing trauma therapy.	Picking up German. Ukrainian has no articles like der, die, das or genders. Struggle with grammar and vocabulary.	Kids are tested based on MIKA-D test to determine if they are eligible for class.	Loss of continuity with children dropping out of school. Progress is affected.
Teacher since 10 years - German teacher from 2 years. Before war she was a Gym teacher.	Kids speak Ukrainian/ Russian and some German, but no English.	Older children must attend Austrian school from 7:00 to 13:00 and Ukrainian school online from 14:00 to 18:00. Very hectic and stressful. No time to play or relax.	Refugees are integrated with Austrian children based on MIKA D.	Not too stressful because the children are younger.
Provides 1 on 1 German tutoring to kids that need special care	Kids study Math, Science and Social Studies. Also learning English as 2nd language.		For struggling children - not passing MIKA D test are enrolled in extra German courses	

Tends to 9 Ukrainian refugee children - ages 6 to 11 (1st to 4th class)	Kids would prefer being in Ukraine. But with the class integration, they now have friends, and the younger ones show inclination towards learning German and wanting to stay in Austria. Some older ones want to go back.		Final exams - MIKA D test 3 times a year to determine if the child is ready to be promoted to next class	
	Nina sees a future for most kids in Austria. Most of them want to go back to Ukraine.		Teachers are in touch with parents regularly using text messages using a designated smartphone app that can be translated to German.	

P2:

Birgit Schatz - Public Affairs Head at SOS Kinderdorf			
Role at the organization	**Challenges of children**	**Role/ Services of NGO and status of refugees**	**Challenges faced by Birgit/ NGO**
Head of Public Affairs - Works on the Child rights policy of SOS Kinderdorf by representing the interests of children and adolescents towards politics and public administration.	Some children came to SOS Kinderdorf early on during the war. So, they haven't witnessed the full extent of war trauma. Some have and are receiving therapy.	Children of all ages until 18 are taken in at SOS Kinderdorf. SOS Kinderdorf took in 300 Ukrainian refugees. 220 of these are children (and keeps growing). 80 are adolescents and adults who are either the parents or companions of these children.	Legal policies for refugee children were unclear at the beginning of the war for 3-4 months. Lack of clarity in the accommodation, child care, education, what are the laws governing the treatment of refugee children, What are they laws when they come with a companion, what if the children come unaccompanied? etc., so unclear in the direction they wanted to go due to absence of a solid legal farmwork.
Working at SOS Kinderdorf for 5 years - Works on strategies for policies, programme ideation for refugees, communicates needs with journalists and the press, spokesperson with the media.	Biggest fear for children is the fear of losing their parents and guardians who had to stay back in Ukraine - specially fathers who joined the military.	SOS Kinderdorf takes all round care of refugees - Housing them, connecting them to other sources, paying for their medical and therapy needs, socio-educational needs, support system for families, support for unaccompanied children.	80% of the work in the first 3 months was spent on finding a solid framework. Had to intervene with the public policy on how refugee care can be regulated, how to connect the kids to schools etc. Solid framework was given by the Austrian govt only by September.

Has been working on the issue of the rights for displaced, children and adolescents since the war began.	When there are large groups of Ukrainian children, they are not integrated with other Austrian children till they pass the MIKA D test. Learning German becomes an additional challenge since they converse in Ukrainian with each other. They are put in class with other refugee children who are Turkish, Afghan or Serbian who also need remedial German lessons.	SOS Kinderdorf has their own in-house psychiatrists and psycho-therapist outpatient clinics in Vienna and Carinthia where refugees can get therapy for free. In Upper Austria and Tyrol where they do not have in house services, they have partners who provide the service.	Difference in the way Ukrainian childcare is treated versus Austrian child care. They receive lesser donation from Federal states for SOS Children's Village to care for Ukrainian children compared to the needs of Austrians. There is discrimination and the team is fighting to rectify it.
	Very challenging for children who are 15-16 years or older. They cannot harness their full potential until they learn German. They could be extraordinary in Math, Science but unless they learn German, they are not integrated into regular school or technical school, hence are frustrated with repeating school years till they pass MIKA D test. So they have additional programs to support them into apprenticeships or integrated them into labour market.	SOS Kinderdorf has 3 major programmes for refugees currently - 1: "Guest Family Program" where the NGO connects the refugee kid with families that are willing to take them in. The NGO supports and advises the family on refugee care.	Convincing Ukrainian parents to allow their children to attend 1 school in Austria instead of 2 schools (online Ukraine) everyday because it is stressful for the child.

