



CASE STUDY

Greenline

Bulgarian Red Cross

October, 2025

Case Study: Greenline Bulgarian Red Cross

Location

Bulgaria: Plovdiv (national coverage)

Date established

2022

Target groups

Refugees, migrants and displaced persons (mainly from Ukraine)

Description of service

The Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC) Greenline is a free helpline available to anyone in Bulgaria. It provides information about BRC services and programmes and connects callers with trained psychologists who offer psychological first aid (PFA).

Context

Since February 2022, Ukraine has been at the epicentre of a humanitarian crisis affecting millions of people. The escalation of the international armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine triggered a surge in the number of people seeking safety in neighbouring countries and beyond. This has resulted in 5,137,910 displaced people from Ukraine being recorded in Europe and 560,560 recorded outside of Europe.¹ Since 2022, Bulgaria has hosted over 216,425 people from Ukraine with temporary protection status.²

On 4 March 2022, the Council of the European Union (EU) unanimously adopted an implementing decision introducing temporary protection in accordance with the EU Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) for people fleeing Ukraine as a consequence of this conflict. Temporary protection is an exceptional measure to provide immediate and collective protection to a large group of displaced persons who arrive in the EU and it applies when there is a risk that the standard asylum system will struggle to cope with demands stemming from a mass inflow, risking a negative impact on the processing of claims. Temporary protection was initially granted for one year and has since been extended twice. Given the uncertain situation in Ukraine, the Council of the EU has decided to extend the temporary protection in its current form until 4 March 2026.

In response to the humanitarian crisis, in February 2022, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) launched the Emergency Appeal for Ukraine and Impacted Countries Crisis, supporting 18 National Societies. As part of the Emergency Appeal and in alignment with the IFRC Response Plan of Bulgaria, the BRC provided a wide range of support, particularly in areas such as health and well-being, water sanitation and hygiene (WASH), shelter and housing, multipurpose cash assistance (MPC), livelihoods, protection, gender and inclusion (PGI), community engagement and accountability (CEA) as well as migration and displacement.

Through the IFRC Emergency Appeal, the BRC significantly strengthened its capacity to scale up humanitarian efforts, delivering critical support to those impacted by the conflict.

1 [UNHCR](#), 2 September 2025

2 [UNHCR](#), 31 August 2025

Greenline

One of the main services provided under the IFRC Emergency Appeal for Ukraine and Impacted Countries Crisis was mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). While the BRC already had a significant capacity for MHPSS, the IFRC Emergency Appeal and the additional EU4HEALTH (DG SANTE) project, funded by the European Commission, allowed the BRC to implement various MHPSS activities and build more human resource (HR) capacity.

In response to emerging needs, the decision was made to establish two separate helplines, both of which continue to operate successfully today. Psychosocial support (PSS) and PFA helpline supported the emotional health and well-being to all callers (host community as well as displaced people). Certified psychologists provided the service aiming to help people manage stress and anxiety or simply offer emotional support.

Another helpline, the Greenline was an informational channel, operated by displaced people from Ukraine, who were trained by the BRC in PFA, PGI and CEA to provide vital information on existing services and support available to displaced people from Ukraine accommodated in Bulgaria.

The Greenline offered guidance on a wide range of topics, including humanitarian aid (food, hygiene kits), contact details for refugee centres and social services, guidance on legal status, temporary protection and rights in Bulgaria, as well as information on available PFA and PSS services.

If a need was identified by an operator, the call could be redirected to the PSS and PFA line. Both helplines were available free of charge to all people across Bulgaria.

The Greenline played a crucial role in supporting the CVA programmes under the IFRC Emergency Appeal in Bulgaria. The Greenline provided vital information about CVA, helping people understand eligibility criteria and navigate the registration process. It also helped by reaching people in remote areas and ensuring wider coverage. It was a trusted source of information, providing guidance on application processes, programme timelines and options for those without bank accounts.

“We left unexpectedly, simply to save our lives.”

In 2022, Ina arrived in Plovdiv from Zaporizhia. *“It was very close to the front line, we left unexpectedly, we did not even have time to think about what to take with us. We were just saving our lives.”*

After settling with her daughter in Bulgaria, she tried to help others herself. *“But I was very stressed, sometimes I did not know what to do. That is how I participated in different groups for support and had individual sessions with psychologists. After a while, I managed to overcome the stress and high levels of anxiety that I had. Only after this, I was able to participate in a Bulgarian language course. This helped me a lot to feel more comfortable in Bulgarian society and laid the foundations for our life here.”*



Ina providing food and hygiene packages at the BRC's Humanitarian Centre. Photo: BRC

Today, she helps displaced people from Ukraine as an employee of the Greenline. *“They call us about various problems, from lack of food and hygiene supplies to not knowing how to navigate the laws and institutions. Like us, they came with just a bag, often without any documents. All this has to be sorted out, the necessary provisions made. Psychological trauma has to be healed, people's dignity preserved.”*

“We emigrated after five months of living under occupation, and now I help other people.”

The city of Kherson was occupied in the early days of the international armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2022. *“For a long time, we could not leave the city, so we lived under occupation for five months”,* Tatyana recalls.

Tatyana came to the BRC to receive basic humanitarian support and participated in MHPSS activities, afterwards she felt strong enough to support others. She became an active volunteer of the BRC, supporting others. She went through PFA, PGI and CEA trainings and now she is part of the Greenline team. Every day she meets people from Ukraine and it is as if she is returning to the worst pages of her life.

“It is hard, but I am coping. I try to be helpful. The people come with different problems and questions, but mainly they are looking for information and PSS. Together with my colleagues, we do everything we can to help them to feel better into their new home.”

“I am very grateful to Bulgaria and the Bulgarian people. I have not encountered any negative attitudes, only support and smiles. I have also been given the opportunity to be useful and help others. I like it here.”



*Tatyana in the BRC's Humanitarian Centre.
Photo: BRC*

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

HUMANITY

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

IMPARTIALITY

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

NEUTRALITY

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

INDEPENDENCE

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

VOLUNTARY SERVICE

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

UNITY

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

UNIVERSALITY

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.