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To: Mr Jeppe TRANHOLM-MIKKELSEN, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

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Welcoming those fleeing war in Ukraine: Readyng Europe to meet the needs

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Delegations will find attached document COM(2022) 131 final.

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Brussels, 23.3.2022  
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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE  
REGIONS**

**Welcoming those fleeing war in Ukraine: Readyng Europe to meet the needs**

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, some three and a half million people, mainly women and children, have arrived in the European Union in the space of just four weeks. Both the scale and the speed of arrivals are unprecedented. While the EU continues tirelessly to support those suffering from humanitarian catastrophe in Ukraine, this Communication focuses on actions inside the EU to support those who are fleeing the country.

The EU's welcome to those fleeing their homes has been central to the Member States' common response to the war<sup>1</sup>. Action at EU level mirrors the determination, compassion and solidarity shown by people across the EU, as well as the huge efforts made by national and local authorities, NGOs, community associations, and businesses.

At the moment, the focus is rightly on meeting the immediate reception and protection needs of the arrivals. The EU is giving constant support to Member States in terms of assistance at the border, reception and civil protection. This Communication sets out a perspective on how the EU will continue to support their work over time.

The EU's welcome is epitomised by the first-ever activation of the Temporary Protection Directive<sup>2</sup>, to offer quick and effective assistance and a clear legal status. Ukrainian nationals and their family members, as well as people displaced by the conflict who have made Ukraine their home<sup>3</sup>, are now entitled to unprecedented protection across the EU, including access to accommodation, schools, health care, and jobs. This will continue to apply as more people are forced to leave Ukraine. The challenge is now to give life to those rights in practice.

Those arriving have seen their families divided. Of particular concern are the large number of children arriving from Ukraine, with the UN estimating these may make up half of all arrivals. These children have been exposed to terrifying experiences, and will need particular protection, care and psychosocial support. Many are unaccompanied minors, or are arriving without parents. All need to feel safe and secure, start going to school to help regain a sense of stability and be protected from the potential risks of abuse and trafficking.

Meeting the challenge will need a common approach, and real solidarity. New operational guidelines<sup>4</sup> on the Temporary Protection Directive will help those arriving to enjoy a consistent and effective level of rights, and help Member States to shoulder their new responsibilities. The guidelines will be regularly updated to support Member States in the day-to-day challenges and new situations they are confronted with.

A Solidarity Platform is now up and running to coordinate cooperation between Member States, starting with transfers from Moldova, which is under extraordinary pressure. The Platform will coordinate the solidarity offers and the needs identified, including reception

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<sup>1</sup> Communication on European solidarity with refugees and those fleeing war in Ukraine, COM(2022)107, (8.3.2022)

<sup>2</sup> Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to Ukrainian nationals, Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 foresees that third country nationals or stateless persons benefiting from international protection in Ukraine and their family members should be granted temporary protection if they resided in Ukraine before or on 24 February 2022. For third country nationals residing in Ukraine before or on 24 February with a permanent residence permit and who cannot safely return to their country of origin, Member States shall apply either temporary protection or adequate protection under their national law. Member States may also grant temporary protection to other third country nationals who were legally residing in Ukraine and are unable to return.

<sup>4</sup> Communication on Operational guidelines for the implementation of temporary protection, C(2022) 1806, (21.3.2022)

capacity<sup>5</sup>. It will ensure that facilities and services across the EU can be used to best effect, linking up all the tools and instruments at EU level to respond to the needs of Member States. In doing so, it will pay particular attention to the most vulnerable cases, in particular children. In its first week of operation, six Member States and Norway pledged to receive people who had fled Ukraine and were putting huge strain on Moldova's reception capacities. For swift implementation and results in the Solidarity Platform, active involvement of all stakeholders, Member States and agencies will be essential. Transparent and up-to-date data<sup>6</sup> from Member States will be key to effective coordination so as to redirect people to Member States with sufficient capacity.

Given the scale of the needs, all sectors of society are engaged in providing access to the rights attached to temporary protection – accommodation, education, healthcare and access to jobs. Local and regional authorities, businesses, social partners, health, social and employment services, child protection services, childcare facilities and schools all have a major role to play, alongside civil society, migrant-led organisations and diaspora communities. This commitment will be backed up by a major new effort at EU level, maximising the impact of available funding and tapping into a wide variety of expert networks.

Supporting so many new arrivals in Europe fleeing the war against Ukraine calls for humanity and flexibility. It represents a major challenge for effective organisation and coordination on the EU side, as well as with Ukrainian authorities and international partners. The EU is facing an unprecedented challenge, and it is through collective strength that it will respond to those who need our help, in line with our values and the European way of life.