	Realising that they cannot go back to Ukraine immediately like they had initially hoped since the places they come from along with education infrastructure have been destroyed.	2: For Full Families. They also provide information and advise to refugee families on how they can organize their life in Austria. They also take care of medical needs, special needs like connecting them to therapists to deal with trauma, and education of children. This is SOS Kinderdorf's 'Family program'.	
	Ukrainian displaced persons are in principle provided with basic services, but they need to be recognised as a refugee. After Geneva convention, they need to be moved from basic care to social assistance to get more money. There is no longer a test procedure in Austria to recognise Ukrainian displaced people as refugees. Hence it is harder for refugees to be independent and provide for the family. Fighting for equal refugee status for Ukrainian refugees. European Displaced Persons Directive has a quick fix for refugee residence but creates injustices.	3: Caregiver program. A group of 50 children fled Ukraine from a children's home/ orphanage with 3 Ukrainian caregivers. All of them along with their care givers have been accommodated by SOS Kinderdorf in a boarding house in Tirol. The Ukrainian caregivers are employed and paid salaries by SOS Kinderdorf to care for the children with additional Austrian caregivers hired to support the Ukrainian Caregivers to bring up the service to Austrian standards since Ukrainians are not very modern with their pedagogy.	

		SOS Kinderdorf connects kids to nearest Volksschule for education. Additionally they provide self-organized extra German classes with SOS Children's village. This also supports Ukrainian adults to improve their German.	
		SOS Kinderdorf doesn't believe in separating Ukrainian kids from Austrians is the most efficient model and has been trying to talk to policy makers, but this is the current legal system for education in Austria.	

P3:

Marion Bock - Steiermark hilft				
Role at the organization	**Refugee children status**	**Challenges of children**	**Role/ Services of NGO and status of refugees**	**Challenges faced by Marion/ Steiermark hilft**
Co-founder and board member of the association "Graz: donation convoy" for refugees along with 7 other women. She also coordinates donations at Steiermark hilft.	Children from ages 0 to university age are supported here.	Children have suffered war trauma - specially those who came in the middle of the war.	Took in 300 people in Syria of which 200 are children. Started with housing. Organized apartments with furniture and everything else to make them comfortable. Supporting 300 more with other guidance. They do not have clearly defined functions. Their aim is to help refugees in everyway they can when a request is put forth.	No official framework about how education for Ukrainian refugees in Austria which is a complex issue. There are still loops and issues. And the education system between Ukraine and Austria are very different.

Full time employee of the coordination office arbeitplus - Soziale Unternehmen Steiermark, which networks non-profit organizations throughout Styria that strive to reintegrate people who are far from the labor market and people who have returned to work. She volunteers apart from her regular job.	4 pregnant women arrived at the beginning of the war. Everything from maternity health care, medical bills, baby requirements from clothing to food were taken care.	The municipality office in Graz has put all Ukrainian children in one class and separated them from Austrian kids till they perfect German. Some schools in Graz have as less as 3-4 Ukrainian children who are cut off from other children. So, they have no playmates or social life and learning of the language becomes much more difficult without peers. So, the volunteers have decided not to send the parents/ children to this municipality office, but to instead approach schools themselves and request them to integrate them into the Austrian class.	Main function after housing: Being a hub for information and networking and putting the refugees in touch with their contacts and network of experts, doctors, schools, therapists, governmental aid, and a wide range of refugee requirements.	Work became very intense after the war. They put together housing for 300 people who came into Graz - everything from searching apartments, cleaning them, putting them together, assigning them to families. They are the point of contact for any requirements from the 300 families staying in Graz. They cater to every request from accompanying them to the doctor to help with translation (English), help with Austrian paperwork, broken washing machine/ gadgets in the house etc.
As part of her commitment to the "Weekend for Moria" campaign, whose activists are committed to a humane and human rights-compliant asylum policy, she received the Human Rights Award from the City of Graz this year.	B1 level German is expected of older children for apprenticeships since all the apprentice work available in Styria are a combination of practical learning in the company + theoretical learning in vocational school. Also, the Residence permit for this apprenticeship training is valid for 3-4	Focus of study is German with little Math and English. But otherwise, children have very little exposure to other subjects.	Organised summer camp for 200 kids last summer for 2 weeks to distract them from their distressed parents, playing at the lake, learning German etc.	Unlike Vienna, in Styria one of the biggest challenges is that there are no available spots for Ukrainian children in kindergartens since they are filled to maximum capacity with Austrian children. A large chunk of refugee children who came to Graz were of the kindergarten going age and had to be redirected instead to other service providers and organizations that hosted playgroups and childcare combined with German courses for the mothers so they can learn the language.

