

# Reception Systems in some EU Member States during the Ukraine Crisis: solidarity and discriminations

by Rossella Fadda

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT N. 18

Jun 2022



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"This background document has been realized in the framework of the project, to spread data and information based on a scientific analysis. If you want to know more about this project and be part of its activities, please feel free to contact the leading partner Diaconia in Czech Republic (email: nozinova@diakoniespolu.cz), as well as Focsiv in Italy (email: f.novella@focsiv.it)."

<sup>1</sup> This background paper has been realised in the framework of the "Faces of Migration" project (Migrant and SDGs, contract number CSO-LA/2018/401-798), co-financed by the European Union. The paper has been elaborated by Rossella Fadda with the coordination of Andrea Stocchiero (Focsiv). This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

On February 24, Russia launched a large-scale invasion in Ukraine, marking the effective start of the Russia-Ukraine war. Although tensions between the two countries had already emerged in late 2021, the escalation occurred when the Russian Federation sent 100,000 soldiers to the border, raising the level of alarm for the Ukrainian government.

With several failed diplomatic talks and attempts to stop the war, this is the largest military mobilization Europe has witnessed since World War II in 1945 and the Balkan wars (in the 1990s) that led to the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. As of May 2, 2022, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)<sup>1</sup> reports a toll of 6,546 civilian casualties in Ukraine since February 24, recording 3,193 killed and 3,353 injured.

The war unleashed a humanitarian crisis. As of May 23, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)<sup>2</sup> reported more than six million people who have left the country across its borders and eight million internally displaced (IDPs).

The new refugee flow raises crucial questions about European Union (EU) migration policy compared to the EU response implemented when the so-called “refugee crisis” was declared, when millions of Syrians left their war-torn country in 2015.

On March 4, 2022, the European Commission (EC) adopted the Council Directive (2001/55/EC) implementing the Temporary Protection (TP), to which all EU Member States (MS), except Denmark, have acceded. The Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) was activated for the first time<sup>3</sup> and applies to Ukrainian nationals displaced as of February 24, 2022, third-country nationals (TCNs) and stateless persons who have been granted international protection in Ukraine until February 24, 2022, as well as families of both groups<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, on March 17, 2022, the EC published the Communication on Operational Guidelines<sup>5</sup> to support Member States (MS) in implementing the TPD at national level. According to UNHCR, to date (May 5, 2022), the MS with the largest influx of refugees from Ukraine (UA) are Poland (3,094,446) and Romania (846,521), followed by Hungary (539,821) and Slovakia (385,284)<sup>6</sup>. However, it is important to stress that these figures only represent border crossings and arrivals in neighboring countries - a consideration that might also apply to the Republic of Moldova - and that it is likely that many have moved onwards to other countries. As discussed below, UA nationals entered Slovenia (21,980), the Czech Republic (more than 351,000), Bulgaria (279,976), Greece (29,822), Slovakia (442,316) and Italy (116,130). Other non-neighboring countries, such as Germany (727,205 until May 11)<sup>7</sup>, also recorded high entries of Ukrainians.

<sup>1</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2022/05/ukraine-civilian-casualty-update-3-may-2022>

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.unhcr.org/it/notizie-storie/comunicati-stampa/unhcr-la-guerra-in-ucraina-e-altri-conflitti-spingono-per-la-prima-volta-il-numero-totale-delle-persone-costrette-a-fuggire-oltre-la-soglia-dei-100-milioni/> and <https://www.unhcr.org/it/notizie-storie/notizie/lunhcr-e-i-suoi-partner-chiedono-sostegno-urgente-per-sostenere-i-rifugiati-provenienti-dall'ucraina-e-i-paesi-ospitanti/>

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the Temporary Protection Directive (Council Directive 2001/55/EC) was adopted in 2001, but its activation has been rejected by EU Member States despite the fact that the EU has faced several humanitarian crises, notably Libya (2011), Tunisia (2011), Ukraine (2014) and Syria (2011 and ongoing).

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see: <https://ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Information-Sheet-%E2%80%93-Access-to-territory-asylum-procedures-and-reception-conditions-for-Ukrainian-nationals-in-European-countries.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> For more information, see: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/communication-operational-guidelines-establishing-existence-mass-influx-displaced-persons-ukraine\\_en.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/communication-operational-guidelines-establishing-existence-mass-influx-displaced-persons-ukraine_en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> For more information, see: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

<sup>7</sup> Source available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/over-700000-refugees-ukraine-registered-germany-welt-2022-05-14/>

Since its outbreak, the war has caused serious protection problems, as civilians are exposed to armed violence, mines, family separation, looting or evictions, and human trafficking. There is also concern about safety risks for women, girls and the most vulnerable groups (children, the elderly, people with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ people).

In response to the humanitarian challenges caused by the war, the EC is coordinating its largest ever operation under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism - European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)<sup>8</sup> - in which all 27 MS, plus Norway and Turkey, are participating (see Figure 1).

This background paper analyses ongoing government responses to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Europe - Italy, Slovenia, Greece, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria - within

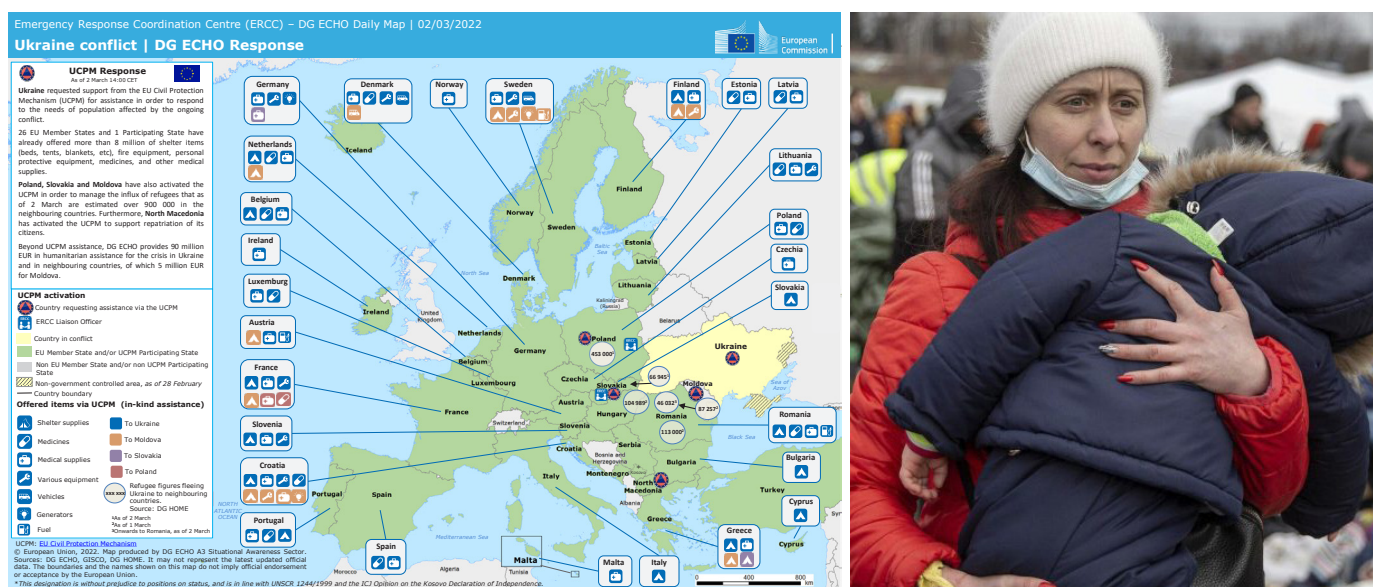
the framework of the “Faces of Migration” (FoM) project. It was realized in cooperation with 6 of the FoM partners<sup>9</sup>.