***The Commission will:***

- ***Mobilise key networks to support Member States through the Solidarity Platform in using resources and expertise across the EU to best effect;***
- ***Help Member States to use EU funds quickly and flexibly, so that tailor-made funding can flow rapidly to support the efforts of Member States, key organisations and civil society to make the rights granted through temporary protection a reality;***
- ***Put in place dedicated structures so that Member States of both first entry and of destination, and other key service providers, can deploy the best available tools as quickly as possible.***

## **I OFFERING A SAFE HAVEN IN EUROPE**

Ukrainians have been driven to leave their country against their will by the Russian aggression, and many will be hoping to eventually return home. It remains very uncertain how soon this will be possible. Support must therefore be ***immediate***, but also factor in the ***possibility of a prolonged stay***. This is reflected in the design of the Temporary Protection Directive, which provides for an initial protection for one year but which could be automatically renewed twice for six months each time. Support to Member States will combine support in handling the present challenges with addressing their foreseeable requirements for the mid-term.

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<sup>5</sup> This work draws on guidance provided by Member States within the Integrated Political Crisis Response mechanism (IPCR).

<sup>6</sup> Including data on flows and the number of people present on Member States' territories, as well on available accommodation capacities

The Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027<sup>7</sup> provides a strong framework to guide the work and to help sustain the bonds between persons displaced from Ukraine and host communities we see today. It underlines the importance of including a wide range of stakeholders – including the new arrivals themselves, and diaspora communities – in the design of actions. This is critical to effective communication, empowerment and ownership. Also important is coordination, so that contributions from public authorities, philanthropic organisations and civil society work together to best effect, including where possible with the Ukrainian authorities. The Commission has mobilised the Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps and cultural communities to adapt their activities to support the arrivals.

New arrivals and their host communities should receive **targeted assistance as early as possible**. This reflects the massive support already needed and being provided, in the first instance by Ukraine's immediate neighbours Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia. This will quickly switch to an emphasis on helping displaced persons to settle. The best way to reduce reliance on external support, and enhance interaction with host communities, is to help the arrivals to achieve a degree of financial autonomy – most obviously by finding employment in line with their skills and qualifications – and to ensure their access to housing, education, healthcare, and other social services. Where possible, the Ukrainian authorities may also still be able to provide records and information which will help the Member States to target support more effectively, and every effort will be made to help those who are without documents.

One key factor to help new people arriving will be **information** about the rights provided. Information handed out at the border has already been very valuable. A 'Support for people fleeing Ukraine' webpage<sup>8</sup> has been launched to help them understand their rights in the EU. The website contains information about crossing the border, rights on arrival and onward travel. The Commission will continue to work with EU agencies, Member States, UN agencies, and other partners to ensure that people have the information they need, as well as to counter pro-Russian disinformation designed to spread doubt and uncertainty.

**Accurate data** will also be key to drive the EU response – including data on the needs, particular vulnerabilities and health status, family connections, age groups, and skills of those arriving, as well as their chosen destinations in Europe. It will be essential that Member States share accurate, comparable and up-to-date data to allow solidarity in all areas to work effectively. The EU Migration Preparedness and Crisis Management Network is already sharing valuable data, and will focus on specific issues such as numbers of unaccompanied minors, persons with disabilities or reception capacity suitable for families. The Solidarity Platform and other key networks are already up and running to match capacity to needs and to work on issues such as identifying where there are skills gaps that the new arrivals can fill. Further ways of collecting data on population movements will also be explored.

Part of helping those arriving from Ukraine find their feet in the EU will be support in overcoming **cultural and language barriers**. This is true for both adults and children. The EU can help with initiatives such as support for welcome centres, websites with practical guidance to link in with the local community and public services, adding the Ukrainian language to tools to help job seekers, and publicising existing Ukrainian-language e-learning websites. Ukrainian has just been added as one of the languages of the e-Translation tool of the European Commission and is available to national public authorities to support their

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<sup>7</sup> COM(2020) 758 final, (24.11.2020)

<sup>8</sup> [Information for people fleeing the war in Ukraine | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-operations/infoboxes/item-detail/-/press-operation/123456789)

work<sup>9</sup>. Integration funding allows language learning to be immediately available to all ages. Cultural mediators and interpreters, including from the diaspora and from arrivals themselves, can also help with inter-cultural integration.

Part of assimilation into normal life for those arriving from Ukraine is **access to bank accounts** in the EU, so that people can receive social support payments or salaries or make payments. The beneficiaries of temporary protection have the right to a basic bank account<sup>10</sup>. The Commission is in contact with the banking industry to ensure implementation, and this will be part of information campaigns. The guidance on implementing the Temporary Protection Directive also recommends that Member States facilitate the opening of a bank account even before a residence permit is issued.

The EU intends not only to welcome those fleeing war but to ensure their **safety** in Europe. The overwhelming majority of those who have been able to cross into the EU are women, children and elderly people, with around half the arrivals being children. It is essential that none of these people find themselves exposed to fresh dangers in their new situation. NGOs and others working in border regions have underlined the risk that people could fall prey to false offers of accommodation or transport, and find themselves in the hands of traffickers. Children, unaccompanied minors and orphans are at a particularly high risk and registration at first entry is key to ensuring the best interests of the child can be respected at all stages. Each child should be traceable from the moment they leave Ukraine to the moment of arrival in their country of destination. Europol reports that traffickers are targeting unaccompanied minors on the border, and alerted Member States to report all suspicious cases. National laws and procedures for vetting and monitoring procedures for foster families and other hosts need to be fully respected, in line with the best interests of the child. The network of National Rapporteurs on Trafficking in Human Beings is fully engaged to support effective registration of entities and persons providing accommodation and transport. Women and girls fleeing armed conflict are exposed to particular risks, and targeted measures are needed for their protection<sup>11</sup>.

