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Social networks and well-being in a forced migration context – the role of inclusion practices in the receiving society

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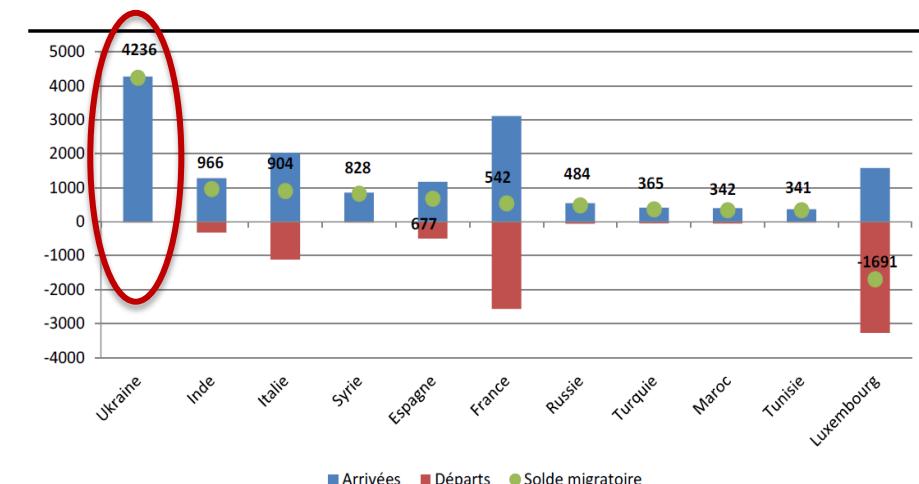
- **Social relationships** are central to human functioning and well-being.
- In the case of forced migration, family and friendship structures are **disrupted** and need to be (re)built with the home country *and* the receiving society.
- Little research on family dynamics in forced migration contexts. (Robertson et al., 2016; Westphal et al., 2019)

- The present qualitative study focuses on the family and network structures of Ukrainian refugees in Luxembourg following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24.02.2022.
 - **Temporary protection status**, a specific protection status was applied at EU level for people who have fled the war in Ukraine.
 - In Luxembourg, it is available to anyone who was a **resident of Ukraine before 24 February 2022**
 - Right to material assistance,
 - Right to live in accommodation provided by the *Office national de l'Accueil* (ONA) or in private homes.
 - Right to work in Luxembourg and access to education (UNHCR, 2024).

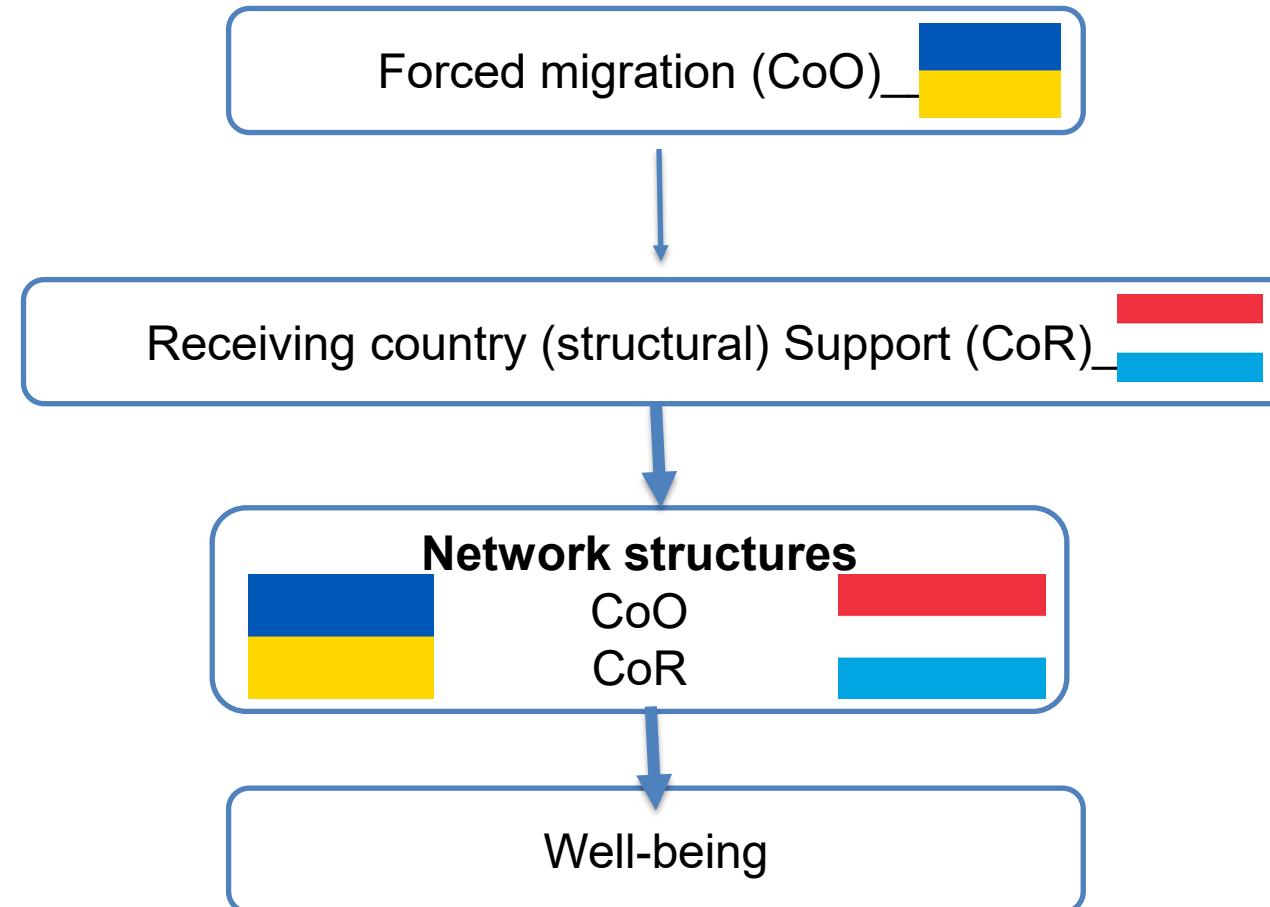
Luxembourg is...