The document was created on the basis of information collected through a questionnaire filled in by FoM partners, or retrieved from official open-source tools, as well as from news and reports produced by UN agencies and local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Our aim is to present an overview of the governments’ implementation of policy measures to address “the Ukrainian emergency” with regard to: the reception and registration of people fleeing Ukraine, the implementation of the TPD, and cooperation between States, civil society and NGOs, raising issues related to discrimination.

It presents country-by-country information, drawing reflections on similarities and differences as well as critical issues reported by FoM partners.

**Fig. 1: ECHO’s Response to Ukraine conflict in Europe**

Ph. <https://italialibera.online>



<sup>8</sup> For more information, see: [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/europe/ukraine\\_en#facts--figures-as-of-2604](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/europe/ukraine_en#facts--figures-as-of-2604)

<sup>9</sup> Federazione Organismi Cristiani Servizio Internazionale Volontario (FOCSIV, Italy), Institute for the Culture and Development of International Relations in Culture (Povod, Slovenia), ActionAid Hellas (Greece), Ambrella - Platform for Development Organizations (Slovakia), Diakonie ECC - Center for Relief and Development (Czech Republic), Bulgarian Platform for International Development (BPID, Bulgaria).



## 2. SLOVENIA



Povod, Institute for the Culture and Development of International Relations in Culture<sup>10</sup>, is a Slovenian NGO partner of the 3-year FoM project. Povod, together with the other FoM partners, aims to inform and raise awareness among decision-makers, journalists and the public opinion across Europe on the topic of migration within the UN 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At the time of Povod's submission of the questionnaire (April 19, 2022), Slovenia was in a national pre-election phase, which contributed to conflicting perceptions about people fleeing Ukraine among the population. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinated national measures with some humanitarian NGOs which are providing support to people with the Government Office for the Integration of Migrants, which has been in charge of leading the coordination process with the NGOs they work with.

According to the police, 21,980 Ukrainians have entered Slovenia since the beginning of the conflict, of whom only 5,738 still live in the country. In accordance with the EU TPD, 5,919 have been recognized as TP, including 2,149 minors and 3,589 adults. A total of 5,919 applications were submitted, yet some applicants have already left the country<sup>11</sup>.

Approximately 20,000 Ukrainian displaced persons are reported to have already moved to other countries. While no official or empirical data is currently available, Povod estimates that Italy is the main destination for people transiting

through Slovenia, while those moving to Austria might transit through neighboring Hungary and Slovakia<sup>12</sup>.

### Reception policy

The Slovenian government's policy towards the "Ukrainian crisis" appears to be in line with that adopted by the EU. However, it should be noted that no official national plan has been established since Ukrainians began arriving in the country during the election period and the transition of the previous government. According to the Ministry of the Interior, an estimated 10,000 people could be hosted. Povod also reported that the government initially mentioned a reception capacity of 200,000 people, but later explained that this would represent the maximum capacity - including Slovenian citizens - in the event of a natural catastrophe in the country. Nevertheless, the government set up reception centers<sup>13</sup>, but a substantial number of refugees turned to local communities and family networks to find spontaneous accommodation in private facilities.

As of May 6, 316 refugees were accommodated in the reception center in Logatec, with a capacity of 250 people, and 91 in another center in Debele Rtič, with a maximum capacity of 80 people<sup>14</sup>. In the future, the Office also plans to use the facilities in Jelšane, Gornja Radgona and Velenje - currently, the accommodation capacities in Velenje are only intended for people who are travelling to other countries and need short-term accommodation in Slovenia.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> For more information: <http://povod.si/>. The NGO has been involved in several actions, including training on gender mainstreaming in intercultural learning, integration in globalization, intercultural communication and capacity-building training.

<sup>11</sup> Official data was last retrieved from the Government Office for Refugees on May 6, 2022. For information see: <https://www.gov.si/en/state-authorities/government-offices/government-office-for-the-support-and-integration-of-migrants/>

<sup>12</sup> The estimates were discussed during an interview with Povod's spokesperson conducted by the author.

<sup>13</sup> Official information on the precise numbers of the reception capacity was not available due to the election period and the government transition when the questionnaire and the interview with the Slovenian partner were carried out.

<sup>14</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.primorske.si/slovenija/urad-za-migracije-in-zdravstvo-povsem-obvladujeta> (Slovenian only)

<sup>15</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.gov.si/en/topics/slovenias-assistance-to-the-citizens-of-ukraine/>

On May 6, the Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants signed an agreement with the Government Department for Development and European Cohesion Policy on the financing of a project to provide basic support for the integration of persons with temporary protection status from Ukraine into Slovenian society.

### Permits and visas

All Ukrainians in possession of valid documents may enter Slovenia and stay in the country for up to 90 days (tourist entry). Temporary protection is granted almost automatically to persons fleeing Ukraine and guarantees the right to: a) food and accommodation in reception centers or financial assistance for private accommodation; b) healthcare; c) work; d) education; e) financial assistance or pocket money; f) family reunification; g) free legal assistance; h) information on rights and duties and assistance in exercising rights under the Temporary Protection of Displaced Persons Act. Support and access to these services, as well as social benefits, are provided by both humanitarian organizations and the State. Slovenia provides institutional support to people who have applied for TP, which should meet people's primary needs.

According to unofficial information, the Government Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants received 806 applications for financial assistance, of which only one third has already been approved. This consists of monthly payments of 421.89 euros per refugee, renewable after six months. However, psychosocial support and access to medical care do not seem to be fully guaranteed to all.

### Discrimination and other challenges

Discrimination and xenophobia against Ukrainians have not emerged as relevant issues in Slovenia; on the contrary, they have been positively

welcomed and accepted by institutions and the population. People who flee Ukraine and remain in the country are treated differently, identifying positive discrimination in contrast to discrimination against other refugees and asylum seekers. Consequently, NGOs and civil society are claiming the urgent need to set standard procedures for protection to ensure equal treatment for all refugees, without discrimination based on skin color or country of origin.

