



Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights

Snapshot of Plan International's Impact
in East and Central Europe (2022-2025)

About Plan International's Ukraine Humanitarian Refugee Crisis Response

Plan International initiated its Ukraine Humanitarian Refugee Crisis Response immediately following the escalation of the war in Ukraine in February 2022 by setting up operations in Poland, Moldova, and Romania. The organisation established a presence within Ukraine in August 2022 and has since been amplifying civil society partners' integrated humanitarian programming in East and Central Europe (ECE).

Plan International and partners' humanitarian response aims to reduce the vulnerabilities and risks faced by refugees, displaced and conflict-affected people inside Ukraine and host countries. Whilst providing direct life-saving humanitarian assistance, Plan International's objective is also to address structural inequalities and promote social, gender, and economic justice across ECE by increasing the resilience, well-being, and agency of girls, young people, as well as minority or non-dominant groups.

By consistently maintaining partner spending above 70%, Plan International's localised and partner-led approach has ensured faster, more contextual and sustainable delivery of assistance, whilst strengthening the long-term capacity of local civil society actors in ECE. From 2022 to 2025, this approach has allowed Plan International to reach more than 1.7 million people across 65 partners and 87 projects in four countries.

Plan International's reach by country in ECE



Key insights

Plan International and partners' Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) interventions across ECE have combined direct service provision with awareness-raising efforts, ensuring that even in politically restrictive environments, girls, women, and vulnerable groups can access the care and information they need:

- Referral and the provision of direct services by Plan International and partners have **expanded access to SRHR services** in ECE.
- Awareness-raising interventions have also provided essential information to support internally

149K

people reached by Plan International and partners' **SRHR programming** in ECE.

- displaced persons, refugee and host communities in **understanding their SRHR and accessing key services** in Ukraine and host countries.
- Interventions targeting social norms were critical to **improving SRHR access in marginalised communities**, especially for Roma adolescents.

Impact of SRHR Interventions

Awareness-raising and education interventions provided essential information to support displaced, refugee and host communities in understanding their SRHR and accessing key services.

At the start of operations, progress in **Ukraine** was achieved through awareness-raising sessions on SRHR, combining age-appropriate education on contraception, puberty, menstrual health, consent culture, and healthy relationships. Increased access to reliable SRHR information improved adolescents' and young women's knowledge and self-protection, whilst also contributing to reducing stigma and promoting gender equality. More recently, awareness-raising activities in Ukraine have been integrated into the **Adolescent Life Skills and Parenting (PALS)** programme to strengthen young people's confidence and promote healthier behaviours. Nonetheless, both approaches to awareness raising in Ukraine have contributed to enhancing CAY's ability to make informed decisions about their SRHR.

Awareness-raising and education activities have promoted SRHR in host countries, too. In **Moldova** and **Romania**, Plan International and partners used a peer-to-peer model to deliver SRHR education for adolescents. Adolescents' participation in SRHR sessions revealed unexpected interest in subjects originally considered secondary. The sessions were especially relevant where adolescents had almost no access to reproductive health information. In addition, in **Moldova**, parenting sessions

integrating SRHR and child protection for both host and refugee caregivers promoted skills for the well-being of families, helping parents gain a comprehensive understanding of gender-related health and rights.

About Plan International's PALS programme

Plan International's global **PALS** programme supports adolescents and their caregivers in emergency and protracted crisis settings. It aims to equip adolescents aged 10 to 19 years and their caregivers with essential information, skills and resources to support adolescent health, safety and well-being in times of crisis.¹

In host countries, Plan International and partners have also expanded access to SRHR services through referral and the provision of direct services. For instance, despite a restrictive policy landscape in **Poland**, Plan International supported referral to SRHR services to Ukrainian refugees, especially for survivors of GBV, as well as Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) outside of school for adolescent refugees with parental consent. In addition,

through one partner, Plan International supported the opening of a clinic to directly support the reproductive health of both Polish and refugee individuals.

In **Moldova**, partners reached refugees, as well as participants from marginalised backgrounds, including sex workers and drug users, through STI testing, contraception, and referrals to specialised care. More recently, this work was expanded to offer pregnancy monitoring, hygiene kits, and adolescent-focused information sessions, including for children in temporary placement centres, as well as Roma and youth.

In **Romania**, partners provided safe healthcare access for girls and women, including abortion, medicines, and referrals. Access to services was further enhanced through two helplines, including one for youth and one multilingual call centre offering support in Ukrainian, English, and Russian. A women's centre was also established in a rural community, creating a safe space for community members to access SRHR services and engage in community-led initiatives that improved their well-being.

Interventions that target social norms were critical to improve SRHR access in marginalised communities. For instance, interventions focusing on SRHR awareness amongst Roma adolescents in **Moldova** prompted changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to SRHR across project participants. Although discussing these topics is generally regarded as inappropriate within Roma families, consultations

with CAY, parents and professionals allowed for gaining acceptance from the community, leading to an increase in SRHR awareness amongst Roma CAY.

About Plan International's approach to SRHR in ECE

Across the countries where Plan International operates in ECE, CSE remains limited both within and outside schools, leaving CAY without essential information and support regarding their SRHR, sexuality, and relationships. Since the start of operations in the region, Plan International and partners have been filling this gap by supporting adolescents, youth, and service providers to ensure access to timely, age- and gender-responsive SRHR services and information.

