SMART UA | ESF-SI-2024-UA-01-0074

Person-Centered Approach Framework

for Supporting Ukrainian Refugees' Access to Housing

WP2 — A002.004 — D002.004

ASSWR (RO) | Szociometrum (HU) | Trnava University, Dept. of Sociology (SK)

Coordinated by JRS Europe

2025 — Common transnational framework document (English) — Version 2 (incorporating partner feedback)

How to Use This Document

This Framework is a shared working tool for the three national research teams (ASSWR — RO, Szociometrum — HU, Trnava University — SK). It formalises the methodological agreements already made and defines the common analytical categories that each team must use consistently.

It is not a research report and does not contain national results. Its purpose is to ensure that the work done in Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia is based on the same logic — so that findings and tools can be compared, combined, and used across countries.

Document	What it is	Who produces it	Status
This Framework (D002.004 — Part 1)	Common methodology, categories, and analytical tools — no national data	ASSWR, with Szociometrum and Truni	One document, all three countries
National PCA Guideline (D002.004 — Part 2)	Operational guide for practitioners — populated with national findings, schemes, and contacts	Each national team for their country	Three separate documents (HU / RO / SK)

For partners: Yellow boxes like this one appear throughout the document. They indicate what each national team needs to add, verify, or complete when producing the national PCA Guideline.

1. Purpose and Scope

The Person-Centered Approach (PCA) Framework provides the common conceptual and methodological basis for assessing individual Ukrainian refugees' housing needs and connecting them to appropriate support within the multi-stakeholder networks created under WP2.

It applies to all pilot project activities involving direct support to Ukrainian refugees in Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia — specifically those conducted under A002.005 (social team and mentors) and A002.006 (vulnerability assessment and accommodation services).

The Framework covers	Individual assessment of vulnerability; matching to housing solutions; referral to stakeholder network; monitoring principles
The Framework does not cover	National housing market data or statistics; country-specific legal frameworks; specific organisations or contacts (these go in the national Guideline)
Primary users	Social workers, mentors, case managers, and research staff in all three countries
Language	This common Framework is in English. National Guidelines are produced in national language + English.

2. Conceptual Foundations

All three national teams apply the following principles consistently. These are not optional — they define what 'person-centered' means in the context of this project.

2.1. Core Principles of the Person-Centered Approach

Principle	What it means in practice
Autonomy	The refugee is an active participant in defining their own needs and goals, not a passive recipient of decisions made by others.
Individualisation	Assessment and support are tailored to each person's specific situation. No two cases are treated identically.
Holistic perspective	Housing needs are assessed together with income, health, family situation, legal status, and employment — not in isolation.
Participation	Refugees are involved in setting their own goals and in evaluating the support they receive.
Non-discrimination	Support is accessible regardless of age, gender, disability, family status, or duration of stay.

2.2. Rights-Based Dimension

The PCA is combined with a rights-based perspective: assessment considers not only what the person needs and wants, but also what they are entitled to under EU and national law (temporary protection, access to housing support, non-discrimination).

2.3. Intersectionality and Gender Sensitivity

The demographic profile of Ukrainian refugees across HU, RO, and SK is predominantly female (over 70% of adults), with a high proportion of single mothers with children, elderly persons, and people with disabilities. Assessment must explicitly account for the intersection of:

- Gender — predominantly women, often sole caregivers
- Age — both young children and elderly persons within the same household
- Disability or chronic health condition
- Legal status and its expected duration
- Migration trajectory — length of stay and intent (return vs. long-term integration)

For partners: In the national Guideline: describe how these principles are reflected in the specific context of your country (e.g., specific protections available for single mothers, national disability assessment procedures, etc.).

3. Common Research Methodology

This section documents the methodological agreements made jointly by the three research teams. These agreements are the shared evidence base for the vulnerability categories and matching logic in Sections 4 and 5.