At the moment, the main challenge is the processing of official applications, which according to local authorities is very time-consuming. Due to the administrative slow process, there is a lack of information on other specific types of visas besides EU temporary protection. In addition, this slow processing of the registration of Ukrainian refugees, together with the language barrier, might represent a problem in the medium term, as it prevents them from immediately entering the labor market.

Overall, Ukrainian people fleeing the conflict have been well accepted by the population compared to people fleeing Arabic-speaking countries and arriving in Slovenia via the Balkan route. Cultural similarity and 'whiteness' definitely play a role in determining the positive attitude and perception of the public and the government. It is rather difficult to assess whether this perception will change in the future and whether the new left-wing government will further implement the reception system. According to Povod, rising gasoline and energy prices - and a possible consequent increase in the prices of essential items - might fuel aversion and discrimination against Ukrainian refugees. Yet, the newly elected government has announced that more effort will be put into establishing more equal administrative procedures for access to protection for all refugees staying in Slovenia.

### 3. CZECH REPUBLIC



Diakonie ECC - Center of Relief and Development<sup>16</sup> is a non-profit organization and FoM partner based in the Czech Republic, specializing in aid, development and social service projects across the globe.

As reported by Seznam Zprávy (May 22, 2022), according to the Czech Ministry of the Interior<sup>17</sup>, more than 351,000 Ukrainian refugees have entered the Czech Republic. The number of people officially registered has increased every day. Since people have 30 days to register after entering the country, the real number of Ukrainian refugees is estimated to have grown significantly at the time of writing.

#### Reception policy

The official government strategy was presented and approved on April 13, 2022, providing for an investment of CZK 54 billion (EUR 2.2 billion) to support approximately 500,000-600,000 refugees from Ukraine. The strategy proposes a national plan with several steps for the next 360 days (1 year), including: the establishment of a national coordination team (responsible for the implementation of the strategy in cooperation with relevant Ministries, regional and local authorities) and 13 priorities (coordination and management; legal status; digitization of migration management; accommodation and housing; employment and access to the labor market; education; social support; medical care; integration and inclusion in the country; internal security; European and internal cooperation; finance; and communication).

NGOs also organized humanitarian aid among civil society and the public with financial and material collections, volunteering, assistance and housing coordination, among others. The NGO platform *Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations*<sup>18</sup> coordinates a national online platform where different needs are expressed, and offers are collected for distribution. This NGO also coordinates communication and cooperation with the government and the Integrated Rescue System, which is responsible for the reception of refugees. In general, Czech NGOs cooperate closely with the State and the Integrated Rescue System and provide support services and volunteers. They were also invited to contribute to the government strategy at the national and local levels, thus showing close coordinated cooperation not only between the State and NGOs, but also with businesses. After the approval of the national strategy, Diakonie CCE observed that NGOs still need to discuss and comment on the concrete steps of its implementation and possible changes.

As challenges could emerge for each of the 13 priorities, the NGO predicts that this might mostly affect education and housing due to limited capacity in these sectors. So far, no relocation program is planned or announced, but it will depend on the arrival and stay of Ukrainians in the coming months.

As for accommodation, the Czech Interior Minister stated that the Czech Republic is able to provide basic comfort and accommodation for ap-

<sup>16</sup> For more information: <https://www.diakoniespolu.cz/en/>. Their work is based on the principles of social justice and empowerment and applies a ground-up approach that emphasizes person-to-person cooperation.

<sup>17</sup> For more information, see: [https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/fakta-uprchlici-v-datech-podivejte-se-kolik-lidi-na-slo-azyl-ve-vasi-obci-193127#utm\\_content=ribbonnews&utm\\_term=Uprchl%C3%ADci%20v%20datech&utm\\_medium=hint&utm\\_source=search.seznam.cz](https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/fakta-uprchlici-v-datech-podivejte-se-kolik-lidi-na-slo-azyl-ve-vasi-obci-193127#utm_content=ribbonnews&utm_term=Uprchl%C3%ADci%20v%20datech&utm_medium=hint&utm_source=search.seznam.cz)

<sup>18</sup> For more information, see: <https://migracnikonsorcium.cz/en/>

proximately 250,000 people. Currently, refugees are accommodated in hotels and private facilities (houses and flats offered by individuals); in some regions, when the accommodation capacity is exhausted, people stay in schools and other public facilities. Accommodation is covered directly by the State, which provides social allowances to Czech citizens and hotels that host Ukrainians in their homes and facilities to cover accommodation costs - energy, internet, new furniture, etc. However, Diakonie CCE reports that accommodation remains a significant issue in terms of the reception of people fleeing Ukraine.

The various primary needs of the refugees that are being met in close collaboration by the State and NGOs are: a) assistance (registration, medical check-ups, labor office), provided by NGOs and volunteers; b) baby-sitting (especially for working mothers), provided by NGOs; c) education and socialization for children, provided by the government and schools; d) psychosocial support, provided by the State and NGOs; e) food, provided by food banks, NGOs, the State and businesses.

### Permits and visas

As of May 22, 2022, 351,315 Ukrainian citizens had obtained TP<sup>19</sup>.

345,821 UA nationals were granted a TP residence permit, including 60,486 men, 158,119 women and 127,201 minors<sup>20</sup>.

In accordance with EU recommendations, special temporary residence permits (valid for up to one year) are issued to all Ukrainian refugees, including Ukrainian citizens and persons with permanent or temporary residence in Ukraine.

Persons without this status can apply for asylum. As in other EU countries, visa holders have access to accommodation, education, the labor market and medical care (like Czech citizens). The Senate of the Czech Republic approved a bill on the payment of special humanitarian benefits to Ukrainian refugees. Since March 21, 2022, Ukrainian refugees receive humanitarian aid in the amount of 5,000 crowns (approximately 200 euros) per month during the first three months of their stay in the country. However, as of May 16, those applying for TP status must present a stamp in their passport confirming that they have crossed the Ukrainian-Czech border in order to receive the assistance. Regarding other types of visas, there are currently no statistics available on people applying for visas from other countries.

