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Humanitarian consequences and internal and external migration in connection with the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine

Report¹

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

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Summary

The report focuses on the largest movement of people since the Second World War caused by the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine. It praises the tremendous and unprecedented solidarity of Council of Europe member States, which by mid-May 2022 had taken in more than 6 million refugees, including more than 3 million in Poland, and praises the remarkable efforts of Ukraine itself, which is caring for 7 to 9 million displaced persons while fighting to defend its territory and the values of democracy shared by the rest of Europe.

Highlighting the important role played by international organisations and the European Union in co-ordinating all these efforts and responding to needs and challenges in real time, the report examines the various solutions put in place by Ukraine and its neighbouring countries as part of their international and regional obligations, as well as the challenges faced by the authorities and the internally displaced persons and refugees themselves.

The current needs to ensure a dignified and forward-looking life for the internally displaced persons and refugees are colossal, far exceeding the resources available. Moreover, the long-term consequences of this humanitarian crisis are undeniable. While civil society plays a fundamental role in the reception – in the broad sense of the term – of internally displaced persons and refugees, and the central government has an essential role to play in co-ordination, the main burden of managing the humanitarian crisis falls on the cities and regions, particularly as far as infrastructure is concerned.

The report calls for a series of sustainable measures, based on Council of Europe instruments, for Ukraine and the host countries to address urgent and longer-term needs.

1. Reference to committee: [Doc. 15474](#), Reference 4633 of 14 March 2022.



Contents	Page
A. Draft resolution	3
B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Pierre-Alain Fridez, rapporteur	7
1. Introduction	7
2. Figures and words	8
2.1. People who fled the fighting	8
2.2. Humanitarian aid	9
3. International humanitarian response	9
3.1. The main UN agencies	9
3.2. The European Union	11
3.3. The Council of Europe	12
4. My observations in the field	12
4.1. Humanitarian aid	12
4.2. Arrivals and emergency reception in border countries	13
4.3. Temporary protection	15
4.4. Risk of human trafficking and forced labour	16
4.5. The plight of vulnerable people	17
4.6. Discrimination situations	18
4.7. Access to rights	19
4.8. Integration	22
5. Conclusion	22

A. Draft resolution²

1. The Parliamentary Assembly is extremely concerned about the humanitarian consequences caused by the Russian Federation's attack on Ukraine, which has displaced millions of people and caused the largest population movement since the Second World War. It is appalled by the staggering and growing numbers, with more than a quarter of the Ukrainian population having fled the bombing, atrocities and terror by mid-May 2022.
2. Applauding the rapid reaction of the Council of Europe, which suspended the Russian Federation on 25 February and excluded it on 16 March 2022, in response to [Opinion 300 \(2022\)](#) adopted unanimously by this Assembly, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to support the Organisation's long-term commitment to Ukraine as set out in the adjusted Action Plan for Ukraine (2018-2022), which contains a series of immediate measures to address the direct consequences of the aggression committed by the Russian Federation.
3. The Assembly commends the solidarity demonstrated by Council of Europe member States in opening their borders on 24 February and welcomes the fact that the European Union States have activated, for the first time since its adoption in 2001, Directive 2001/55/EC (the so-called Temporary Protection Directive) and incorporated it into their national law. It calls on all national parliaments, including those of non-EU member States that have not yet done so, to put in place at least equivalent protection and to extend it to cover third-country nationals, too. This could include the lifting of visa restrictions where necessary.
4. The Assembly is impressed by the admirable efforts made by Ukraine, which, in addition to defending its territory and the values of freedom and democracy it holds dear, has to meet the needs of the 7 to 9 million displaced persons who have found refuge in regions hitherto relatively untouched by the war.
5. While hoping for a rapid cessation of hostilities, the Assembly is aware that the humanitarian consequences will not be resolved in the short term, so it is essential to ensure continued, long-term and co-ordinated support from Council of Europe member States in order to guarantee that displaced persons and refugees from Ukraine receive all the assistance they need to live in dignity and face the future.
6. Convinced that the dignified reception of those who have fled the war in Ukraine is undeniably a duty of all Council of Europe member States, the Assembly believes it is necessary to create the conditions for the sustained long-term resilience of the Ukrainian people.
7. At the same time, we need to start thinking now about the reconstruction of Ukraine, which will have to face many challenges, especially with regard to the environment and infrastructure. In this context, the Assembly welcomes the pledges made at the Warsaw Donors Conference on 5 May 2022. This international assistance will need to be carefully targeted and co-ordinated in order to meet all of Ukrainian society's needs.
8. In the meantime, as long as the war continues, the Assembly stresses the need for a co-ordinated, continuous, long-term and non-discriminatory support policy involving all relevant players, international organisations, central authorities, regional and local authorities, civil society and the private sector.
9. Acknowledging the enormous generosity shown by Europeans towards Ukraine through the very substantial humanitarian donations made since 24 February, the Assembly regrets their gradual decrease and urges constant and sustained efforts, while stressing that this humanitarian aid must be subject to monitoring and quality control. To this end, it encourages the European Union, the relevant United Nations agencies and the Ukrainian authorities responsible to set up a mechanism to carry out these tasks.
10. The Assembly encourages the member States to develop humanitarian crisis-management action plans in order to avoid the improvisation seen in the early days. Those States with no tradition of taking in migrants should reflect on their recent experience in order to envisage a paradigm shift.
11. The Assembly considers that an integrated approach to the assessment of Ukraine's humanitarian needs is indispensable. In this context, the support provided by international organisations, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), is essential.
12. The Assembly points out that infrastructure issues (roads, transport, water drainage, waste management, etc.) need to be examined at the same time as the assessment of housing needs. It welcomes the recent initiative of 120 architects from all over Ukraine who met in Irpin in the Kyiv region to draw up a