Full respect for fundamental rights must be a touchstone for the EU response, no matter what the nationality or ethnicity of those arriving. All EU measures will pay particular attention to non-discrimination and the specific vulnerabilities of particular groups at greater risk of discrimination, including **Roma and other minorities**, and the **LGBTIQ** community, from first arrival to reception and integration.

## 2. SPECIAL PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN

With children representing half of those who have left Ukraine due to Russia's invasion, the EU is determined to give priority to ensuring that these children are well looked after. This will require a particular effort – starting from the first moment of identification and registration. All public services, as well as civil society, will need to be geared up to respond and to ensure that their rights and their best interests are protected. EU funding is available to support social inclusion, foster care and psychosocial counselling, as well as for education.

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<sup>9</sup> Machine translation for public administrations — eTranslation (europa.eu)

<sup>10</sup> See Payment Accounts Directive 2014/92/EU.

<sup>11</sup> See the Commission proposal for a Directive on combatting violence against women and domestic violence, COM (2022)105, (8.3.2022)



Every child fleeing Ukraine has suffered the trauma of war and its consequences. Children must be **guaranteed swift access to their rights**, without discrimination, including the necessary psychosocial support, healthcare and education (see below).<sup>12</sup> Children should be provided with information about their situation tailored to their age, by staff trained for working in child protection. Particular attention and support is required for those who are orphaned, unaccompanied or separated from their families, and particular provision for those with special needs or disabilities.

Member States' national offices for children and child protection services have a key role to ensure the appropriate support to and protection of all children arriving from Ukraine. Youth organisations and youth workers can also play a key role in providing concrete help and psychological support to children arriving from Ukraine<sup>13</sup>. Cultural and sport activities can also be important in dealing with psychological trauma and foster integration. Well-coordinated and clear lines of responsibility and contact points are of particular importance.

The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child provides a comprehensive framework of actions to ensure that the needs of children are fully taken into account. Under the European Child Guarantee<sup>14</sup>, **national Coordinators** are now appointed and this month has seen the presentation of national action plans, with children with a migrant background a key focus, even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. They will now have a particular role galvanising and coordinating the effort at a national level and with regional and local authorities, as well as exchanging best practice on an EU level. In addition, an EU Network for Children's Rights, bringing together national representatives, international organisations, NGOs, ombudspersons and children themselves, will be launched on 31 March.

The challenge of dealing with huge numbers of arrivals must not prevent all **unaccompanied children** from being registered. They should receive full and safe support and a representative of child protection services should be present as quickly as possible. In the case of separated children, (those arriving with adults other than their usual caregiver) national authorities should check the relevant documents to confirm the identity of the child, and the consent of the parents. Family tracing programmes should seek to reunite unaccompanied minors with family members in other parts of the EU. This may take time and calls for extra caution in determining long-term solutions for these children. The Commission will work with international organisations and Member States to reunite families scattered by the war.

Given their vulnerability and specific needs, **children from institutions** in Ukraine such as orphanages or other shelters, particularly those with disabilities, require immediate referral to child protection authorities. The best interests of the child will often point to temporary foster or other community based care, with necessary safeguards in place.

Member States are encouraged to be particularly vigilant about **children at risk** of trafficking or abduction. The EU-wide Child Helpline 116000 for missing children should be widely advertised. The renewed Schengen Information System entering into operation in the coming

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<sup>12</sup> Communication on Operational guidelines for the implementation of temporary protection, C(2022) 1806, (21.3.2022)

<sup>13</sup> Stakeholders and national coordinators of the European Year of Youth are also encouraged to reshape activities at national level to mobilise young people to offer support and show solidarity.

<sup>14</sup> COM (2021) 142, 24.3.2021. See also Commission Communication on the Protection of Children, COM (2017) 211, 12.4.2017. In line with the European Child Guarantee, Member States ensure access to free early childhood education and care, education, free healthcare, healthy nutrition, and adequate housing to children in need. Children with migrant backgrounds are one of the key target groups.

months will offer the possibility to enter alerts not only about children who have gone missing, but also ‘preventive’ alerts. This should be used in full.

In addition to general guidelines on transfers of beneficiaries of temporary protection, the Commission is preparing dedicated Standard Operating Procedures for **transfers of unaccompanied minors**. These are being developed with Member States and EU and UN agencies, to ensure children’s best interests come first. They will be shared with all relevant authorities to ensure a framework is ready so that all unaccompanied and separated children’s cases, no matter how urgent, are handled with the necessary safeguards. The Solidarity Platform will prioritise safe transfers of unaccompanied minors (see below).