In **Romania**, interventions also contributed to shifting norms regarding SRHR across participants in marginalised communities. Group and individual sessions created a safe and inclusive environment that encouraged women to prioritise their health and share advice with others. Following the sessions, participants reported feeling more informed about SRHR and becoming increasingly comfortable during SRHR consultations.



Young people take part in SRHR training in Bucharest © Plan International



What are the key SRHR needs and challenges in ECE?

Selected findings from Plan International's research

Programmes that protect SRHR remain highly relevant in ECE, as Plan International's research indicates:ⁱⁱ

- In **Ukraine**, access to state SRHR services has been restricted due to the **destruction of hospitals and clinics, resource limitations, and disruptions to the wider healthcare system** since the escalation of the war. Issues were also reported in providing emergency contraception and clinical management for rape survivors in areas near or on the frontlines because of pharmacy closures, damaged facilities, and disrupted supply chains.
- In **Poland**, recent **rollbacks of sexual and reproductive rights**, including access to contraception and abortion, are the main obstacles to accessing SRHR services for both refugee and local girls and women. Poland's abortion law is currently amongst the most restrictive within the EU. Many girls in Poland receive little to no information on free SRHR services, either from the government or non-governmental organisations.
- In **Romania**, access to SRHR services is limited by **conservative attitudes, bureaucratic obstacles, and an underfunded healthcare system**. Despite abortion being legal up to 14 weeks, many doctors refuse to perform it at public clinics or to provide referrals. Since 2021, SRHR services have also suffered setbacks, as the Romanian government ceased funding contraceptive subsidies and sex education, resulting in the closure of clinics.

Obstacles for marginalised groups

According to Plan International's research, marginalised groups face specific challenges in accessing SRHR information and services in Ukraine and Romania. In **Ukraine**, marginalised groups, including **girls from the Roma community**, find that financial constraints add an obstacle to SRHR services. They are also more vulnerable to missing out on already limited SRHR services due to a lack of awareness about the free services available to them.

Similarly, in **Romania**, there is considerable SRHR discrimination and marginalisation of groups such as **refugees, Roma, LGBTQI+, rural populations, and persons with disabilities**. Although Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and NGOs in Romania offer services for these groups, many lack targeted programmes to address deep-rooted and systemic discrimination against vulnerable populations.

Sources of information on SRHR

According to adolescent girls in **Ukraine**, as well as those in **Poland** and **Romania** following Ukraine's online education system, **sexual education** is introduced late, typically when students are aged 13 to 14. Findings from Plan International's research reveal that although this gap in CSE existed before the escalation of the war, it has since worsened because of the difficulties in delivering quality CSE online. In Poland, refugee girls also reported limitations on the provision of CSE, with older adolescents stating that they had not received any classes on SRHR since they shifted education systems. In Romania, there is currently little to no CSE being provided to youth in Romanian public schools.

Considering the limited CSE that adolescents receive, the primary sources of information for girls are their **mothers or female caregivers**. However, some girls experience silence on the topic at home and do not feel comfortable starting these conversations. Others explained that female caregivers have limited time to discuss these issues since the escalation of the war in Ukraine. Boys in **Ukraine** also receive information informally rather than through official channels and face a lack of access to adequate SRHR information.

The influence of stereotypes and norms about sex and sexuality

The role of **caregivers and the family environment** in facilitating access to accurate SRHR information and quality services can be crucial. However, caregivers from displaced families may hesitate to seek professional help for girls due to negative attitudes linked to SRH services. Additionally, adolescents' health and well-being might suffer when sexual education only



Young people participate in a SRHR peer to peer training in Romania © Youth for Youth

reinforces **harmful stereotypes and norms about sex and sexuality.**

In **Romania** specifically, misinformation about sex is widespread due to the influence of social media and pornography. Difficulties in accessing SRHR also reflect increasingly conservative gender norms within Romanian society. The dominance of traditional views on contraception, abortion, and gender roles results from the impact of religious institutions that use external funding to influence legislation and public policies.

Interested to learn more about SRHR needs and challenges in ECE?
See the following reports:

 [Adolescent Girls in Crisis – Voices from Ukraine, Poland and Romania \(June 2024\)](#)

 [Sexual & Reproductive Health and Rights in Romania: Current Status and Future Trajectories \(August 2024\)](#)



References

- i Plan International (2021) PALS: Adolescent Life Skills and Parenting in Humanitarian Settings. Available at: <https://plan-international.org/uploads/2025/07/ANNEX-F-PALS-Programme-Brief.pdf>.
- ii Plan International (2024), Adolescent Girls in Crisis: Voices from Ukraine, Poland and Romania. Available at: <https://plan-international.org/publications/girls-in-crisis-ukraine/>; Plan International (2024) Sexual & Reproductive Health and Rights in Romania: Current Status and Future Trajectories. Available at: <https://plan-international.org/romania-en/publications/research-status-sexual-reproductive-health-rights-romania/>.



About

Plan International

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We believe in the power and potential of every child but know this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it is girls who are most affected.

Working together with children, young people, supporters and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges girls and vulnerable children face. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood, and we enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge.

For over 85 years, we have rallied other determined optimists to transform the lives of all children in more than 80 countries.

We won't stop until we are all equal.




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