### Discrimination and other challenges

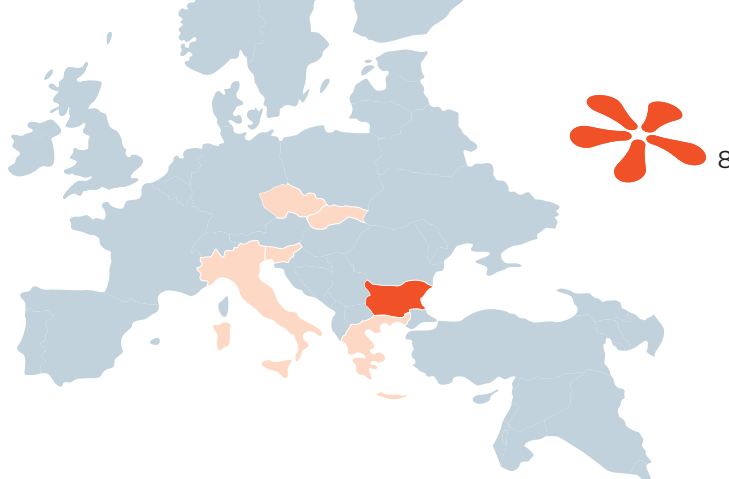
Diakonie CCE reports the recent spread of hate speech on social networks, especially against the government and NGOs, but also against refugees. Furthermore, the recent electoral context has seen the threat of a tilt towards radical parties, thus jeopardizing the political stability of the Czech Republic. As a result of this trend, school incidents related to xenophobia and conflicts between Russian and Ukrainian students have been reported. Others were witnessed in public against Russian people living in the Czech Republic. More generally, the public is becoming more and more reluctant to help, as stereotypical arguments against refugees - such as the alleged priority of refugees in social support and over Czech citizens - are increasingly widespread.

<sup>19</sup> Data retrieved from: <https://twitter.com/vnitro>

<sup>20</sup> Data retrieved from: [https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/fakta-uprchlici-v-datech-podivejte-se-kolik-lidi-naslo-azyl-ve-vasi-obci-193127#utm\\_content=ribbonnews&utm\\_term=Uprchl%C3%ADci%20v%20datech&utm\\_medium=hint&utm\\_source=se-arch.seznam.cz](https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/fakta-uprchlici-v-datech-podivejte-se-kolik-lidi-naslo-azyl-ve-vasi-obci-193127#utm_content=ribbonnews&utm_term=Uprchl%C3%ADci%20v%20datech&utm_medium=hint&utm_source=se-arch.seznam.cz)



## 4. BULGARIA



The Bulgarian Platform for International Development (BPID)<sup>21</sup> brings together 16 development NGOs with different expertise: minority rights, education and integration; human rights; social inclusion, among others. The BPID is the Bulgarian FoM partner and is currently prioritizing actions in line with the SDGs.

As of May 23, 2022, 279,976 UA nationals have entered Bulgaria, of whom 99,193 remained in the country and 39,143 are children<sup>22</sup>.

### Reception policy

In response to the recent crisis in Ukraine, the Bulgarian government took the first steps to receive Ukrainian refugees. On March 9, 2022, the government announced several measures: adherence to the EC TPD (2001/55/EC); an amendment to the national action plan for temporary protection from 2011; a newly established crisis headquarters; a national platform - in four languages: Ukrainian, Russian, English and Bulgarian - with all information on the protection, rights and integration measures for Ukrainian refugees; and a national hotline.

An operational coordination group was set up in the Council of Ministers to manage the war-related crisis in Ukraine. Within this coordination group, a working group on cooperation between the government and the non-governmental sector was set up, which is in constant contact with all the NGOs on the field.

Concerning accommodation for refugees arriving from Ukraine, there are several options depending on the status and future plans of the people. The Bulgarian government offers free accommodation and meals in hotels, or refugees can live temporarily in properties provided by volunteers. Those who are housed in a hotel are registered in the refugee reception platform. Alternatively, medium- and long-term paid alternatives are available for those Ukrainian refugees who are eligible and intend to stay in Bulgaria. There are currently 60,290 Ukrainians hosted in the country.

### Permits and visas

As of May 23, 107,476 Ukrainian persons had registered for temporary protection in Bulgaria. In addition to the implementation of the EU TPD, Bulgaria approved a procedure for the immediate obtaining of TP status, which is given to Ukrainian citizens at the border, after border inspection. It is also possible to apply for temporary protection at a later stage by contacting the migration authorities or the State Agency for Refugees, which started to register the country's regional cities and police offices after March 20, 2022 - with priority given to the major regional cities of Sofia, Varna, Burgas and Yambol.

Ukrainians can also apply for asylum and International Protection. Those who are granted TP, asylum or international protection have the right to work in Bulgaria without a permit.

<sup>21</sup> For more information, see: <https://gcap.global/coalition/bulgaria/#:~:text=Established%20in%202009%2C%20the%20Bulgarian,youth%2C%20social%20inclusion%2C%20health>. In 2015, the BPID signed the first Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, becoming a partner of the Ministry on development cooperation issues and programs involving the country's participation at the EU and UN level.

<sup>22</sup> Data retrieved from: <https://ukraine.gov.bg/>

### Discrimination and other challenges

In April 2022, Bulgaria announced that it would stop providing humanitarian assistance to Ukrainian refugees in the country by May 30, insisting that they should earn a living and pay rent and other living expenses like other citizens<sup>23</sup>.

As of May 6, many refugees housed in hotels and resorts on the Black Sea, who had to leave these facilities by the end of May, had nowhere to go. Nearly 60,000 have been accommodated in hotels in seaside resorts, but so far only 33,000 places have been identified in suitable buildings owned by the State and local authorities, according to the head of the State Agency for Refugees<sup>24</sup>.

Anti-refugee rhetoric and resentment towards Ukrainians are growing in Bulgaria after the initial openness and welcoming of the public since the conflict broke out. The pro-Russian nationalist party Varazhdane - supported by about 10% of the voters - is spreading fake news about Ukrainian refugees, claiming that all assistance measures are focused on Ukrainians while many Bulgarians live in poverty. This rhetoric has already led to several incidents – e.g., a Ukrainian woman arrived in Bulgaria with her child recently found her car with a pickaxe stuck in the hood<sup>25</sup>.



Ph. [www.ilpescara.it](http://www.ilpescara.it)



Ph. <https://gdsit.cdn-immedia.net>

<sup>23</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/bulgaria-to-stop-supporting-ukrainian-refugees-on-may-30/2569711>

<sup>24</sup> For more information, see: [https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short\\_news/bulgaria-seeks-shelter-for-30000-ukrainian-refugees/](https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/bulgaria-seeks-shelter-for-30000-ukrainian-refugees/)

<sup>25</sup> For more information, see: [https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short\\_news/resentment-of-ukrainian-refugees-grows-in-central-and-eastern-europe/?utm\\_source=piano&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=21031&pnespid=sag-5DCUZKa1FwvDH\\_2i3F5CepUO1WMZndbDsmfJ5rw9muqRbhOFTFNoPvoHS\\_S5GQvJvLOJyhA](https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/resentment-of-ukrainian-refugees-grows-in-central-and-eastern-europe/?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=21031&pnespid=sag-5DCUZKa1FwvDH_2i3F5CepUO1WMZndbDsmfJ5rw9muqRbhOFTFNoPvoHS_S5GQvJvLOJyhA)

## 5. GREECE



ActionAid<sup>26</sup> is an independent international organization that has been working to combat poverty and injustice in liaison with local communities, organizations and governments since 1972. ActionAid Hellas<sup>27</sup> is a FoM project partner in Greece. According to the latest data provided by the Ministry of Civil Protection, as of May 23, 2022, 29,822 Ukrainian refugees have crossed the Greek borders - including 7,655 minors<sup>28</sup>. The main entry points into Greek territory are the International Airports of Promachonas, Evzoni, Athens and Makedonia, as well as other land borders in the northern part of the country.