2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 3 June 2022.

development strategy for the reconstruction of the city and recommends the creation of a network of non-governmental organisations that, under the umbrella of the Council's Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations, will bring together architects and engineers from Council of Europe member States who could provide support to their Ukrainian colleagues.

13. Recognising the primary responsibility of national authorities for taking in refugees, the Assembly is impressed by the key role played by civil society in providing a dignified humanitarian response to the plight of the Ukrainian people and realises that this support is essential for addressing the many challenges faced by host States. It regrets, however, that this role does not always receive due recognition and calls on national authorities to treat non-governmental organisations, volunteers and other players as full partners. Those whose competences and involvement are well established should be eligible for national and international funding.

14. The Assembly is deeply concerned about the plight of certain vulnerable groups:

14.1. it encourages the member States of the Council of Europe, including their national parliaments, to embrace the activities, norms and standards developed in connection with the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025) in order to implement all necessary measures to address the vulnerability affecting certain individuals;

14.2. it reiterates the compelling need to identify those in vulnerable situations at an early stage and to comply with the norms and standards of the Council of Europe as developed in connection with the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025);

14.3. in order to prevent human trafficking, it recommends the establishment of a transnational tracking system that would help border police to identify potential victims more easily. In general, it is still necessary to intensify measures to prevent and combat trafficking and the abuse and exploitation of vulnerable people, especially women and children, drawing on the guidance note from the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA);

14.4. recalling that unaccompanied and missing children (whether they have left Ukraine or are still on its territory) are at a higher risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, the Assembly welcomes the Statement adopted on 10 March 2022 by the Committee of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No. 201) (the Lanzarote Committee) on protecting children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse resulting from the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. It is essential that States implement the recommendations adopted by the Lanzarote Committee in the context of its Special Report "Protecting children affected by the refugee crisis from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse" and follow the guidance to States on the prevention and protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse in the context of migration and asylum contained in the practical sheet prepared for this purpose;

14.5. welcoming Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)17 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls, adopted on 20 May 2022, the Assembly calls for its effective implementation. In this context, it calls for the implementation of gender-sensitive policies and services;

14.6. the Assembly regrets that third-country nationals have not been given the same welcome as Ukrainian nationals and reiterates the obligation to protect people fleeing from Ukraine against xenophobic and racist violence and hate speech. It hopes that the response by member States and the many initiatives developed during this period will also benefit other refugees in Europe and that a new approach will be taken to them. It stresses the need to ensure equal opportunities in access to education for all pupils and students whose education was interrupted by the outbreak of hostilities in Ukraine. It also recommends that the possibility be introduced of taking examinations remotely, particularly for students from third countries, or the option of returning to Ukraine to study once that is possible;

14.7. the situation of Roma remains a matter of concern. It has highlighted the difficulties which remain concerning the documentation of Roma in Ukraine and the need to remedy them once conditions so permit. The Assembly stresses the need for safe and regular routes to safety for everyone, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity or religion – including stateless people and undocumented Roma. It refers to the Statement by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, who urged all member States to raise awareness of the vulnerabilities and difficulties faced by Roma fleeing the war and to increase their efforts to address them, in particular by ensuring that

humanitarian assistance is provided to everyone, without any discrimination. The Assembly suggests that when preparing their monitoring reports on the situation in Ukraine and the other countries concerned, the relevant Council of Europe bodies should take stock of the situation and propose concrete solutions, and recommends the mobilisation of the Council of Europe's Roma and Travellers Team to ensure that Roma fleeing the fighting are given proper long-term protection including a path for permanent residence or citizenship and, indeed, enabled to participate in integration programmes without being stigmatised;

