

Volunteer work is always rewarding

By Stana Buchowska, Regional Coordinator for Eastern Europe and Central Asia

City of Poznan, its main railway station, at 22,40. As every evening, the Przemyśl¹ - Szczecin train arrives at the second platform. Several hundred people are pouring out of it. Mostly women with children. Children make up more than half of this crowd. Older women, grandmothers or aunts, I suppose. Faces gray with fatigue. One big question mark in his eyes. Where have we gone? What awaits us here? Is this the end of our journey or will we still have to go further? Children clinging to their mother's jacket. Her hands are busy. She is carrying a suitcase and often the youngest child in her arms. Some children, lethargic with fatigue, walk slowly. Some whimper softly. Some cry quite loudly. Many women and children have transporters with pets in their hands. Cats and dogs peek out from behind the bars. Hamsters, guinea pigs and parakeets. Dozens of volunteers are waiting for them at the station. They help to climb the escalator. A children's corner awaits them. Hundreds of pillows and cuddly toys. Hot tea, sandwiches, snacks. Children food. Hygienic supplies. Diapers for children and for adults. Pet food and bowls of water prepared, too. Volunteers take care of children so that mothers can go to bathrooms or find information about a transfer to the next train. Volunteers also lead war refugees to the registration point, direct them to the main reception point at the Poznań Fair, where they can rest, use medical assistance, find accommodation or obtain information where to go next. In the children's corner, we see them busy with various coloring books and building blocks. Soap bubbles and clowns make children laugh most. Yes, we even have a clown among the volunteers.

It is after a midnight. The station is slowly emptying, some people change to other trains, some go to the Poznań Fair reception centre. Volunteers tidy up the places where they work. The children's corner was also deserted. Only a few pillows and blankets left. Most took women and children for onward travel. It's okay, new ones will be delivered tomorrow.

I am coming home, before I fall asleep, the most beautiful children's smiles from tonight flash before my eyes.

¹ Przemyśl is a big border city to the border with Ukraine