### 3. ACCESS TO EDUCATION

With such a large share of children amongst those fleeing Ukraine, education systems face a **huge logistical challenge and also a major social responsibility**. Children’s swift return to early childhood education or schooling will be a major factor in the return to stability, helping to alleviate psychological stress. An overwhelming majority can be expected to come from separated families, with many unaccompanied. Schools, vocational education and training institutions, and early childhood education facilities can help connect displaced children and young people with social and health services, including psychosocial support, and create a sense of community. The numbers of children with a right to schooling is in the millions, demanding major increases in both infrastructure and staff. This will require a Team Europe approach, with EU funds supporting Member States at national and local levels and capitalising on existing support.

Children are likely to be present in greater numbers in some regions than in others. At the start, they will be predominantly in the countries bordering Ukraine and these Member States need immediate help, but soon other destinations in Europe may host bigger groups of children and will need targeted support. The **immediate priority** is to offer these children a place where they feel secure and can access education, followed by addressing language barriers and psychological trauma. Different local situations will call for different combinations of direct integration into the local education system and temporary reception classes to first prepare for integration into the mainstream education system. It is important to reach out to families upon arrival and provide parents and guardians with all necessary information<sup>15</sup>. Many children will have been out of formal education for a while, and will need particular help to catch up. Others will have special needs. Non-formal education hubs can play an important role for children in this situation. Access to extra-curricular activities such as sport and cultural activities is also important, alongside psychosocial care and language classes. Additional support including recruitment of Ukrainian-speaking teachers would help integration and bridge language barriers.

Member States are looking at what flexibility is needed and how to quickly adapt **legal and administrative rules** to ensure access to school systems and to mobilise additional teachers – including by recognising educational qualifications acquired in Ukraine. This will also include looking at possible financial barriers to education. Work also needs to start now to prepare for a smooth start of the next school term, looking at capacity, preparing teachers,

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<sup>15</sup> The EU Academy e-learning platform will provide educational support including for the integration of refugee children, their adult family members and carers. It can also host education-specific media channels (for podcasts and live and recorded video talks).



and identifying responses for the needs of specific groups, as well as addressing language training or translation needs. These elements will be essential to ensure an inclusive school environment. **EU Cohesion Policy funds** can help to finance a broad range of activities to support integration into education. This includes language courses. Erasmus+ can support staff to work temporarily where there are concentrations of displaced persons and the Commission will support efforts to find suitable staff and expertise through Erasmus+ National Agencies<sup>16</sup>. Where institutions are already participating in Erasmus+ cooperation projects, these can be adapted to new needs, also working closely with Cohesion Policy funds. The Commission will bring together Member States to foster the sharing of experience and identification of what is needed to continue displaced children's education. It will support Member States by pooling the expertise available across Europe on effective integration of displaced children into national education systems, including via reception classes and digital education, as well as higher education. The Commission will organise peer learning and bring together policy guidance on the integration of children and teenagers into schooling or further training or study.

While it will be a priority to help children learn the language of their host country in order to enter mainstream schooling, they will also need to continue building skills in their mother tongue, and at least for a transitional period, will require **school materials** in Ukrainian. In cooperation with the Ukrainian authorities, the EU Publications Office stands ready to print schoolbooks in Ukrainian for pupils who are currently in the EU. Learning material and language courses, for which the Commission can obtain the rights, can also be published electronically on the **School Education Gateway**, a public platform providing free information and professional development material to teachers and other education stakeholders. The Gateway will serve as a one-stop shop to link to educational material from Ukraine and Member States' material in Ukrainian language. A further initiative will work with **EU-based education technology providers**, based on work developed by the Ukrainian government, Member States and other recognised sources, to provide targeted digital education content on scalable local platforms. This will also rely on access to equipment for children to use digital education offers: donations of unused, refurbished and new devices by citizens, companies and public institutions could be organised to this end. Telecentres, local hubs where people can go to improve their digital skills, can also help by providing access to online education and learning.

It will be essential to draw on the capacities of Ukrainian teachers among the new arrivals in Europe. The **eTwinning community** can help through groups created in the secure space of the platform to support teachers facing the challenge of integrating new arrivals and addressing the war context in the classroom. As well as the Ukrainian teachers already involved in eTwinning, any teacher who has left the country and has established links with a school can take part.

In addition to support for primary and secondary education, **higher education institutions** are already looking at how to welcome and integrate students and academic staff fleeing Ukraine into their campuses. Flexibility is needed to facilitate access to courses and offer opportunities to students who benefit from temporary protection and need to continue their education. This will need swift consideration of how to recognise and take account of higher education credits and qualifications achieved in Ukraine<sup>17</sup>. Flexibility in the **Erasmus+**

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<sup>16</sup> The adult education platform [EPALE](#) (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe) can also be drawn upon.

<sup>17</sup> This will be supported by the network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres

funding programme and synergies with Cohesion Policy funds will be used to support the education of students and the integration of staff of higher education institutions who are also fleeing the war. Erasmus+ will also promote peer learning between Member States for higher education institutions and staff.