### Reception Policy

The Ministry of Migration and Asylum has created a page on its website where Ukrainian citizens can ask for the information they need and has uploaded a form for accommodation requests on its website<sup>29</sup> that must be filled in upon arrival in Greece. However, ActionAid Hellas reports that no official information could be retrieved on the reception capacity established by the State when filling out the questionnaire.

According to the Ministry's website, Ukrainian people can access short-term accommodation in the open Sintiki facility until the completion of the process of issuing travel documents, where required.

Access to long-term accommodation is possible after submitting a request on this website. So far, the Serres and Elefsina camps have accommodated some of the Ukrainian IDPs.

In addition to open camps, people with previous established networks in Greece stay in private apartments and some NGOs accept requests for accommodation in the shelters they run - e.g., for women and their children. The ESTIA and HELIOS programs, which currently accommodate asylum seekers and refugees, are not available for Ukrainian IDPs.<sup>30</sup>

No official coordination mechanisms - e.g., relatives or friends - were established between the public sector and civil society organizations. Yet, the channels developed to manage the 2015 refugee crisis still exist and were involved in identifying needs and responding to the emergency. UNHCR has a critical role<sup>31</sup> as it offers, together with other volunteers, translation and information on rights and options in the country to Ukrainians arriving in Greece at the northern borders. The NGO Metadras is also providing translations to support the response of the competent Ministry.

At the local level, coordination is taking place via existing platforms - i.e., the Athens Coordination Center for Migrants and Refugees, established in 2017, a platform of 380 organizations and actors operating in Athens<sup>32</sup>. Ukrainian communities<sup>33</sup> in Greece have also been mobilized to support their co-nationals in need and represent the liaison between civil society and Ukrainians in the country. The most urgent needs of Ukrainian refugees remain accommodation, health care and childcare for women wishing to work.

<sup>26</sup> ActionAid has over 15 million people in 45 countries and acts through education, community and solidarity. <https://gcap.global/faces-of-migration/>

<sup>27</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.actionaid.gr/>

<sup>28</sup> For more information, see (available in Greek only): [http://www.mopocp.gov.gr/index.php?option=ozo\\_content&perform=view&id=7854&Itemid=735&lang=](http://www.mopocp.gov.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&perform=view&id=7854&Itemid=735&lang=)

<sup>29</sup> For more information, see: <https://migration.gov.gr/accomodation-ukraine/>

<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that the TPD is group-based. As a result, non-Ukrainians who need help - such as African or Indian students, or Belarusians and Russians who used to live in Ukraine - are ineligible unless they prove that they were legal residents of Ukraine. The different status of population groups explains why ESTIA and HELIOS were not activated to receive Ukrainians in Greece.

<sup>31</sup> UNHCR is also expanding its psychosocial support program with the NGO Epapsy, also hiring Ukrainian-speaking staff.

<sup>32</sup> The Athens Coordination Center for Migrants and Refugees mapped the services provided to Ukrainian nationals by partner organizations. UNHCR also conducted a needs assessment exercise in cooperation with NGOs and Ukrainian communities.

<sup>33</sup> In Athens, five Ukrainian communities are coordinating to map the services provided by the Greek State and aid agencies.

## Permits and visas

Following developments at EU level, Greece applies Council Directive 2001/55/EC – i.e., TPD – and provides temporary residence cards 90 days after arrival in the country. The card is valid for one year and grants its holder access to healthcare, the labor market and education; in addition, the AFM (tax number) and AMKA (social security number) are also issued automatically after the request for temporary status is submitted. Ukrainians arriving in Greece can submit an online form<sup>34</sup> that will be processed by the regional asylum offices and must be in possession of valid travel documents in order to benefit from the rights granted by the TP status<sup>35</sup>. At the time of submitting the questionnaire (April 15, 2022), ActionAid Hellas reported that there is currently no information available on applications for other types of visas. Almost all Ukrainians currently arriving in Greece apply for TP in the framework of the EUTPD.

## Discrimination and other challenges

Despite some progress – a new integration strategy<sup>36</sup> was introduced for public consultation in January 2022 –, Greece still lacks a defined and comprehensive immigration strategy. In general, no defined policy has been implemented and several legislations have been drafted to address certain issues.

Migrants are often victims of xenophobic and racist acts<sup>37</sup> and the government makes little attempt to combat these issues.

Additionally, migrant women are often subject to multiple grounds for discrimination, while the protection of unaccompanied minors is severely lacking despite efforts to reform the protection system with legislative and policy initiatives – such as the establishment of the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors (SSPUAM) in March 2020 and a new relocation system<sup>38</sup>.

Other migrants increasingly encounter intolerance resulting from Greece's migration policies, while Ukrainian refugees fleeing the Russian invasion of their country have received a quite different and more positive welcome<sup>39</sup>. According to professionals working with refugees and migrants, there is a clear division between Ukrainian refugees and asylum seekers from other countries who have been there for several years or who continue to arrive from nearby Turkey<sup>40</sup>.

Further challenges may arise from a potential escalation of the conflict in Ukraine, but also from a potential outbreak of COVID-19 in the following months. As the number of Ukrainians arriving in Greece is increasing, accommodation is listed as a major need but also as a gap.

Precarious accommodation conditions represent a threat especially to single women and unaccompanied minors. NGOs and Ukrainian communities have received complaints about trafficking networks approaching Ukrainian nationals without local support promising safe accommodation and work.

<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that the application form, the possibility of booking an online appointment with the competent authorities and, in general, the requirements for obtaining temporary status are quite simple.

<sup>35</sup> In March 2022, the Greek government announced the opening of 50,000 jobs in the tourism sector for Greek expatriates and Ukrainian coming to Greece. For more information, see: <https://greekreporter.com/2022/03/02/greece-ukrainian-refugees-tourism/>.

<sup>36</sup> According to ActionAid Hellas, this strategy is rather fragmented and lacks clear objectives and goals oriented towards the effective integration of people residing in Greece.

