

Cultures on my street

Three years ago a family with two children moved into the building next door. I had the chance to meet them. They had come from Kiev, which is the capital of Ukraine, the second-largest European country after Russia. Ukraine gained independence in 1991 . Ukraine is a beautiful country with so many attractions : mountain ranges suitable for skiing, hiking and fishing, the Black Sea coastline as a popular summer destination , churches, castle ruins and other architectural and park landmarks. They told me many things about their country and their life there, which I found very interesting but at that moment they had to leave their country for a safer place.

Before the war in Ukraine, relations between Ukraine and Russia were marked by a complex history of culture, politics and economics. For many Ukrainians the bond with Russia was deep as both nations share language, historical and religion connection. Many Ukrainians spoke Russian as their first language. Every day life was shaped by this mix of identities, with many families having relatives on both sides of the border. Travel between the two countries was easy and common. Ukraine was heavily indepent on Russian energy and trade.

The war caused wide spread suffering and thousands of Ukrainians were forced to leave their home. Still today cities are being bombed , life is dominated by sirens and the threat of violence.

They told me that things were very difficult there with a lot of fear for their lives. Until one night their house was bombed and luckily they were not inside. So they had to go to a hotel where they stayed for a few days. The parents of the family couldn't go to work and the children couldn't go to school either. That is the reason they decided to move to Greece. It was easier for them to come to a country where they had relatives. Their lives changed completely.

At first, they were sad because they had to leave behind a lot of things, a whole life. For instance their home, their jobs, their school, their friends. They miss their country a lot.

In Greece, they had the chance to start again and live peacefully and safe. After a while they found jobs, their children were happy because they made a lot of friends and the whole neighborhood accepted them for being friendly and adorable.