#### 4. ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Many of those fleeing the war against Ukraine are arriving in Europe in a vulnerable state of health. Many have faced real hardship en route or may even be wounded. Some have pre-existing conditions in need of continuous treatment, or may be pregnant. Many may find their mental health challenged by their recent experiences. Children have particular needs and psychosocial care, nutrition, and care for special needs or disabilities should be particular priorities.

The Temporary Protection Directive underlines the rights of those under its scope to social and medical care, including mental health care. The Commission recommends that Member States provide broad access to sickness benefits and affiliate them to the public health care system of the host Member State. This will also call for clear information for arrivals on the procedure and conditions for access to healthcare. Some existing EU integration initiatives already include a strong health component<sup>18</sup>. At the same time, the Commission will explore how the qualifications of Ukrainian healthcare workers, including mental health professionals, can be recognised so that they can play their role in meeting new needs.

The immediate priority is to treat those in urgent need of specialised hospital treatment and care, whether emergency care or treatment for chronic diseases. The Commission has set up a solidarity **mechanism**<sup>19</sup> **for intra EU medical transfers** from the Member States bordering Ukraine, where healthcare systems are under particular pressure. 10 000 places have already been made available by Member States, including places for cancer and burns patients, as well as paediatric wards, and beds for new-borns and their mothers. Vaccines, medicines and medical equipment including ambulances have also been delivered to Member States under pressure.

The Commission invites Member States to make full use of the new Standard Operating Procedures for medical transfers using the **Early Warning Response System** under the mechanism. These allow Member States to request support for the effective and secure transfer of the patients' health records, and outline the key components to be addressed – such as the condition, the need for treatment, and the family situation. Medical supplies are a key part of the work of the **Union Civil Protection Mechanism** (UCPM) to support Member States. While the receiving Member State covers the cost of treatment and care of incoming patients, medical evacuations and delivery of medical supplies can be supported and co-financed by the UCPM. This has helped Member States to donate medicines, routine vaccinations and equipment to help with urgent medical needs. To help speed up medical transfers of patients, the Commission, in close coordination with Member States and WHO Europe, is ready to support the set-up of **triage hubs** in most affected Member States for patients directly at the border to make a first diagnosis, determine the urgency and identify

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<sup>18</sup> Such as the Urban Agenda Inclusion Partnership.

<sup>19</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news/ukraine-commission-sets-european-solidarity-mechanism-intra-eu-medical-transfers-refugees-and-2022-03-08\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news/ukraine-commission-sets-european-solidarity-mechanism-intra-eu-medical-transfers-refugees-and-2022-03-08_en)

hospitals for referral. The UCPM can also help Member States to deploying medical personnel on the ground.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is monitoring the health situation on a permanent basis, including the risk from infectious disease due to the humanitarian situation. It provides practical public health guidance and field support for countries that experience a large influx of displaced persons. This relies on Member States putting strong surveillance systems in place,<sup>20</sup> as well as on requesting the necessary support on the ground to help address disease outbreaks and increase vaccination. The ECDC has also issued **guidelines on the prevention and control of infectious diseases**<sup>21</sup>, to increase awareness among community healthcare providers of the need to ensure access to services and continuity of vaccination programmes, and to mental and psychosocial health support.

**Vaccination** coverage in Ukraine is low compared to the EU, particularly for tuberculosis, polio, measles and COVID-19. Standard child vaccination should be considered a priority and dedicated vaccination campaigns would help national healthcare professionals to roll this out. At this stage, many people are staying in reception centres or other shared accommodation and may be particularly vulnerable to risks of infection. The Commission's Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority is supporting the procurement and supply of vaccines, taking into account that childhood vaccinations require several doses for full protection, spaced out over several months. Key to the rollout of vaccines is to make them easily accessible to all those arriving from Ukraine, which calls for good communication and planning in all areas where people are staying more permanently. The situation will increase the EU's overall needs for medicines and the EU and Member States will work together to monitor and address supply issues. This can be extended to procure further vaccines and medicines should Member States express such a need.

Easy, quick and free of charge access to **COVID-19** vaccination for those who have not yet completed their first course of vaccination or their booster dose is crucial. It is especially important to ensure the safety of the most vulnerable. The stocks of COVID-19 vaccines in the EU are sufficient to cover the needs of those arriving from Ukraine. The Commission recommends that Member States provide free COVID-19 testing during the arrival process.

The Commission will strengthen targeted actions on **mental health and trauma support** for those fleeing the war, working with NGOs and civil society. This will include supporting an increase of capacity deployed on the ground to provide mental health crisis support, and the setting up of a network of Ukrainian speaking mental health professionals in the EU<sup>22</sup>. An initiative under the EU4Health programme will collect and implement best practice on mental health and wellbeing, with special attention to the traumas they have experienced.

The EU Health Policy Platform<sup>23</sup> has set up a dedicated network to share information and coordinate new initiatives on public health concerns.