- ... fairly small
 - Total population: **672,050** (1/2024)
 - Dimension: 82 km x 57 km
- ... is trilingual (FR, DE, LU)
- ... has a foreign population percentage **47,3%** (1/2024)
- ... Largest net immigration by Ukrainians in 2023

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Research Question



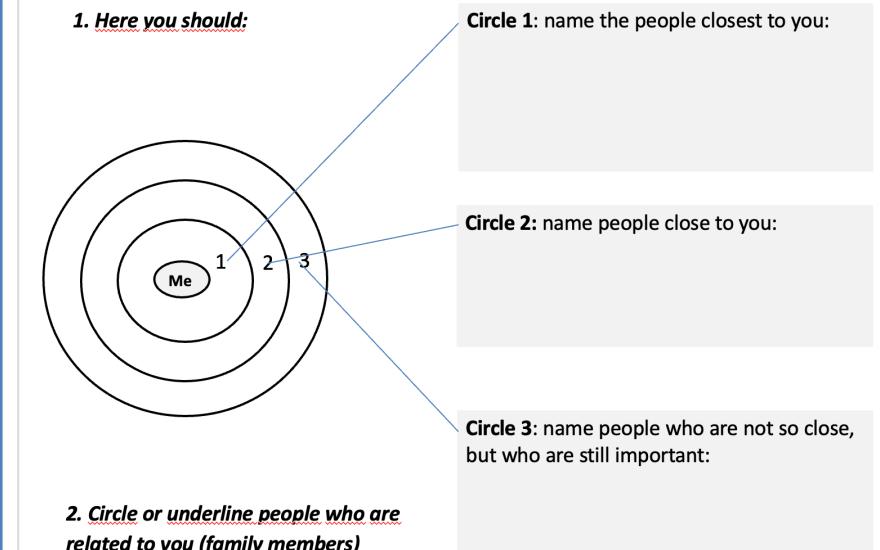
- Recruitment via **Gatekeepers** (Koschmieder et al., 2021).
- Gatekeeper – community worker at the Ukrainian House
 - The house had originally been bought by the Commune to develop it as a Youth Centre.
 - *But..."as the war continued in Ukraine and more and more refugees made their way to Luxembourg, the administration decided to turn it into a platform for new arrivals from Ukraine to meet up, partake in activities and exchange information with one another"*
 - <https://en.paperjam.lu/article/ukrainian-house-fulfilled-purp>

- Adult, healthy volunteers – with language competence in English
 - Originate from different regions of Ukraine
 - 5 Women, 2 Men (Fathers of > 3 children)

	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Partner	Children	
1	F	30+	In partnership	In Lux	/	
2	F	60+	married	In Ukr	Daughter in Lux, Son in Ukr	
3	M	30+	married	In Lux	3 in Lux	
4	M	40+	Married	In Lux	2 in Lux, 1 in PL	
5	F	30+	In partnership	In Lux	/	
6	F	30+	married	In Lux	3 in Lux	
7	F	30+	In partnership	In Lux	1 in Lux	

- **Semi-structured Interview**
- **Egocentric network charts** (Convoy method, Kahn & Antonucci, 1980)

- Frequency of contact, emotional attachment - Where do they live? (Ukraine, LU?)
- Do you have ways of keeping in regular contact with your family/friends, for example via phone calls, video calls or messages?
- How often do you see each other, do you communicate with each other? And how? (mode)
- What kind of support is exchanged with these people? (emotional, practical, financial)
- Have relationships changed since you left?



