The EU response to the Ukraine refugee crisis

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has forced millions of people to leave their homes. Find out what the EU is doing to help them and manage its external borders.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has created one of the largest humanitarian crises in Europe’s recent history, with the ongoing war causing increasing numbers of casualties, destruction and displacement within and outside Ukraine’s borders.

Ukraine’s civilian population is being subjected to shelling and violence and at least one-third of Ukrainians have been forced from their homes, either within the country or to neighbouring states. As of 6 July, more than 5.6 million Ukrainian refugees have been recorded across Europe, including Poland (1,207,650), but also Germany (867,000), the Czech Republic...
About 90% of them are women and children, who are also at a higher risk of violence and abuse, including human trafficking, smuggling and illegal adoption.

The numbers keep changing, but more than 2.5 million Ukrainians have returned home since the beginning of the Russian invasion. Some are returning to areas which were threatened by Russian forces at the beginning of the war but are now considered safer.

Read more on migration in Europe

EU funds to support frontline countries

The refugee crisis triggered by the war has spurred waves of solidarity and mobilisation throughout Europe, with the EU and its member states providing emergency relief to the displaced and support to the countries bordering Ukraine.

On 24 March, MEPs approved the European Commission’s proposal for Cohesion’s Action for Refugees in Europe (Care) to redirect available funds to EU countries sheltering people fleeing from the Russian aggression. This could include an additional €10 billion from React-EU, a fund created to act as a bridge between Covid emergency measures and cohesion funds.

Parliament also extended for one year - until mid-2024 - the period in which the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Internal Security Fund operate. The extension allows EU countries to urgently redeploy unused funds to deal with the influx of refugees from Ukraine and is expected to free up around €420 million for additional support, such as accommodation, food, healthcare or extra staff.

Further assistance, such as medical supplies, tents and power generators, has been channelled to neighbouring countries and Ukraine via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and RescEU medical stockpiles.

During the 23-24 March plenary session, MEPs also agreed to provide Moldova with financial support to help with the reception of refugees, in addition to the granting of macro-financial aid to cover part of its external financing needs.

On 23 June, Parliament approved a €400 million support package to help EU countries taking in most of the refugees deal with urgent migration and border management measures. The EU funds will contribute to the financing of the first reception and registration costs of people fleeing Ukraine, through the reinforcement of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Border Management and Visa Instrument.
Temporary protection for people fleeing Ukraine

In a resolution adopted during an extraordinary plenary on 1 March, Parliament welcomed the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time since it entered into force in 2001. The directive aims to grant immediate temporary protection in the EU to people fleeing the war in Ukraine for an initial period of one year, including Ukrainian citizens, people from outside the EU, stateless people or people with residence permits in the country.

This allows displaced people to benefit from the same rights across the EU, such as a resident permit, the possibility to work, housing, and access to social welfare and medical assistance. MEPs also agreed to allow Ukrainians with temporary protection status to keep using their driving licences in the EU.

More than 3.6 million people have registered for temporary protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe until now.

On 9 March, MEPs called on the EU to introduce a proper migration system that shares responsibility for refugees.

The EU pact on migration and asylum, which is being negotiated, includes a solidarity mechanism that distributes responsibility for protection among EU countries and measures addressing mass influxes of migrants.

Management of EU external borders

On 4 March, the Commission issued new guidelines to help EU countries manage arrivals efficiently and assist border guards carrying out checks at the borders with Ukraine, including the simplification of border controls for vulnerable persons and the establishment of temporary border crossing points.

Parliament also approved the deployment of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) to help Moldova, which is not a member of the EU, manage the massive number of people crossing the border from Ukraine.

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Resolution on the financing reception costs of people fleeing Ukraine (23 June)