## 5. ACCESS TO JOBS

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<sup>20</sup> This can also apply to the environmental surveillance of waste water to identify the presence of viruses.

<sup>21</sup> [Operational public health considerations for the prevention and control of infectious diseases in the context of Russia's aggression towards Ukraine \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/health/epr/operational_public_health_considerations_for_the_prevention_and_control_of_infectious_diseases_in_the_context_of_russia_s_aggression_towards_ukraine_en)

<sup>22</sup> The Commission will also work with the pilot of the Minimum Service Package for mental health and psychosocial developed by WHO, UNICEF and other UN Agencies.

<sup>23</sup> A specific network "Supporting Ukraine, EU neighbouring Member States and Moldova" is now in place.

The right to **access the labour market** is a key aspect of the rights offered to those enjoying EU temporary protection. In order to prevent potential tensions, the real mutual benefits of participation of those fleeing the war in Ukraine, in the labour market needs to be properly explained and communicated. Early employment can have a great impact on the lives of the newly arrived, allowing them to be economically independent and to integrate into the local community, while at the same time reducing the economic burden in the hosting communities. The importance of the offer of access to the labour market was underlined in a joint declaration by the Ministers of Social Affairs of Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, some of the countries hosting the greatest numbers of new arrivals. In their declaration<sup>24</sup>, they also underline the need for EU support.

The Temporary Protection Directive stipulates that those with temporary protection should be able to engage in **employed or self-employed activities**, as well as **vocational training**. The Commission invites Member States to take national measures to implement these provisions as a matter of urgency, in close cooperation with social partners. Informing the people concerned about their rights is key, so that those arriving can start working as soon as possible.

They should also be able to rely on **equal treatment** in terms of pay and other working conditions. The Commission recommends that Member States interpret the rights granted by the Temporary Protection Directive to access the EU labour market in the broadest possible way, applying exceptions to free movement in the internal market only in duly justified circumstances. For beneficiaries of EU temporary protection, access to the EU labour market is a right. The Commission also encourages granting such access to beneficiaries of protection under national law. This would facilitate financial autonomy and a smoother integration process for all those benefitting from some form of protection in the EU.

Helping new arrivals to acquire the necessary skills to enter the EU job market is a key task of EU Cohesion Policy funding and the new Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe programme (CARE), as well as the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. This could include **help to prepare for employment** or entrepreneurship, through language courses, counselling, basic training, or business support, with Member States having the flexibility to tailor the support to their needs. Language and basic digital skills can also be built up using networks under the Pact for Skills to connect regional and city authorities, education organisations, and NGOs involved in supporting people who have fled Ukraine. The Commission has added the Ukrainian language to the **EU Skills Profile Tool** for third country nationals, to help Ukrainian job seekers and those who wish to continue their studies.

Given the large number of women among those fleeing war against Ukraine, who are effectively single parents in the EU, **access to childcare** and pre-school education will be essential to enable their participation in the job market. CARE funds can support both services and infrastructure in this area.

Employers and training institutions need to be able to understand the skills of those arriving from Ukraine. The Commission is developing new guidelines to facilitate the **recognition of professional qualifications** obtained in Ukraine, and work will continue with the European Training Foundation to compare European Qualifications Framework and the Ukrainian national qualifications framework. In addition, the Commission is exploring the potential of European Digital Credentials for Learning to reissue diplomas in digital format for those who

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.lm.gov.lv/en/article/joint-statement-ministers-social-affairs-czech-republic-baltic-states-poland-romania-and-slovakia>

do not have the necessary documents, having fled the war. The European Training Foundation is setting up a resource site to help both Ukrainians seeking assistance in having their qualifications recognised, and others who need help in interpreting them.

Among the rights offered under the Temporary Protection Directive is the right to educational opportunities for adults, and vocational training. Support for those arriving from Ukraine in re-skilling can also help to meet EU labour market needs and **skills gaps**. The European Labour Authority has identified<sup>25</sup> 28 occupations, making up 14% of EU jobs, which are facing shortages. Cedefop, the EU agency for vocational education and training, is analysing millions of job vacancies across Europe to examine what skills are needed and where. Public Employment Services will play a key role in active labour market policies to make use of the skills of the new arrivals, and act as matchmakers on the labour market. The Commission has asked all Public Employment Services to collect information on measures in place, and will follow up with dedicated guidance on the integration of workers from Ukraine in the jobs market, including in rural areas. A specific support scheme – drawing in the first phase on tools available under Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs – could also support Ukrainian start-ups. The Enterprise Europe Network can provide support to new entrepreneurs launching businesses.

In parallel to mapping the existing skills of new arrivals from Ukraine and helping to connect them with employment services, available jobs and employers, the Commission will launch an **EU Talent Pool** pilot initiative. This web-based tool will allow candidates to present their skills and availability to work. The pilot will take into account ongoing successful initiatives in Member States such as in Portugal and Romania. It will be developed in cooperation with Member States, with outreach to social partners and all relevant stakeholders, to be up and running by the summer. The platform could provide particular help to priority sectors, such as helping to identify teachers for displaced children or to give language courses, as well as interpreters and care professionals to support key services for new arrivals.