	Sex	Age	Status	Partner	Children	Parents	Other relatives
1	F	30+	In part.	In Lux	/	Mother in Lux Father in Ukr	Brother in Ukr Cousins in Ukr
2	F	60+	married	In Ukr	Daughter in Lux, Son in Ukr	/	Niece in Ukr
3	M	30+	married	In Lux	3 in Lux	In France	Grandparents in Ukr.
4	M	40+	Married	In Lux	2 in Lux, 1 in PL	Mother in Ukr	Parents-in-Law Cousins in Ukr
5	F	30+	In part.	In Lux	/	Mother in Lux Father in Ukr	Sister in UK
6	F	30+	married	In Lux	3 in Lux	Parents in Ukr	Brother in DE Cousins in Ukr
7	F	30+	In part.	In Lux	1 in Lux	Parents in Ukr	Brother in Ukr

- **Inner Circle** – closest persons
 - Core family dominates (Partner & children)
 - 4 participants also name parents & siblings
 - Independent of location (Ukr, Lux, elsewhere)
 - Host families in Luxembourg

- **Second Circle** – close persons
 - Other family members (grandparents, cousins)
 - Friends in Ukr and Lux
 - Host families in Luxembourg
- **Outer Circle**
 - Friends in Ukr and Lux
 - Work colleagues from Ukr (3/ 7)

■ Contact frequency

- daily/ at least once per week, depending also on news
 - To stay **informed**

Every time I check the news about the situation, something I saw or heard, I immediately call and contact them to check if they are okay. (T4)

- To maintain relationship (normal, “mundane” exchanges)

Plus, there are memes on Instagram, so we exchange those quite often. That's always something that keeps the fire in the relationship. (T5)

- Contact – *practical* difficulties in finding the right time
 - Internet problems
 - Destroying personal information on leaving Ukraine to protect relatives
- Main mode of contact through phone/ internet
- Occasional return visits

- Family members are dispersed over several countries
- Temporary separation between family members
- Change in relationship:

Yes, I think all the relationships changed, because I think we are living in two different realities [...] It is difficult to find something in common because we have different levels of problems.

Sometimes I'm just, like, afraid even if I would like to complain about something, you know, I couldn't, because I understand that my problems are nothing compared to their problems. (T1)

- Change in contact frequency

You know what is interesting, now I see my mother more than in the past (T4)

- Change in quality

...before war started I was like a teenager with her, I said to her things like “mom, it’s my business.” Now I understand that it is important for her that she knows that everything is ok. Now I’m more open towards her, we are more close emotionally (T7)

So there a lot of divorces going on like some kind of phenomenon [...] Women who left the country with or without children, they would oftentimes feel unsupported by their husbands so that causes a lot of divorces ... (T5)

- Divorces
- New partnerships
 - 3 participants found new partners in Lux (not from Ukr)

■ Role of host families

- They were made feel welcome upon arrival in Luxembourg.
- They received emotional and practical support.

They were so nice. They were always very concerned about our comfort, whether we were like emotionally comfortable, physically comfortable, well-fed (...) the best people ever." [...] I received tremendous support from the community. (T5)

I was very lucky when we came to Luxembourg to live in a host family that became our close friends [...]. They helped me to integrate a lot, like first with all this bureaucracy but later also to arrange our life with the children, because I was still in shock. (T6)

- Social encounters & practical activities
 - Contacts with volunteers from the local community
 - Exchange with fellow Ukrainians
 - Facilitates activity-based coping (i.e. knitting club)

I had no problem with the integration. I had a lot of projects with the Ukrainian house, like cooking projects and with the knitting club... At the beginning I didn't know them, they were strangers and know they are very close people for me, and we spent a lot of time together and support each other. (T1)

*And this organization, the Ukrainian House, I come here often and it brings people together. Here I attend choir classes and I also give English speaking club classes every Saturdays. **I do things I enjoy** (T 5)*

- Organization of collective remittances for Ukraine

■ **Social Bonds**

- Importance of maintenance of relationship with relatives & friends from Ukraine
- Changing family dynamics – intensify / change

■ **Social Bridges**

- Importance of host families in making the transition to the CoR
 - Emotional support
 - Practical support (Bureaucracy, establishing contacts, culture...)

- **Structural support**
 - Legal Status – Temporal protection status
 - Commune Level
 - Ukrainian House – **Mayor & community**
 - Support in finding accommodation
 - Language classes
- **Context of Luxembourg**
 - Multicultural – blending in with other foreigners
 - Trilingualism also a challenge

- Sample
 - English language – not mother tongue
 - Gatekeepers – identification of participants
 - Educated volunteers with language capabilities
 - ...

- Limitations – example of good practice

ONE YEAR ON

**Ukrainian House “fulfilled purpose
much better than expected”**



The community house gives newcomers an anchor, says Blathnайд Stroomer. Photo:
Courtesy of Ukrainescht Haus Stroossen

Thank you!

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