	years instead of the current RP which is 1 year.			
In 2015 when refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq came to Austria, 7 women founded Graz: donation convoy and did volunteering work. This extended to Ukrainian families coming to Styria in Feb 2022.		Ukrainian parents want their children to finish secondary school/ Matura instead of taking on apprenticeships, but older kids have no chance of managing this final exam. So, the volunteers are trying to convince parents to put their children in this training programme, so their children have a chance in the labour market, but the parents are not willing to let them pursue this training and are pushing their kids to attend online classes in Ukraine and write their final exams in Ukraine.	Providing online German courses for refugees outside of Graz in rural areas of Styria that have no access.	Refugee laws have made it difficult for NGOs and volunteers to function.

Writing emails to politicians and law makers for policy information, help etc.		Additionally, older children willing to do apprenticeships also find it difficult to land companies since companies are unwilling to invest in these children without a 3-year guarantee that they will stay till the end of the training. The current timeline decided by the EU for refugees to stay in host countries is March 2024 and this makes companies wary of hiring older children for apprenticeships since they do not want to invest time, resources, and effort in training them.	Putting families and children in touch with public schools and helping them enrol.	Marion and her NGO are fighting by writing letters and petitions to politicians for disability laws to be applied to Ukrainian refugee children with no success. They are currently funding their needs from fund raising and sometimes their own pockets, but they are very angry that the volunteers are having to do what the state needs to be doing.
They also have a Facebook group for Ukrainian refugees where questions and enquiries are posted by the refugees which are answered, handled by them.		Academically proficient kids with excellent grades from Ukraine in their final year of Primary school are forced to repeat their years for not having perfect German, thus preventing from being promoted to secondary schools which is causing them mental distress and frustration and taking a toll on their self esteem to an extent where they've been urging parents to go back to Ukraine.	Putting traumatized victims in touch with therapists who speak Ukrainian/ Russian.	

		Refugees with disability are excluded from the disability law in Austria and therefore no access to services and special treatments and therapies they need in their daily life making their lives difficult.		
		Kids under a lot of stress since they are exposed to the news, they watch about what is happening to their homes and cities.		

P4:

Anya Petrenko* - Volkshilfe			
Role at the organization	**Refugee children status/ Challenges**	**Role/ Services of NGO**	**Challenges faced by Anya/ Volkshilfe**
Refugee care lead - First contact person. Has been in the role since a year. Was specifically hired for the Ukraine refugee project.	Volkshilfe organises study rooms for children doing online school in Ukraine. Children studying in Austrian schools have moved out with their families to other apartments.	Arrival centre for Ukrainian refugees - First point of contact as soon as they arrive.	Extremely stressful and emotionally exhausting - Understaffed. Sometimes must work 6-7 days a week including night shifts.