The Commission will work with **social partners** to inform beneficiaries of protection and the **private sector** about the rights under temporary protection and the programmes set up to match job offers and skills profiles. Other key multipliers include the European Integration Network and the European Partnership for Integration. The Commission will reinforce the Partnership and cover integration into the labour market of people fleeing from Ukraine. All these networks could help to develop mentorship programmes alongside civil society, building on existing cooperation with the Ukrainian diaspora.

## 6. ACCESS TO ACCOMODATION AND HOUSING

Those fleeing Ukraine have needed immediate shelter. Many amongst the first arrivals went directly to the homes of family and friends. Increasingly, however, arrivals are fleeing without the comfort of knowing their destination. The Temporary Protection Directive offers the right to suitable accommodation, responding to the particular needs of those arriving, or the means to obtain housing. This is also part of the work of the Solidarity Platform: accommodation and housing will be a key determinant of how Member States can help share the effort of welcoming people.

*To meet the immediate needs of those arriving*, thousands of private individuals are already providing housing and assistance, supplementing Member States' official reception capacity.

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<sup>25</sup> Report on Labour Shortages and Surpluses, European Labour Authority, November 2021



This generosity demonstrates the solidarity and unified sense of purpose Europe has shown in facing this unprecedented situation. A new “**safe homes**” **initiative** will support Europeans who are making their homes available by embracing the initiatives already taken by some Member States, regional and local actors, maximising the use of existing EU funds for this purpose, and mobilising targeted funding and online resources as the needs arise. It will also support new, innovative partnerships at local national and EU level, and tap into the experience of community sponsorship programmes.

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, as well as Cohesion Policy funds, will be mobilised to strengthen public reception systems. Member States that need to ramp up reception capacity to provide shelter, supplies and services can make use of the rules foreseen for urgent public procurement, as was the case during the migration crisis of 2015-16.

Member States are encouraged to coordinate, via the Solidarity Platform, on facilitating onward movement of people fleeing the war against Ukraine, by setting up transport connections between their main points of arrival, transit and destination. This should take into account reception capacities in Member States. This coordination should ensure more dignified travel for people to their chosen destination, a better sharing of effort across Europe and more predictability about numbers of arrivals for Member States of destination and transit.

However, *more permanent housing solutions* may quickly be required and need to be factored into Member States’ broader housing policies, taking account of the needs of both the new arrivals and of host communities where housing is already under pressure. The European Regional Development Fund helps to provide social housing for families and individuals in the community, and the Fund can cover both the purchase and refurbishment of accommodation. In addition, basic rent for accommodation could be foreseen. The European Social Fund can support community-based services and accommodation, especially for those with special needs, disabilities, children and older people.

## **7. SOLIDARITY IN ACTION**

The arrival in the EU of so many fleeing war with unprecedented speed is a challenge that is being met by the Union as a whole, building on the extraordinary efforts shown in the first place in Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia. Public authorities, civil society and private individuals are showing enormous commitment to help those in need.

The EU will ensure that Member States receive the support they need. The Commission, through the Emergency Response Coordination Centre, has worked 24/7 to mobilise assistance and EU agencies are stepping up their deployment in line with Member States’ requests. Frontex is currently deploying a total of more than 250 staff and this will continue to rise. The EU Asylum Agency is responding to Member States’ requests for support, and Europol is increasing its involvement.

The **Solidarity Platform**, bringing together Member States, the Commission and EU agencies, is collecting and examining needs identified by Member States, and coordinating the operational follow-up. Through a regular exchange of information, the Platform will provide a comprehensive overview of reception capacities in Member States. It will match the offers of those who can provide help to those who need support, as well as help to organise the transfers from Member States under most pressure to those with suitable reception capacity. It will work closely with the Council’s Integrated Political Crisis Response and the EU Migration Preparedness and Crisis Management Blueprint Network to



map needs, resources, and action. It is paying particular attention to the needs of the most vulnerable, in particular children.

The **private sector** is also playing its part. The Commission is looking at how in-kind donations from private companies could be added to the common effort. Many **transport** operators have spontaneously offered support in carrying those fleeing, by organising humanitarian trains and providing free tickets, as well as in transporting humanitarian aid to Ukraine. The Commission will coordinate with private sector operators to facilitate and expand these efforts<sup>26</sup>. As part of its operational guidelines, the Commission recommends that Member States do not impose financial penalties on carriers transporting persons enjoying temporary protection without valid documents for travel.

In addition, the arrival of millions of people fleeing war against Ukraine is not a matter for the EU alone. Partners worldwide have condemned Russia's aggression and may wish to play their part in helping those who have lost their homes and livelihoods. The Solidarity Platform can help through a **dedicated cooperation platform for third countries** to establish pathways for persons displaced by the conflict, particularly those who are already host to significant Ukrainian communities (such as Canada or the United Kingdom).