3.1. Stakeholder Mapping — Agreed Elements (A002.001)

Element	Common agreement
Objective	Identify institutional and non-institutional actors involved in housing support for UA refugees; document barriers; collect good practices
Data collection tool	Structured online questionnaire developed in English, translated into national languages
Sampling	Purposive sampling — relevance and operational involvement with UA refugee housing. Minimum 20 organisations per country.
Stakeholder classification grid	Type (public / NGO / private / faith-based / grassroots) × level (national / regional / local) × interest and engagement × quality of intervention (effectiveness, coverage, accessibility) × impact (reach, influence, systemic role)
Thematic areas	Organisation type and area of intervention; current housing activities; operational challenges and systemic barriers; coordination mechanisms; good practices; resource and capacity needs
Analysis	Thematic content analysis (qualitative); categorisation by type and sector (quantitative)
Output per country	1 national stakeholder mapping report (national language + English, approx. 20 pages); 1 stakeholder list with minimum 20 entries

3.2. Housing Market Analysis and Good Practices — Agreed Elements (A002.002)

Component	Common design
Desk research	National and local housing legislation; availability and affordability of housing options; public, NGO, and mixed housing initiatives
Refugee survey	Structured survey for at least 30 refugees per country. Topics: housing experiences, barriers, formal and informal solutions. Gender balance ensured where possible.
Focus group	1 focus group per country (5–8 participants from local authorities, NGOs, housing providers). Topics: coordination mechanisms, systemic gaps, collaboration models.
Good practice interviews	3 individual interviews per country. Focus on: accessibility and inclusion, sustainability and financing, refugee involvement, replicability and local adaptability.
Housing market analysis framework	Demand analysis / Supply analysis / Access barriers / Support schemes / SWOT analysis / Policy and regulatory review
Output per country	1 national report (national language + English, approx. 30 pages): Part I — Housing market analysis (~15 pages); Part II — Good practices, minimum 3 per country (~15 pages)

3.3. Cross-Cutting Ethical Principles

The following principles apply to all data collection activities across all three countries:

- Voluntary and informed participation in all research activities
- Written or verbal informed consent obtained before any engagement (using the common informed consent script)
- Confidentiality and data protection in accordance with GDPR
- No provision of services, goods, or financial benefits during research activities
- Safe facilitation and gender sensitivity in all engagement with refugees
- Right to withdraw from participation at any time without consequences for access to services

For partners: In the national Guideline: describe any country-specific adaptations to these ethical procedures (e.g., national data protection requirements, language of consent forms, approval processes).

4. Vulnerability Dimensions: The Common Analytical Framework

The vulnerability categories below were defined jointly by the three research teams based on the literature on Ukrainian refugee integration and the thematic areas agreed in the WP2 research methodology. They represent what each national team investigated and what each national Guideline must assess at the individual level.

National findings will populate these categories in the national Guideline. This Framework defines the categories only.

4.1. Structural Barriers — Categories Agreed for Investigation

The following barrier categories were included in both the stakeholder survey (A002.001) and the housing market analysis (A002.002) across all three countries. They provide the systemic context for individual assessment.

Barrier category	Investigated through	Relevance for individual assessment
Availability and affordability of housing	Stakeholder survey Q17; desk research; refugee survey Q11–Q14	Determines which solutions are realistically accessible for a given profile
Landlords' attitudes and willingness to rent to refugees	Stakeholder survey Q17; focus group; good practice interviews	Mediation and verified landlord database as key support tools
Absence of institutional coordination	Stakeholder survey Q17 and Q5.6; focus group	Individual case management must bridge institutional gaps
Language barriers	Stakeholder survey Q17; refugee survey; focus group	Language support is a prerequisite for private housing market access
Documentation and administrative barriers	Stakeholder survey Q17; desk research; good practice interviews	Legal assistance needs must be flagged during individual assessment
Insufficient financial resources (refugees)	Refugee survey Q10; stakeholder survey	Financial vulnerability is a primary assessment dimension
Health, mental health, and complex social situations	Refugee survey Q7; focus group open responses	Psychosocial and family dimensions must be included in assessment

For partners: In the national Guideline: for each barrier category, add the key finding from your national research (e.g., percentage of stakeholders reporting this barrier, main examples identified in the focus group). This is where national data enters.

4.2. Profiles of Vulnerability — Common Typology

The following five vulnerability profiles were identified as the most relevant for the Ukrainian refugee population in HU, RO, and SK, based on the demographic data available at project design stage and confirmed by the WP2 research instruments. They are not mutually exclusive.

