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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: One year into the Russian aggression against Ukraine: the employment and social situation in the EU, with a focus on the labour market situation of refugees from Ukraine
- *Exchange of views*

Delegations will find attached a Presidency steering note on the above subject, with a view to the exchange of views at the Council (EPSCO) on 13 March 2023.

One year into the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine: the employment and social situation in the EU, with a focus on the labour market situation of refugees from Ukraine –
Exchange of views

Entering in its second year, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine forced almost 5 million Ukrainians to apply for temporary protection in the EU. Another 5 million are displaced within Ukraine. The Member States' solidarity with the Ukrainian refugees has been unprecedented, despite the considerable challenge for Member States, and in particular Member States bordering Ukraine and those hosting the largest number of Ukrainians, of providing them with subsistence means, affordable and stable accommodation as well as access to childcare, education, healthcare and the labour market.

The agreement to the Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE) and the amended Home Affairs Funds made possible the provision of funds without major delays and enabled Member States and regions to provide emergency support to people fleeing from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Moreover, programmes under the 2021-2027 European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) are starting now and will fund projects in employment, education, social inclusion as well as food and basic assistance. Nevertheless, the surging energy prices, high inflation rates and increased cost of living put additional pressure on the ability of the hosting Member States to provide adequate assistance to the refugees.

Since 4 March 2022,¹ the Union provides temporary protection to displaced persons granting, among others, residence rights, access to housing, social and medical assistance, access to education for children, the right to legal guardianship for unaccompanied minors, and the right to means of subsistence². The beneficiaries of the Temporary Protection Directive³ are automatically entitled access to the labour markets. One year after the Russian aggression, many of the refugees are

¹ Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection.

² The Commission is due to adopt a report on one year implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive.

³ Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0055&from=EN>)

starting to rebuild their lives in the host Member States. Finding work is a catalyst for the swift integration of refugees in society and for ensuring their financial independence. Recent estimates indicate that about 1 million Ukrainian refugees are in employment in the EU. Most Public Employment Services across the EU have adapted their services to address the specific needs of displaced people from Ukraine, by offering online information in Ukrainian, by providing tailor-made assistance by dedicated counsellors speaking Ukrainian, or by offering interpretation. Language training is highlighted as particularly important⁴.

However, securing employment in the host Member States can be challenging, notably due to barriers to enter the labour markets, such as language barriers, skills recognition, insufficient access to early childcare for parents, and in particular women, and the negative consequences from the trauma of war. The situation is particularly challenging for groups in vulnerable situations, such as refugees with disabilities or single parents. Member States have put in place numerous measures to eliminate the barriers to employment, many of which aim at enabling access to the labour market, training, upskilling or reskilling, setting up public dedicated services and enhancing the provision of childcare as of the earliest age.

Numerous actions have been taken also at the EU level. On 5 April 2022, the Commission adopted a recommendation on the recognition of qualifications for people fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine which provides Member States' authorities with guidance and practical advice to ensure a quick, fair and flexible recognition process. On 14 June 2022, the Commission published a communication with guidance for access to the labour market, vocational education and training and adult learning of people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine to steer Member States' actions aimed at supporting those arriving in the EU. On 15 February 2023, the Commission published a report comparing the Ukrainian and European Qualifications Frameworks to further support a better understanding and recognition of qualifications.

The online tool "*EU Talent Pool Pilot*", which is available also in the Ukrainian language, helps all persons benefiting from the Temporary Protection Directive to make their profiles available to EU employers registered on the EURES portal. Complementary to that, the EU Skills Profile Tool for non-EU nationals provides key information on how to access education and training opportunities, search for a job, and recognise diplomas and qualifications in each Member State.

⁴ More information following a PES network survey at : [Public Employment Services support to persons displaced from Ukraine: latest developments - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#). Figures reported by PES indicate that around **1 098 000 people** displaced from Ukraine are in employment in these countries.

Against this background, Ministers are invited to focus on the following questions in their contributions:

1. *How is the employment and social situation in your country affected by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, alongside rising inflation rates and energy prices?*
 2. *What is the labour market situation of Ukrainian refugees and how does this affect their integration in society?*
 3. *What measures are taken in your country to facilitate integration of refugees into the labour market? What additional measures are you planning to do in that regard?*
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