Support also continues for **repatriation of third country nationals** who were caught up in the war in Ukraine, including through outreach to the countries of origin. Many third countries have arranged for their citizens to be repatriated either directly or with EU assistance. Frontex has supported the first humanitarian voluntary return flights from Poland to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, with further humanitarian voluntary return flights in the pipeline. The Commission is working with the International Organization for Migration on a facility to support Eastern Partnership countries such as Moldova to repatriate third country nationals fleeing the war.

## 8. FAST, FLEXIBLE SOLUTIONS TO FINANCE SOLIDARITY

The Commission has taken immediate action to help mobilise financial support to Member States hosting those fleeing war against Ukraine. This builds on the very wide range of assistance already available under Union Civil Protection Mechanism, Cohesion Policy and the Home Affairs funds. This includes investments in infrastructure, equipment, services in education, employment, housing, health, social and childcare. Another source of prompt assistance is the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived.

The **Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE)**<sup>27</sup> proposal, to be adopted by the [European Parliament and the Council](#) in the coming days, facilitates the flexible use of funding still available from the 2014-20 programmes. In particular, it will allow more flexible and interchangeable use of the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund. All expenditure concerning those fleeing the war will be retrospectively eligible, dating back to the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. This will enable immediate mobilisation of funding, without having to wait for programmes to be modified. The exceptional 100% co-financing rate applied in response to the pandemic is extended by a year, which will lighten the burden on national, regional and local budgets, releasing funds to meet operational needs. These flexibilities should also help to support the many NGOs

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<sup>26</sup> Examples of such support by the transport sector are airlines, rail, bus and shipping companies offering free or discounted tickets for those fleeing Ukraine.

<sup>27</sup> COM (2022) 109, (8.3.2022)

currently playing such an important part in receiving new arrivals in Member State and offering the essential services they need.

Amendments to the **Home Affairs funds** will unblock access to unspent amounts previously earmarked for specific purposes under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund in 2014-20, giving Member States flexibility to use these resources to meet the new needs<sup>28</sup>.

In addition, available funding under **REACT-EU**, in particular its 2022 tranche of up to €10 billion, can be used if in line with the objective of ensuring recovery after the pandemic. To support Member States, and particularly those closest to the EU border with Ukraine, a **€3.4 billion** pre-financing payments under REACT-EU will be made available to speed up access to funds.

Significant funding is also available under the 2021-2027 financial framework from both Home Affairs and Cohesion Policy funds. Member States may start eligible projects already now as expenditure is eligible for reimbursement as from 1 January 2021.

With the increased flexibility in use of available funds from the past and present budget periods, Member States have various funding options at hand to support those fleeing the war against Ukraine. Member States and regions are invited to make use of these options, to accelerate programming of all funds and to include measures supporting those fleeing the war in Ukraine.

To assist Member States and regions in this, a **one-stop shop** is being set up to bring together all relevant Commission experts to reach out to all relevant counterparts in the Member States to provide comprehensive guidance and individualised support on how to optimise the use of EU funding. It will provide expertise to reply to the specific questions of Member States in real time. On-site teams are also being dispatched to Member States to provide guidance and support on the ground.

The **Technical Support Instrument** (TSI) provides tailor-made support to help Member States build institutional capacity, and can also be drawn on to help Member States address the new circumstances. The Commission has launched a dedicated call<sup>29</sup> in response to the emerging needs of Member States in the context of the war. They will be able to request technical support under the TSI Flagship on migrant integration to help them provide rapid access to vital services such as housing, education, employment and absorbing EU funds. Activities under ongoing projects on migrant integration and the Child Guarantee can be swiftly adapted to new needs resulting from the war in Ukraine. Seven Member States already have plans under way to improve support to migrants, including on skills recognition and employment, which can be recalibrated to meet the new needs. In addition, Member States can request special measures for rapid mobilisation of technical support.

## 9. CONCLUSION

Welcoming millions of people following the Russian aggression in Ukraine has seen and will continue to require an unprecedented response from the EU in terms of solidarity, coordination, and mutual support. This Communication shows how the Commission is harnessing every available tool – in terms of coordination, organisation, and funding – to support the work now underway in Member States.

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<sup>28</sup> COM (2022) 112, (8.3.2022)

<sup>29</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_22\\_1867](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1867)

The Commission is in daily contact with Member States and stakeholders such as the business community, NGOs and civil society actors. Member States need quick answers on how to respond to new challenges and the new responsibilities they have under the Temporary Protection Directive.

The EU and its Member States have the resources, knowledge and expertise to master the challenges ahead. We have the networks and processes in place as well as the determination needed to deliver. This must now be drawn together to ensure that concerted action provides the support needed across Member States. Together we will translate the goodwill of Europeans into practical help for the millions forced by Russian aggression to leave their homes.

Whilst the focus now is on addressing the immediate and medium-term needs, the present situation serves as a further reminder of the need to put in place a comprehensive migration and asylum management system.

The Commission invites all the institutions to give swift consideration to this Communication, with the upcoming meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council scheduled for 28 March 2022 providing an opportunity for Interior Ministers to take the relevant elements forward.