<sup>37</sup> Above all, Afghans, Arabs, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Africans are often associated with crime and put in a bad light by public opinion and the media. For more information, see: [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/racism-and-related-discriminatory-practices-greece\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/racism-and-related-discriminatory-practices-greece_en)

<sup>38</sup> At the end of 2020, a new law put an end to the practice of detaining unaccompanied children, followed in January 2021 by the introduction of an emergency response mechanism offering children support and a safety net. For more information, see: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/729356/EPRS\\_BRI\(2022\)729356\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/729356/EPRS_BRI(2022)729356_EN.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220410-greece-softens-tough-migration-policy-for-ukrainians>

<sup>40</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/refugees-in-greece-face-double-standards-of-migration-policy>



## 6. SLOVAKIA



Ambrella is a Platform for Development Organizations comprising 29 organizations, mostly non-governmental organizations, from Slovakia<sup>41</sup> that focuses on development cooperation, humanitarian aid, global development education and sustainable development at home and abroad. The platform is a FoM partner.

As of February 26, the Slovak government declared a state of emergency in relation to the massive influx of people fleeing Ukraine. According to UNHCR<sup>42</sup> and the Ministry of Interior, as of May 22, 2022, 442,316<sup>43</sup> Ukrainian nationals have entered Slovakia since the beginning of the conflict on February 24.

### Reception policy

Ambrella noted that Slovakia's reception policy showed many contradictions. On the one hand, both the reception and crisis management systems were outdated and understaffed, resulting in the Slovak Republic being unprepared to face the Ukrainian crisis<sup>44</sup>. On the other hand, there is a high demand for workforce in both high-skilled jobs (physicians, nurses, ITs, etc.) and low-skilled jobs (workers in the car and automotive industry).

Since February 24, hotspots have been set up at the three border crossings of Vyšné Nemecké, Ubl'a, and Veľké Slemence with a huge presence of NGOs backed by the police and firefighters, while the Headquarters for border crossings was set up in Sobrance. Later, these centers were moved to more inland large capacity centers

in Humenne, Michalovce, Bratislava, Nitra and Žilina. People fleeing the war in Ukraine were not quarantined or registered in the online system. Both in terms of location - on the border or inland - and period - between March and April - services (i.e., shelter, transport, legal counseling, food, psychosocial support, health care, etc.) to Ukrainians were provided mainly by civil society, such as NGOs and semi-formal and informal initiatives, and by volunteers.

Additionally, in April 2022, UNHCR opened two offices - in Bratislava and Košice - to provide humanitarian aid, repatriation, integration and cash-based assistance. UNICEF, WFP and IOM are also supporting the Slovak government.

There are several levels of coordination between State authorities. However, at a general level, coordination has proven to be one of the bottlenecks. Civil society representatives repeatedly addressed this issue, including at the Governmental committee for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on March 15. At the CSO level, six main clusters were established, and some improvements could be observed. But, as Ambrella reported, several impediments - such as the simplistic perception of CSOs as volunteers without professional competences by the various authorities - led to frequent misunderstandings.

### Permits and visas

All persons fleeing the conflict in Ukraine who have been allowed to enter through the Slovakian border - usually with a Slovakian entry stamp in their passport - are allowed a short-term stay of

<sup>41</sup> For more information, see: <https://gcap.global/faces-of-migration/>

<sup>42</sup> For more information, see: [http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine?fbclid=IwAR0HyOLdBqOwUnmHvoC5MI\\_\\_BdPTL-55MdDZ3cv6zxQ77DeGNvTXnsYVTQus](http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine?fbclid=IwAR0HyOLdBqOwUnmHvoC5MI__BdPTL-55MdDZ3cv6zxQ77DeGNvTXnsYVTQus)

<sup>43</sup> Figures from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

<sup>44</sup> It should be noted that Slovakia is among the EU Member States with the lowest percentage of foreign nationals.

up to 90 days<sup>45</sup>. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Slovakia, 70,792 people applied for temporary protection in the country between February 24 and April 24, 2022. Of these, 70,447 (99.5 %) were Ukrainian nationals<sup>46</sup>.

As of March 1, 2022, Slovakia started to grant temporary protection to Ukrainian citizens in accordance with the EU TP. The Ministry of the Interior announced that TP is considered the easiest path to ensure protection to refugees, as it does not require long administrative procedures and allows Ukrainians quick access to the labor market and healthcare, as well as to their children's education<sup>47</sup>. TP is granted upon application, which must be submitted in person at one of the border crossings or at the nearest Foreign Police Office. In order to speed up the processing of applications, the large capacity centers mentioned above have also been set up<sup>48</sup>.

As of March 17, 2022, TP is also provided for non-Ukrainian citizens who meet one of the following conditions: a) they were granted permanent residence in Ukraine before February 24 and cannot safely return to their home country; b) they were granted asylum or international protection by Ukraine before February 24 - family members residing in Ukraine before February 24 can also apply for TP<sup>49</sup>.

In addition to the TP, asylum and subsidiary protection can be granted in Slovakia to people in need.

Asylum applicants can reside in the country during the evaluation process and have the right to study - school attendance is mandatory for people under 16 years of age. However, they are not allowed to travel outside the country or work - unless they have previously been granted a residence permit in Slovakia<sup>50</sup>. As of March 30, 2022, asylum seekers fleeing Ukraine and their family members can access employment immediately after applying for asylum.

### Discrimination and other issues

Ambrela observed that there have been some incidents of discrimination against third-country nationals - such as IT and medical students from Ghana, Libya or India - fleeing the Ukrainian conflict. As the platform reported, some members of extremist Slovak political parties, e.g., Republika, filmed these students at the border presenting them as potential threats to the Slovak nation in their manipulated videos and hoaxes. This is an example of the practice of disinformation and propaganda that extremist groups have already used during the so-called refugee crisis in 2015.

Xenophobia-related issues have not been directly reported or directly visible on the Ambrela platform. However, the Human Rights League (HRL) - a Slovak civil society association that provides legal assistance to migrants and refugees in Slovakia - has already recorded several attacks on people from Ukraine in Slovakia.

<sup>45</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.mic.iom.sk/en/news/758-info-ukraine.html#entry> and <https://www.ukraineslovakia.sk/en/i-am-already-in-slovakia/>

<sup>46</sup> For more information, see: <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/slovakia-displacement-analysis-third-country-nationals-25-april-2022>

<sup>47</sup> Source: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22851763/slovakia-provides-temporary-protection-to-ukrainians-what-does-it-mean.html>

<sup>48</sup> It should be noted that it is also possible to register electronically to apply for TP, but this application process requires the collection of biometric data at a police office or large capacity center.