Profile	Key characteristics	Primary housing implication
1. Single mothers with	Female-headed household; sole caregiver; children under 18; often in	Need for stable, affordable, child-friendly housing; proximity to schools

Profile	Key characteristics	Primary housing implication
dependent children	precarious or part-time employment; limited availability for full-time work	and childcare; protection from exploitation
2. Elderly persons (60+)	May have chronic health conditions; lower language acquisition rate; limited digital literacy; dependent on pension or social assistance	Need for accessible housing; proximity to medical services; risk of social isolation; limited ability to navigate housing market independently
3. Persons with disabilities or chronic health conditions	Physical, sensory, cognitive, or mental health limitations affecting daily functioning; PTSD prevalent among conflict-affected populations	Need for adapted accommodation; psychosocial support as a prerequisite for housing stability; referral to health services
4. Recently arrived refugees (under 6 months)	High disorientation; unfamiliar with host country systems; limited language; may still hold expectations of short stay. Note: This profile represents a very small share of the population in some national contexts (e.g. under 1% in HU sample). Prevalence must be confirmed by each national team.	Need for immediate temporary accommodation with active orientation; transition planning to medium-term solution
5. Long-stay refugees (2+ years) facing housing instability	Initial emergency support reduced or withdrawn; risk of rent arrears or eviction; language partially acquired; employment often precarious	Need for stabilisation support; access to social rental or co-living arrangements; legal protection against eviction
6. Roma refugees facing multiple structural vulnerabilities (where applicable nationally)	May experience compounded disadvantage due to socio-economic marginalisation, discrimination in the housing market, lower access to formal employment, and limited access to services. Prevalence and relevance varies significantly by national context.	Increased risk of exclusion from the formal housing market; need for targeted mediation, anti-discrimination safeguards, and supported access to stable and affordable housing solutions

For partners: In the national Guideline: confirm which profiles are most prevalent in your national context based on your research findings. Add any additional profiles specific to your country if identified in the data.

4.3. Vulnerability Assessment Matrix

This matrix defines the common dimensions for individual assessment. It is used by social workers and mentors during the first contact with a refugee household. Each dimension must be assessed and documented in the case record.

Dimension	Core assessment questions	Indicators of elevated vulnerability
Legal status	Does the person hold valid temporary protection? When does it expire? Are identity documents available and recognised?	Missing or unrecognised documentation; pending legal proceedings; temporary protection not yet renewed following collective extension; unclear status due to administrative delays

Dimension	Core assessment questions	Indicators of elevated vulnerability
Household composition	How many people? Ages of children? Is the adult the sole caregiver? Is the spouse present in the country?	Single adult with 1+ child under 15; elderly person alone; adult with a dependent family member requiring care
Health status	Does the person or any household member have a health condition limiting daily activities? Are there mental health needs or PTSD indicators?	Diagnosed chronic condition; disability; ongoing medical treatment; indicators of psychological distress
Economic situation	What is the household's monthly income? Are basic needs being met? Is rent currently being paid? Is there a risk of eviction?	Income below rent cost; rent arrears; sole dependency on social assistance; no employment income
Employment status	Is the person employed? Is the job formal and stable? Are there barriers to employment (qualification recognition, language, childcare)?	Unemployed; informal employment only; multiple employment barriers identified
Language proficiency	Can the person communicate in the host country language for basic daily needs (housing search, administrative tasks)?	No or minimal host country language; communication only in Ukrainian or Russian; functional illiteracy (unable to read or write in any language) — requires adapted communication tools
Housing stability	How long in current accommodation? Is there a formal rental contract? Is eviction imminent? Is the housing overcrowded?	Eviction notice issued; no formal contract; overcrowded temporary shelter with imminent end date
Social support network	Does the person have contacts with the local community or other Ukrainians? Are they aware of available services?	Isolated; no community contacts; first contact with any support organisation

For partners: In the national Guideline: translate this matrix into a step-by-step assessment form for practitioners, with country-specific scoring criteria, referral thresholds, and documentation requirements.