Anya speaks Russian, Ukrainian, English and German making her a suitable person to communicate with incoming refugees and putting them in touch with services in Austria. Also acts as translator.	Younger children who are not of school-going age are given toys and a room for themselves to play.	Emergency and temporary accommodation centre in Hutteldorf in a building that used to be a former hostel for over 100 Ukrainians till they can find something more permanent.	The amount of people they receive daily is more than they can handle. They are at full capacity in accommodations and are overflowing already.
	The hostel where the refugees are accommodated has a badminton court, ping pong table and a play area to keep the children engaged.	People come to them for accommodation, information about schools and other services, basic care, emotional support, or a temporary place to stay while transiting on their way to another city. If Volkshilfe cannot provide the support, they put the refugees in touch with those who provide that service like Beratungszentrum to help schedule appointments with the Embassy and help with the paperwork.	Anya receives refugees all day long - some of them with severe traumas. She's the first point of contact as soon as they arrive. She feels she lacks the psychological knowledge of how to approach refugees afflicted by trauma.
	Children suffered severe war traumas - mostly quiet, distant, not sociable, don't want to play. Specially seen in teenage kids.	Food - all meals and snacks, Hygiene amenities are provided for the refugees staying here.	Dealing with difficult people. Economically sound people who had comfortable lives in Ukraine arrive in a Tesla or a Mercedes and are unsatisfied with the services they receive or having to wait for services.

	Demand for therapy is very high, but people providing the service is limited. So sometimes they must wait many weeks before they can see a counsellor.	Volkshilfe receives a lot of requests from parents of children who have trauma from war to provide services of a psychotherapist. Volkshilfe has been able to put them in touch with psychotherapists who live in Ukraine and provide online counselling so there's no language barrier. They also have partners within Vienna who provide the service and refugees are sent to them.	Experiencing emotional upheaval while confronting people who are missing an eye or a limb. Tending to cancer patients and people in wheelchairs and their needs can be very demanding and they don't often have the skills or resources to help them.
	They have a buddy program in Volkshilfe where volunteers provide companionship to teens and young adult refugees who are lonely with football games, movie night, playtime etc.	German language classes are provided for registered refugees by either AMS for labour integration or schools for children. Volkshilfe helps connect them with these offices and helps with registration.	Anya hopes the bureaucratic system in Austria becomes more flexible with better defined framework.
	Children are sent to Sunday schools held by the church in Vienna which is exclusively for Ukrainians. So, children can socialize and meet other Ukrainians. They also have a library with Ukrainian books that children can access.		

P5:

Elena Ivanov* - Volksschule, Sankt Lambrecht, Steiermark			
Role at the organization	**Refugee children status**	**Challenges of children**	**Challenges faced by Elena/ organization**
German Teacher of Ukrainian-Russian origin to Ukrainian children at Volksschule.	11- to 16-year-old children are the demographic.	The parents of the children want to stay in Austria till the war is over, but the children are fed up and want to go back and show no interest in academics.	Lack/ Dearth of teachers who can speak Ukrainian and German. She was the only teacher in that area teaching 5-6 schools. Quite stressful. She is also expected to cater to the holistic development of the child.
Speaks Ukrainian, Russian and German. So, she was referred by volunteers from her previous organization to the Ministry of Education who hired her.	Children are not graded on their German skills + they are given assurances by parents saying they will go back to Ukraine. Hence, they are not interested or motivated enough to put in effort to learn the language since they're going back to their countries anyway.	These children are not integrated with other Austrian children till they pass the MIKA D test. They are detained in the same year till they pass German. They sit in a separate class. So, they have no friends and social circle who play with them. Plus, they have online Ukrainian classes.	Students who are taught are teenagers and young adults exposed to war trauma and isolation from families. Hence, they are often distracted or uninterested in school. It is challenging for Elena to hold their attention and motivate them to learn.

138

She started teaching 11 Ukrainian students, but the numbers have been reducing from the last few months because they're returning to Ukraine.	Children are encouraged to take on apprenticeships, but parents don't want that for their children, and the children don't want to stay in Austria.	Caritas is providing psychotherapy. But parents are unwilling to take their kids to therapy due to stigma around mental health and because they don't believe in therapy. Some children have displayed concerning symptoms that are trans-cending into physical forms like losing their hair. One particular 12-year-old child rapidly shed her hair in a matter of weeks and displayed moody, dis-tracted, gloomy behaviour with no in-terest in class, and has been complain-ing about wanting to go home despite the war.	
		It's a very small town/ village. So the children have no extra curricular activi-ties to engage in. Football fields and playgrounds require commuting by bus and are far away. Their only form of entertainment is skiing in the winter since Sankt Lambrech is a ski resort.	