<sup>49</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.ukraineslovakia.sk/en/i-am-already-in-slovakia/temporary-refuge/>

<sup>50</sup> It should be noted that if the asylum application procedure is pending, asylum seekers have the right to work 9 months after the application is submitted.

The issue of disinformation and pro-Russian propaganda remains critical, as Slovakia has been among the top countries in the region with strong pro-Russian sentiment and is particularly receptive to its propaganda. The platform observed that Slovak society is, in general, highly polarized and that tensions are used by opposition parties, urging public awareness actions to mitigate potential conflicts between host communities and Ukrainian nationals.

### Box. Lack of financial support to threaten Slovakia's response to the "Ukrainian crisis"

The poor coordination and cooperation between State authorities and CSOs also figures as a significant challenge, reflecting the different level of engagement with civil society by the various ministries. Financially, the CSOs received barely any funding from the State during the first two months of managing Ukrainian migration flows. Ambrella is the most active and effective platform on advocacy, capacity building and awareness raising, and has acted as a coordinating body between civil society and State bodies (mainly Ministries) - gathering, analyzing and transmitting information from its members on the field to the government. However, medium- and long-term measures<sup>51</sup> are urgently needed by the Slovakian government - municipalities and CSOs often do not know if and what funding will be available. This will require stepping into the crisis management to financially support the actors working in the field. A critical hurdle is the embedded mistrust of Slovak citizens by State apparatuses, which makes aid mechanisms highly rigid, administratively burdensome and slow in their implementation.



Ph. <https://media.internazionale.it>



Ph. [ansa.it](https://ansa.it)



Ph. [avvenire.it](https://avvenire.it)

<sup>51</sup> For more information, see: [https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/commissioner-urges-more-coordinated-efforts-by-all-member-states-to-meet-the-humanitarian-needs-and-protect-the-human-rights-of-people-fleeing-the-war?fbclid=IwAR3d3VW9VSbv4sfZLnHFSFY\\_7qpw-t5Zg4mUkAob4r53Snm1VQdBWihIKHY](https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/commissioner-urges-more-coordinated-efforts-by-all-member-states-to-meet-the-humanitarian-needs-and-protect-the-human-rights-of-people-fleeing-the-war?fbclid=IwAR3d3VW9VSbv4sfZLnHFSFY_7qpw-t5Zg4mUkAob4r53Snm1VQdBWihIKHY)



## 7. ITALY



FOCSIV - Volontari nel mondo<sup>52</sup> is the biggest Italian Federation of Christian NGOs and Volunteer sending organizations. It counts 86 member organizations and works for the “development of all peoples and the whole human person” both in the North and in the South of the world. The Federation is a partner of the 3-year FoM project in Italy.

According to the Ministry of the Interior, as of May 16, 2022, 116,130 people fleeing the Ukrainian conflict have entered Italy. Among them, 60,588 are women, 17,702 men and 37,840 minors<sup>53</sup>. It should be pointed out that, as of January 1, 2021, 223,489 Ukrainian nationals - equal to 6.6% of the non-EU citizens residing in the country - were legally resident in Italy, confirming it as the fourth largest non-EU community.

### Reception policy

On February 25, 2022, the Italian Council of Ministers declared the first state of emergency to guarantee interventions to be implemented on foreign territory<sup>54</sup>; on February 28, a national state of emergency was then declared to ensure assistance to Ukrainian nationals on Italian territory.

With a new legislation<sup>55</sup>, the Italian government announced a maximum reception capacity of 15,000 people, introducing new forms of scattered reception as an alternative to the Reception and Integration System (SAI; Sistema di

Accoglienza e Integrazione) and Extraordinary Reception Centers (CAS; Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria), to be implemented in collaboration between local authorities and the non-profit sector. As of May 9, 2022, non-profit organizations have offered to accommodate 17,012 Ukrainians within the scattered reception framework in private apartments, families and other facilities<sup>56</sup>.

Italy also provides 3-month financial contributions to support 60,000 people who have found spontaneous accommodation<sup>57</sup>. Both measures are managed by the Civil Protection Department. The national plan to assist Ukrainian nationals arriving in the country has established funding of 388 million euros to implement actions on the national territory. Additionally, 99.5 million were allocated by the Ministry of the Interior to strengthen the SAI and CAS reception system - 8,000 additional places - for 2023 and 2024.

Italy has established a coordinated model of multi-level governance - led by the Department of Civil Protection - between different actors: State authorities, Autonomous Regions and Provinces, Prefectures - Territorial Government Offices, Municipalities and the Third Sector, as well as civil society actors. To ensure overall coordination, the Head of the Civil Protection Department set up the Command and Control Directorate on March 11, 2022.

<sup>52</sup> For more information, see: <https://gcap.global/faces-of-migration/>

<sup>53</sup> Data retrieved on 18 May 2022 from <https://mappe.protezionecivile.gov.it/it/mappe-e-dashboards-emergenze/mappe-e-dashboards-ucraina/ingressi-alle-frontiere>

<sup>54</sup> The National Operational Plan for the Reception and Assistance of the Population from Ukraine has established 15 million euros to implement interventions on foreign territory. The document (in Italian only) is available at: <https://emergenze.protezionecivile.gov.it/static/8acce8d2f3ed23eff62df9066bb4e3d2/piano-nazionale-laccoglienza-e-lassistenza-alla-popolazione-proveniente-dallucraina.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Decree-Law No. 21 of March 21, 2022 “Urgent measures to counteract the economic and humanitarian effects of the Ukrainian crisis” is available at <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2022/03/21/22G00032/sg> (in Italian only). For further information see also: <https://integrazionemigranti.gov.it/it-it/Ricerca-news/Dettaglio-news/id/2430/Accoglienza-profughi-Ucraina-pubblicato-il-DL-con-le-nuove-misure>

<sup>56</sup> Official data retrieved from: <https://integrazionemigranti.gov.it/it-it/Ricerca-news/Dettaglio-news/id/2560/Profughi-Ucraina-cosi-i-posti-in-accoglienza-diffusa> (in Italian only)

<sup>57</sup> The Department of Civil Protection may grant an economic contribution of 300 euros per month per person to persons seeking temporary protection who have found spontaneous accommodation, for a maximum of three months from the date of entry into national territory. In the presence of minors, an additional monthly contribution of 150 euros is granted to the adult legal guardian for each child under the age of 18.



## Permits and visas

All Ukrainian citizens and nationals in Ukraine in possession of a passport may enter Italy without a visa and stay in the country for up to 90 days. However, those entering without a visa are obliged to make a “declaration of presence” within 8 days of entering Italy<sup>58</sup>.