14.8. the Assembly reiterates the need to ensure the rights of everyone, without discrimination, and in this connection calls on all member States to consider the situation of LGBTI persons who are still in Ukraine or are fleeing the war, in order to ensure that their vulnerability and needs are fully taken into account in the humanitarian assistance provided to them;

14.9. the Assembly notes that the situation of children requires specific measures, based on the principle of the best interests of the child. With regard to unaccompanied and separated children, it refers to Resolution ... (2022) "Protection and alternative care for unaccompanied and separated migrant and refugee children", to the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers Rec(2019)11 on "Effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration" and to the Guide on Family-Based Care for Unaccompanied and Separated Children adopted by the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) in December 2021. It also recalls the measures proposed under strategic objective 6 ("Children's rights in crisis and emergency situations") of the new Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027), in particular with regard to the protection of migrant children and children in armed conflicts.

15. Understandably, people who have fled Ukraine face a dilemma of wishing to return as quickly as possible on the one hand and needing to integrate on the other. The Assembly recognises the desire of displaced persons for their safe, voluntary and dignified return, aware as they are of the unstable security situation. It believes it is essential for people who have fled abroad to escape the war to find their place in the host society during their stay:

15.1. therefore, as soon as possible and at the latest after completing their school year based on the Ukrainian curriculum, at the beginning of the 2022 school year children should be encouraged to attend the schools of the country in which they are living. The summer holidays could provide an opportunity to prepare them for the start of school in their host country. The language education and linguistic integration tools for children developed by the Council of Europe should be used systematically. On their return to Ukraine, the learning acquired should be recognised by the Ukrainian school system. Access to pre-school facilities is also very important for many women arriving with young children, for whom the lack of this type of childcare would make their integration and access to the labour market even more difficult;

15.2. the Assembly is also aware that access to employment in host countries remains a major challenge for refugees from Ukraine, in particular with regard to the recognition of their qualifications. It welcomes the efforts already undertaken to strengthen the abilities of recognition professionals in order to facilitate the efficient, professional and fair processing of Ukrainian qualifications and is pleased that the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees can assist refugees and host governments in the coming weeks and months. Already 16 European countries have joined this Council of Europe project and the Assembly encourages others to do so in order to assess the qualifications of Ukrainian people who have been forced to flee the war, even in the absence of full documentation;

15.3. integration centres under the responsibility of the municipalities and with the involvement of civil society could be developed, in particular through the Intercultural Cities Network, with the aim of assisting refugees from Ukraine in learning the language, finding a job, etc. These centres could be tasked with preparing Ukrainian pupils for the start of the school year;

15.4. an assessment of the needs, both material and psychological, of those who go back to Ukraine should be carried out by the relevant bodies and international support programmes to ensure these people do not face hardship on their return.

16. The Assembly welcomes the active role played by the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) in assisting those fleeing the war in Ukraine through grants from its Migrants and Refugees Fund and through loans. Recognising that the arrival of thousands of refugees from Ukraine has posed an undeniable challenge to its neighbouring countries, particularly in terms of public services, such as schools, hospitals and transport, which were already insufficient before the war, it considers that the current situation of rapidly increasing needs should be turned into an opportunity and serve as an impetus to strengthen failing and/or insufficient public services, particularly through the CEB's involvement.

17. In this context, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to further strengthen the CEB's resources with a view to improving its ability to address urgent needs through targeted grants and increasing its capacity to finance long-term investments in social infrastructure in countries hosting large numbers of Ukrainian refugees, and it urges Ukraine to join the CEB as quickly as possible.

18. Recognising the key role of local and regional authorities in addressing the dire humanitarian consequences faced by citizens and aware that needs are best assessed at their source, the Assembly applauds the establishment of the Cities4Cities platform supported by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities as a co-ordination point for responding to the demands and needs of Ukrainian cities and regions in a synchronised manner. It calls on this initiative to be transformed into a fully-fledged European twinning platform to enable the establishment of detailed twinning arrangements, with the aim of mobilising solidarity and ensuring that the humanitarian aid provided corresponds to actual requirements and is channelled to where it is needed. In addition, the Assembly invites the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities to consider ways of helping local authorities to manage the humanitarian consequences for local communities, in co-ordination with other relevant players.