P6:

Tanja Maier - Cards for Ukraine and Weight of the world

Role at the organization	Challenges faced by Tanja	Institutional shortcomings
Founder and volunteer at Cards for Ukraine and blogger at Weight of the world. She's a mother of three.	When the war began, no volunteer expected it to last this long. Most of them are burnt out physically and emotionally from the work they've been doing for over a year. Sometimes it becomes increasingly stressful with the flood of requests and emails she receives.	Austrian school system hasn't been reformed in decades. It is extremely rigid. She also critiques the MIKA D tests. She also shares that it is particularly problematic in Vienna due to the high number of Ukrainian refugee children here. Lots of negative feedback about the integration of children
Used to help as a volunteer at the Hauptbahnof running around the platform and providing immediate assistance, food etc to Ukrainians. By April 2022, Tanja noticed that the food stand by Caritas was meant to feed only those refugees who would transit/ travel onward from Vienna and not those who chose to stay. Meanwhile the refugees in Vienna still didn't have access to an allowance. The disproportionate demand and supply and watching refugees being turned away from a meal inspired Tanja to start Cards for Ukraine. As a blogger, she also started Weight of the world, a blog that details the war, the refugee crisis, and the lack of resources to feed them. She soon amassed a following of almost 10 k people on Twitter and Facebook while posting about the crisis. She also made a telegram group with all her contacts and began posting there.	Her donations come from all over the world and are dependent on a flow of regular donors who donate on a regular basis. When she runs out of the gift cards she writes on twitter and the telegram group. Sometimes the requests outweigh the donations, and it becomes extremely hard to pick and choose who to send it to.	Ukrainian refugee children cannot attend 'after care' lessons after regular school. They are sent home at 12 in the noon, and it is a whole afternoon of lost language practice. Even regular Austrians whose children are in Gymnasium level complain about this broken system where they need to put children up with private tutoring after regular class to keep up with their academic load. Private tutoring is often expensive and not something the refugees are able to afford.

She began as a volunteer by handing out money to those who needed it most to buy food and groceries. Soon, with the help of the internet, Tanja began receiving messages about other willing contributors who began sending her money. She decided there was more dignity in giving out gift cards to people. She bought these gift cards from supermarket chains like Hofer, Spar and Billa and began handing out or sending these gift cards in an envelope to refugees with a focus on mothers and children, the disabled and the elderly.	Emotionally draining while dealing with personal crises. Tanja speaks Russian and Ukrainian and is one of the few volunteers who can converse with the refugees in Ukrainian. Hence, she is often overwhelmed by the emotional and psychological agony refugees are going through. The empathy can sometimes be exhausting and emotionally intense.	The integration model in Vienna takes a bunch of kids of different age groups - none of whom speak German and put them in one classroom and expects them to become proficient in German.
A computer savvy volunteer, Mario came forward and helped her set up a website with bank details and an address where people could send her their contributions.	There is no contact or collaboration between NGOs and the municipality and the Austrian govt and law makers/ politicians. Tanja shares that many local politicians are removed from reality and don't know what's happening. After sharing a post about the living conditions of children in an Austrian town on Twitter, a deputy mayor reached out to Tanja and requested the address of the said accommodation and returned to her asking for NGO contacts to help them.	For the 'social workday' project given by the teacher in her daughter's Gymnasium, Tanja tried finding an integration class of native German speakers with Ukrainian refugee children and none of the teachers were willing to help.
She posts pictures of the groceries, the food cards, the bills and the happy recipients in her twitter for accountability, transparency and inspire more people to help.	There is no legal framework on how to approach the refugees. When approached the politicians, they too had no idea about a solid legal requirement. Tanja also believes that a few right-wing politicians couldn't care less because they believe the refugees will leave on their own if the conditions are made unbearable for them to live.	Summer 2022 was chaotic when it came to organizing schools for refugee children by the Austrian govt. An entire dorm of Ukrainian children were forgotten last September while allotting places in schools and when volunteers and NGOs approached Stadt Wien, they had no clue about the statistics of how many children were even there and relied on the information given by the volunteers. The burden of connecting these kids to schools fell on the shoulders of the volunteers.