In accordance with the EU TP Directive, with the Decree of March 28, 2022, Italy grants the temporary protection permit - lasting one year - to: a) Ukrainian nationals who fled the country after February 24, 2022; b) third-country nationals (TCNs) and stateless persons to whom Ukraine granted international protection before February 24; c) family members of both groups; d) TCNs and stateless persons who held a permanent residence permit in Ukraine before February 24 and cannot safely return to their country of origin. However, Italy has decided not to grant TP to: a) TCNs and stateless persons residing in Ukraine before February 24 with a non-permanent valid residence permit; b) persons who fled Ukraine not long before February 24, 2022 or who were in the territory of the European Union close to that date<sup>59</sup>. According to the new legislation, those who have obtained TP can also apply for international protection at any time. In this case, the application for international protection will be examined when the TP permit expires.

As of May 5, 2022, the Department of Civil Protection registered a total of 85,606 Ukrainians granted TP in Italy, 72% of whom are women and 28% men, with 36,689 minors<sup>60</sup>. TP status guarantees its holders the right to access adequate accommodation, the labor market (immediately after applying for a TP permit), education - i.e., schooling for children, school/university education

and professional education for adults -, health care and psychosocial assistance.

## Discrimination and other issues

The so-called Ukraine Decree (March 21, 2022) was an important step from both a symbolic and a real point of view. For the first time in a decree law - in this specific case, on the issue of coordinating the reception of Ukrainians - the key role of the non-profit sector in responding to people's needs together with the State was recognized.

However, in recent months, since the start of the Ukrainian conflict, a number of noteworthy issues have emerged. Firstly, some organizations and families that had previously started spontaneous reception paths (offering food, accommodation and assistance in accessing public services) will not receive the contributions provided for by the Civil Protection Department's legislation. As the director of Refugees Welcome Italia noted, differentiating between those who will host Ukrainian nationals after the decree is issued and those who were already hosting them from the outset is discriminatory and unjust. Leaving out Italian families who were already hosting Ukrainians from the government's financial support is unsustainable<sup>61</sup>.

Additionally, the so-called Ukrainian crisis has unveiled how Italian reception and protection systems discriminate between 'class A' and 'class B' refugees. Today, the different approach adopted by the Italian government towards migrants from Ukraine and those crossing the central Mediterranean is evident. Not only the government, but also public opinion has been much more welcoming towards Ukrainians than towards people from sub-Saharan and North African countries, raising questions about a latent racism rooted in the country.

<sup>58</sup> For more information, see: <https://naga.it/2022/05/04/ucraina-informazioni-general-protezione-temporanea-assistenza-sanitaria-accoglienza/>

<sup>59</sup> For more detailed information see: [https://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022\\_Scheda\\_ASgi\\_Protezione\\_temporanea\\_Ucraina\\_maggio\\_.pdf](https://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022_Scheda_ASgi_Protezione_temporanea_Ucraina_maggio_.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> The available data was last updated on May 5, 2022. For more information, see: <https://mappe.protezionecivile.gov.it/it/mappe-e-dashboards-emergenze/mappe-e-dashboards-ucraina/ricieste-di-protezione-temporanea>

<sup>61</sup> Source available (in Italian only) at: <http://www.vita.it/it/article/2022/04/22/accoglienza-dei-cittadini-ucraini-facciamo-chiarezza-su-fondi-e-riche/162593/>

## 8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The report gave an overview of the EU's response to the Ukrainian war-driven migration flows, analyzing in particular 6 EU Member States within the framework of the Faces of Migration project.

Since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the EU has shown unity in its policy to face the current humanitarian crisis by approving the EU Council Directive 2001/55/EC on Temporary Protection (TPD) - with the exception of Denmark. FoM partners Slovenia, Slovakia, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic have all adhered to the EU TPD and are currently granting TP status to all Ukrainians and other persons meeting the requirements established by each government. This has demonstrated a certain level of cohesion, although differences have emerged as for some national measures adopted. In terms of permits, Bulgaria is the only country that has approved an expedited procedure to immediately obtain TP status at the border, while Italy is the only one that has applied some restrictions to the group of persons who can be granted TP.

Coordination between governmental authorities, local NGOs and civil society was difficult in most of the contexts analyzed. Indeed, FoM partners, particularly in Slovakia and Greece, reported little financial support for organizations working in the field and a lack of established cooperation mechanisms. Still, shortfalls in funding and cooperation mechanisms by governments represented an opportunity to increasingly recognize the role of civil society and NGOs and to co-plan national emergency responses.

Another issue is discrimination and unequal treatment in terms of access to protection. It has been observed that Ukrainian nationals have rather privileged and immediate access to protection procedures, particularly at the administrative level, compared to migrants and refugees arriving from other regions. This specific issue will need to be monitored and reported in the coming months by NGOs and civil society in EU countries in order to hold governments accountable for discriminatory - and potentially racist - practices towards people fleeing conflict, poverty, climate change and human rights violations in African, Middle Eastern and Asian countries.

Since May 2022, signs of intolerance towards Ukrainian refugees have also started to be reported in Central and Eastern European countries, especially where pro-Russian rhetoric has gradually gained momentum - such as Slovakia and Bulgaria. The more the initial welcome slowly wanes, the more the xenophobic and anti-refugee narratives are exacerbated by the activities of nationalist and far-right parties for political purposes. The narrative about the "privileges" granted to Ukrainians and the conflict between refugees and nationals in accessing government-provided services and assistance is a common issue in all countries, fueling growing resentment.

It is important to guarantee fair reception policies that provide shared benefits to both refugees and the local population, as well as equal treatment between different groups of refugees and migrants, promoting a culture of solidarity and the common good.

This is crucial to prevent toxic narratives from undermining the important step forward of the EU Temporary Protection Directive.

**For these reasons we, the FoM partners, recommend:**

- civil society organizations should be united and cooperate not only in providing humanitarian assistance and reception services, but also in the community capacity-building for the acceptance of refugees - regardless of their country and region of origin – as well as for a culture of solidarity;
- local and national institutions should be able to foster dialogue with civil society and non-profit organizations and develop efficient and effective coordination mechanisms; and to finance access to universal services, thus demonstrating that there is no conflict between the local and refugee populations;
- local and national institutions should strengthen integration policies in cooperation with civil society organizations and local communities to foster social cohesion and inclusion of Ukrainians;
- governments should implement more equal national asylum procedures to reduce discrimination between Ukrainian nationals and asylum seekers from other regions and countries of origin (Africa, Asia, Middle East) arriving at EU borders;
- the European Commission should monitor and support State authorities and civil society organizations, strengthening the role of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO);

- institutions, civil society organizations and local communities should promote awareness-raising and advocacy activities to counter misleading narratives about migration and refugees and to help reduce growing resentment and negative perceptions of Ukrainians and other migrants residing in the EU.



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This document is part of the SDGs and Migration – Multipliers project and Journalists Addressing Decision Makers and Citizens project funded by the European Union's Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) programme