5. Typology of Housing Solutions

The following typology defines the common categories of housing schemes to be investigated and documented in the WP2 housing market analysis in each country. It provides a shared vocabulary for comparing findings across HU, RO, and SK.

5.1. Common Typology of Housing Schemes

Scheme type	Description	Typical providers
Emergency / temporary collective shelter	Short-term accommodation in collective facilities (reception centres, hotels, dormitories, church facilities). Typically for the first weeks after arrival.	Public authorities, international organisations, faith-based NGOs
NGO-managed medium-term housing	Apartments or shared houses made available to refugees for 3–18 months, often with social accompaniment. Includes supported housing arrangements for persons with disabilities.	NGOs, faith-based organisations
Private rental with mediation support	Private market accommodation accessed with active mediation between refugees and landlords by social workers or NGOs.	NGO social teams; employment of verified landlord databases
Shared flat / co-living arrangement	Two or more refugee households sharing accommodation, matched by social workers on the basis of household composition and compatibility.	NGO social teams
Social housing (public)	Municipal or state housing allocated to refugees under temporary protection provisions. Availability varies significantly by country and municipality.	Municipalities, public housing agencies
Sponsored / hosted accommodation	Private families hosting refugees, with or without financial compensation. Risk of instability when financial support ends.	Individual families, faith communities, volunteer networks
Social rental programme	Structured model where an NGO or authority acts as intermediary between private landlords and refugees, providing guarantees and accompaniment.	NGOs with housing expertise, local authorities

For partners: In the national Guideline: identify which of these scheme types exist in your country, who provides them, what the eligibility criteria are, and how a case worker accesses them for a refugee. Add any country-specific schemes not listed here.

5.2. Matching Logic: Vulnerability Profile — Housing Solution

The table below defines the common matching logic connecting vulnerability profiles (Section 4.2) to housing solution types (Section 5.1). It guides the decision-making of social workers and mentors during case management.

Vulnerability profile	Preferred scheme type(s)	Key conditions for matching	Cross-referral needs
Single mother with dependent children	NGO-managed medium-term; shared flat; private rental with mediation	Child-friendly housing; proximity to school and childcare; income support for rent; legal contract check	Financial aid; school enrolment; employment support (WP3)
Elderly person (60+)	NGO-managed; hosted accommodation; social housing if available	Accessibility (no stairs); proximity to medical services; social check-in schedule	Healthcare; community network; social assistance
Person with disability / chronic health condition	NGO-managed (accessible); social housing; hosted with support	Adapted facilities; psychosocial support first; health service connection	Medical services; MHPSS providers; social assistance
Recently arrived (under 6 months)	Emergency shelter (transitional) → medium-term solution by month 3	Orientation sessions; school enrolment for children; language referral; transition planning	Orientation services; language courses; legal information
Long-stay facing instability (2+ years)	Social rental; shared flat; private rental with mediation	Eviction risk assessment first; legal assistance if notice issued; income stabilisation	Legal aid; employment services; financial support

For partners: In the national Guideline: populate the third and fourth columns with country-specific schemes, organisations, and contacts. Add the conditions for eligibility and the practical steps for accessing each scheme.

6. Multi-Stakeholder Coordination

Individual support cannot work in isolation. The PCA Framework is embedded in the multi-stakeholder networks created in each country under A002.006. This section defines the common referral logic.

6.1. Stakeholder Classification Grid

This is the same classification grid used in the stakeholder mapping (A002.001). It provides the reference for referral decisions during case management.

Stakeholder type	Role in the housing ecosystem	When to refer
National / regional public authority	Sets legal framework; manages social housing stock; financial assistance schemes	Social housing eligibility; financial aid; documentation issues
Local authority / municipality	Allocates municipal housing; manages social assistance departments; coordinates local reception	Municipal housing; local financial aid; coordination with social services
NGO (national or international)	Direct services: case management, legal aid, language courses, MHPSS, housing mediation; hosted accommodation; project-based rental support; community-based assistance	Most housing-related needs; case management; housing mediation; access to rental support programmes; community-based assistance; referrals to services
Faith-based organisation	Hosted accommodation; community integration; emergency material support	Hosted accommodation; community network; emergency needs
Private housing provider / landlord	Rental accommodation in private market	Via verified landlord database (D002.008); with mediation support
Research / education institution	Evidence base; practitioner training; outcome monitoring	PCA tool refinement; training; pilot evaluation
Employment agency	Labour market connection; vocational training; counselling	Cross-referral with WP3; income as condition of housing stability
Healthcare provider	Medical care; MHPSS; disability assessment	When health or mental health dimensions are identified in assessment

For partners: In the national Guideline: populate this table with the specific organisations operating in your country, their contact details, referral procedures, and any eligibility conditions.