She also has a wealth of information about the services other NGOs provide and is able to guide refugees to the exact service/ people who can help them.	Many refugees specially the cancer patients and diabetics chose to come to Austria specifically for their health care system.	Severe criticism about the MIKA D test because it is totally subjective without a publicly available scale about how it is graded and is ultimately the teacher's decision about whether or not they are eligible to be integrated with other Austrian children. This decision could even stem from personal bias and prejudices. They are also not being graded or taught other subjects because they are not in the normal class. It traumatises children who will perhaps be pushed to do 3rd grade for the 3rd time or a 10-year-old is forced to go to 2nd grade. This decision is pushing more and more moms to go back to Ukraine this summer irrespective of the war situation.
	Lack of therapy providers. So, it falls on the network of volunteers to provide psychological comfort. Tanja has been reaching out to her friend in New York who is a therapist to intervene and provide counselling. Due to language barriers, she has to translate the therapist's words to the victims and vice versa.	Some of the parents who don't have a home to go back to, specially in the occupied territory eastern regions of Ukraine know they need to persist in Austria if their children are to be educated and putting an effort to focus on Austrian schools. Some of them are even using their allowance to get personal tutors in German to push their kids to learn the language, and doing everything they can to ensure their kids get an education. But it is difficult to become proficient in German when you are not surrounded by kids who speak German. It is counter intuitive.

142

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	Austrian laws state that children above the age of 6 must attend schools, and the only exception is home schooling but only in German. This is a huge disadvantage for Ukrainian refugee parents since they do not know German and their children do not have the provision of attending schools. This was brought up by the volunteers requesting the law be amended for the Ukrainians with Daniel Landau who is working on the official side of this project at WU from the Federal Ministry for Refugees asking them to not make it mandatory for Ukrainian children who are already doing Ukrainian school to also pursue Austrian schools and were turned away with "The law is the law" even to those refugees who want to go back home. So there is no flexibility.	Tanja expressed severe criticism about children having to pursue two schools every day which means they need to do double the assignments and homework leaving them no time to spare for play or extra-curricular activities. In the middle of the war, with the anxiety about the safety of their fathers and other male members of the family, the kids are put under incredible pressure to pursue two schools. This is causing them mental and psychological distress.
	Tanja opines that a smart kid with a motivated mother will survive anywhere. This isn't the case for all children. Some mothers don't have the skills themselves to support their children with limited budgets for private tutors.	It is not compulsory for kids over the age of 15 in Austria to attend schools. So many children who are not academically sound and are deterred from failing the MIKA D as 13- and 14-year-olds multiple times, simply end up doing nothing. They do not attend schools regularly, or end up going every other day, and are often herded to the polytechnic schools against their interests.
		There is still no legal framework in place in Austria about how to proceed with the refugees after March 2024.

| | | There are positive cases of children picking up German fast and integrating into schools. But that is a small number. School system gives the refugees no flexibility. Mothers are being fined in Austria if their children miss school. Some of the moms are forced to go back and forth between Ukraine and Austria to pick up their new passports, paperwork and important documents or see loved ones back home for a week and take the children with them. But when they return, they are slapped with a fine of 200 € for the child missing 8 days of school. So, they cannot leave the children alone in Austria but are also forced to pay fines without exception. |
| | | Ukraine has a great online school system - they've tackled Covid, then going into war, and then educating kids in shelters in Ukraine. A lot of the education in Ukraine right now is happening online and not in person. So, they've developed a great online education system and are accustomed to it by making it flexible through WhatsApp, Telegram, and Zoom by sending assignments and pre-recorded videos. Parents need to be handed on with their kids' education and motivate them to pursue school. But with 5 hours of Austrian school in addition to 6 hours of Ukrainian school is too much for children. |

If the refugees taken an allowance from the State and also given a dorm/ temporary housing, prevents the refugee from working and limits how much they can earn. If their salary is above the bracket issued, then they lose their allowance and housing. Thus, it is counter intuitive. This used to be applied to Asylum seekers. Ukrainian refugees are put in the same category as asylum seekers even though it has been mandated by EU that they already have temporary protection which means they are entitled to Mindesteinkommen or the basic minimum level of income (Around 800€). But they don't get this. They get 200 €. This is pushing some refugee parents to work illegally for little cash to counter the enormous financial stress.
There are no kindergarten offerings for children in the countryside.

P7 and P8:

Anna Androvik and Victoria Kravchenko* - Students with refugee status	
Current status	**Challenges faced by refugee students**

Anna is currently 18 years old, arrived in Vienna in September 2022 when she was 17. Victoria is 21 years old and graduated from Modul last fall. Both the students are from Kyiv, the capital.	The students wrote to the Integration Foundation courses offered by the Stadt Wien to register for free German classes multiple times but was met with no response.
Both hold the Ukrainian refugee status/ Blue card in Austria.	The rent allowance from Caritas is only eligible to those refugees who have crossed the Ukraine border after February 24th and whose rent costs less than € 500 per month. This means Anna and a lot of refugees who currently pay €450+ will be losing their rent allowance from Caritas from September 2023 because apartment rents will be increase to € 550 due to inflation while the allowance remains the same and does not factor in the inflation.
They chose Modul - a private university because the medium of instruction was English and Ukraine teaches English as a 2nd language in school. No scholarships/ fee reduction was given though.	The allowance from Caritas is subject to proper documentation and paperwork for refugees. Refugees who fled overnight or in a hurry, who lack documentation won't be able to access this allowance.
Both Anna and Victoria's parents and younger sibling remained in Ukraine. The younger siblings do not want to leave Ukraine despite the war.	Anna made a trip to Ukraine during Christmas to see her family and bring back her documents since she was denied allowance the first time due to lack of paperwork. The trip lasted 30 days. But Caritas' provision for leaving Austria is a maximum of 20 days. The refugees are expected to confirm their presence in Austria every 21 days to be able to receive allowance by showing the stamp on their passports. Hence, Anna lost out on her allowance twice - once for the paperwork and once for being outside Austria for more than 20 days at once. These rules and guidelines are also not communicated to the refugees in advance. There is no written document circulated among them. So, most refugees often lose out on the allowance out of ignorance of the rules.

Anna's mother is a beautician, and her dad works at a private firm. Victoria's mother is a journalist, and her father is a businessman who works in Moscow. They have been separated because of the war. Finance is a challenge.	Isolation, separation from families, loneliness, and fear of the war. Both Anna and Victoria claim to have anxiety and panic attacks each time their phone rings fearing the worst about their families. Since the air traffic is closed in Ukraine, the only means of transport is by car, bus or train between Austria and Ukraine. So Anna's parents have been able to make the trip to see their daughter only once in nearly 2 years - by driving all night and leaving the next day to get back to work. Victoria hasn't seen her parents or siblings in over 2 years now since her mother is one of the targeted journalists writing about Russian terrorism while her father is not allowed to leave Moscow (passport ban).
Victoria has opted for a full-time job after graduation instead of the allowance to make ends meet. Her student residence permit was converted into a blue card and the Austrian govt. has given her free OGK public health insurance. She is not entitled to an allowance from the govt though. This is because she can speak fluent German.	Both Anna and Victoria's siblings aged between 12 and 14 refuse to leave Ukraine despite the war for intimidation of having to learn a new language and potentially missing out on education for 1-2 years. They are adamant about staying in Kyiv and are doing online school in Ukraine.
Anna is over the age of 18 and does not have a parent or guardian with her here. So, she is not eligible for childcare or family allowance. She receives aid from Caritas and depends on the money sent by her parents.	Anna is not allowed to take on even a part time job if she needs to have access to her food and rent allowance. This goes for paid internships too.
Their families go through the fear of shelling and bombing every day with rockets and drone attacks in Kyiv.	