6.2. Referral Principles

The following principles apply in all three countries:

- Referral is always made with the person's knowledge and consent.
- Where possible, referral is 'warm' — direct contact between the referring worker and the receiving organisation, not just sharing a phone number.
- All referrals are documented in the case management record.

- Referral does not end the case worker's responsibility; follow-up is required within 30 days.
- The person's case worker remains the primary coordination point even after referral.

7. From Framework to National Guideline

7.1. What Each National Team Must Produce

Each national research team (ASSWR for RO, Szociometrum for HU, Truni for SK) produces a national PCA Guideline that operationalises this Framework for practitioners in their country. The Guideline is produced in the national language and in English.

Section in this Framework	What the national Guideline adds
Conceptual foundations (Section 2)	Country-specific legal basis; national policy context; how principles are reflected in existing national standards for social work
Vulnerability dimensions — barriers (Section 4.1)	Key national findings from stakeholder mapping and housing market analysis for each barrier category
Vulnerability profiles (Section 4.2)	Confirmation of most prevalent profiles in national context; any country-specific profiles identified in research
Vulnerability assessment matrix (Section 4.3)	Step-by-step assessment form for practitioners with country-specific scoring, referral thresholds, and documentation requirements
Housing solution typology (Section 5.1)	Country-specific schemes with providers, eligibility criteria, access procedures, and contacts
Matching logic (Section 5.2)	Populated with national schemes, organisations, contacts, and practical access steps
Stakeholder grid (Section 6.1)	Populated with specific national organisations, contact details, and referral procedures

7.2. Common Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators

The following indicators apply across all three countries and are consistent with the SMART UA project's KPI framework. They are used to monitor the application of the PCA in the pilot projects.

Indicator	Data source	Project target
Number of UA refugees assessed using the vulnerability matrix	Case management database (D002.008 / D003.005)	Min. 200 households across HU, RO, SK
Number of refugees matched to a housing solution	Case management database	Min. 1,750 UA refugees with improved housing access
Number of referrals made to multi-stakeholder network partners	Case management records	Tracked per case
Number of social workers and mentors trained in PCA application	Training records (WP2/WP3 workshops)	All social staff of JTMR, JRS RO, CPPR, ED, LifeStarter
Number of good practices documented using the common framework	Good practices reports (D002.003)	Minimum 3 per country

8. Glossary of Key Terms

Beneficiary of temporary protection	Person from Ukraine granted temporary protection under EU Directive 2001/55/EC and national implementing legislation in HU, RO, or SK. Used interchangeably with 'Ukrainian refugee' in this document.
Case worker / social worker	Trained professional who conducts the PCA assessment and manages the support plan for a refugee household within the SMART UA pilot.
Housing solution	Any accommodation arrangement — temporary or medium-term, public, NGO-managed, or private — providing stable shelter for a refugee household.
Intersectionality	Analytical approach recognising that individuals experience multiple overlapping social identities (gender, age, disability, migration status) that interact to produce distinct forms of disadvantage.
Multi-stakeholder network	Network of 20–40 organisations established in each country under A002.006, providing a shared referral and coordination infrastructure.
Person-Centered Approach (PCA)	Approach placing the individual's needs, strengths, preferences, and rights at the centre of all assessment and service decisions. In this Framework, combined with a rights-based perspective.
Referral	Connecting a refugee household to another organisation or service to address a specific need identified during the PCA assessment.
Verified landlord	Landlord included in the database (D002.008) who has undergone checks demonstrating commitment to quality housing and fair treatment of refugees.
Vulnerability	Condition of being at elevated risk of harm or exclusion due to a combination of personal circumstances and structural factors.

9. References

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