Both Anna and Victoria claim to have received support from Caritas. Once every 3 months, they are given two allowances - one for clothes and shoes (€ 50) and another for rent and food (€800).	
Both the students claim to have a good support system with their Ukrainian community in Austria with the Ukrainian church group and on Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram. Any request for clothes, food, basic amenities or paperwork in the group is met with helping people who are united with a strong sense of community.	
Both the girls show a strong inclination to go back to Ukraine. Victoria after the war, Anna after her bachelors provided the war has ended. They feel they would be more welcomed in their own countries and want to help rebuild Ukraine with their skills after the war.	

P9:

Julia Olyinyk* - Refugee parent	
Current status	**Challenges faced by her Julia and her daughter**

Came to Austria in March 2022 with her 12-year-old daughter who is now 14 after the war began.	Child is not allowed to attend all the classes till she perfects German. Attends English, cooking, computer studies, and Mathematics once a week.
Father has remained in Ukraine	The child is repeating a year this year in Austria because she hasn't been able to pass MIKA D test.
Mother does not work since she doesn't know German. She used to be an English teacher in Ukraine.	She is not attending Ukrainian school online due to scheduling conflicts but has a 'Family education' system in Ukraine which is once a semester - a test which she has to pass compulsorily. Hence, she is being home schooled by her mother in addition to Austrian school.
They were helped by volunteers when they arrived in Austria. They were initially taken in by a family friend while fleeing shelling and bombing. After a short stay with them, they were able to get support from SOS Kinderdorf that connected them with another Austrian family who were willing to host a refugee mother and child duo. After staying with them for 6 months, the family helped them get a rented apartment to move into.	The child is in Mitteschule with other refugee kids - Syria, Turkey, and Serbia. So Turkish children are friends with other Turks, Serbians are with Serbians. There is lesser integration, and hostility.

They receive a basic refugee allowance from the Austrian govt, along with an allowance from Caritas for food, rent and clothes and child support.	The child has suffered trauma from war and even the sound of thunder or fireworks triggers her trauma and renders her paranoid and crying.
They also have a Ukrainian community that are there for each other by posting on a common Facebook page.	Isolation, loneliness are the biggest challenges for Julia. uncertainty and instability not being able to plan for the future. There is an added challenge of public transport access in Glinzendorf and they don't have a car to commute. Buses only run twice an hour and getting from A to B is hard.
They plan on going back to Ukraine as early as possible because their future feels uncertain in Austria because they want her to pursue higher education in a university and not apprenticeships due to cultural norms. Staying in Austria further implies she needs to get into Gymnasium but due to her German language skills, she won't be eligible for it.	

P10:

Isabella Schmidt* - SOS Kinderdorf	
Role at the organization + functions of the team	**Current projects undertaken SOS Kinderdorf**
Project manager - Her team is called "Moving society" doing projects that help raise awareness about the rights of youth, children and their families and motivating the society to do the same. This includes the current refugee children.	Activism in public and bike rally in Austrian cities by making noise about allocating more public spaces for children like bike lanes, and children need to be able to move freely.
Main aim - Stand for the rights of children, to help children without parental care by taking care of them, making positive impact on children.	Campaign asking politicians and society to enable children in schools to have bigger voices and have those voices heard to make them comfortable and happy in schools and understand their needs. Many children were interviewed and realised children don't have a lot of say in their daily life in school.
Making SOS Kinderdorf more recognisable and accessible by all.	They have emergency help for Ukrainians with a Family Café at Hauptbahnhof for refugees travelling to Vienna or transiting through to get together and seek help from volunteers.

The team is also working towards building the organization's image as modern and progressive, and one that stands for children.	School Project SOS Herz Kiste where they have also designed a Toolbox for children to help with social learning - feeling, empathy, strengths, weaknesses etc to help with emotional growth. Workshops can become a little challenging to navigate for volunteers in this project while dealing with refugee children since the topic of feelings also brings up heavier emotions which the volunteers are not always qualified enough to handle.

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