19. Member States that do not share a border with Ukraine need to do more to co-ordinate and support the tremendous efforts being made in the neighbouring countries. The Assembly calls on central, regional and local authorities to facilitate the intra- and international transport of displaced persons, in particular by providing additional means of transport as well as related services, such as information/guidance, the organisation of social housing, the enrolment of children in schools, etc. It also advocates the creation of a European unified platform for the provision of information and the purchase of train tickets, a distant descendant of the InterRail Card, which was created at the initiative of the Council of Europe.

20. Lastly, the Assembly, aware of the very important role played by the private sector in mitigating the damage caused by the humanitarian crisis resulting from the Russian aggression against Ukraine and of the role the Assembly itself will be called upon to play in the country's reconstruction, encourages Council of Europe member States, in terms of information society services and systems, to exploit the possibilities provided by the partnership between the Council of Europe and the private sector in order to maintain and promote the implementation and/or reconstruction of digital infrastructure and related services, including a secure and open internet that respects human rights both online and offline.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Pierre-Alain Fridez, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. A page in European history was turned on 24 February 2022, when the Russian Federation attacked its neighbour Ukraine, violating the latter's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the United Nations Charter and infringing Article 3 of the Statute of the Council of Europe.
2. The Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine was strongly and immediately condemned by the Council of Europe, as well as by States and other international organisations such as the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Interparliamentary Union.
3. Accordingly, the day after the attack, on 25 February 2022, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe decided to suspend, with immediate effect, the Russian Federation's right of representation in the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly. Following the Committee of Ministers' request of 10 March to consult the Assembly on a possible future use of Article 8 of the Statute of the Council of Europe, the Assembly held an extraordinary session on 14 and 15 March 2022, following which it unanimously adopted [Opinion 300 \(2022\)](#) considering that the Russian Federation could no longer be a member State of the Organisation. Furthermore, the Assembly considered that the Committee of Ministers should ask the Russian Federation to withdraw immediately from the Council of Europe. At an extraordinary meeting on held 16 March 2022, the Committee of Ministers decided, under the procedure initiated under Article 8 of the Statute, that the Russian Federation ceased to be a member of the Council of Europe as of that day, 26 years after its accession.
4. To date, more than 14 million people have been put on the roads to flee the Russian-led hostilities, the severity of which will have disastrous humanitarian and other consequences in the very long term. The military offensive has deliberately targeted civilians, who have been caught in sieges, been subjected to bombing and air strikes attacks on densely populated cities. All these people are suffering from the terrible consequences of the fighting, bombing and encirclement: anguish, traumatic stress, loss of loved ones, physical and psychological injuries, deprivation of all kinds, violence, rape etc.
5. The city of Mariupol has become a symbol of the martyrdom suffered by the Ukrainian people. The discovery of mass graves and abuses, such as summary executions and rapes, committed by Russian forces in the towns of Butcha, Irpin, Borodyanka and Andriivka has given this totally unjustified war a new dimension.
6. Before our eyes, the humanitarian situation in Ukraine has seriously deteriorated over the weeks, with a high number of civilian casualties, including women and children, and an increasing number of internally displaced persons and refugees requiring humanitarian assistance.
7. By mid-May, over six million refugees have fled Ukraine with over three million arriving in Poland alone, an incredible figure. Over eight million more people have been internally displaced. This is the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War, as the United Nations Security Council has stressed. These millions of people are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection.
8. The States bordering Ukraine, notably Poland, the Slovak Republic and Romania, which I visited, have shown exemplary solidarity in organising the arrival, settlement or transit of refugees forced to flee their country. The European Union's decision to implement Directive 2001/55/EC (Temporary Protection Directive) for the first time since its adoption is momentous, but without a solidarity mechanism, these population movements could quickly turn into a humanitarian disaster, especially in the Republic of Moldova, which has reached its reception limits and where the sound of bombs falling in Ukraine is echoing. Moreover, the risks of trafficking, exploitation and abuse have already become evident in the case of completely destitute women and children.
9. For those who have not left the territory of Ukraine but are forced into exile, the risk of food insecurity cannot be minimised. This insecurity may also become a factor in further forced displacement. That said, the reason people are being forced to leave their homes and lives they had before 24 February 2022 is because of the Russian aggression, the shelling of civilian targets and atrocities committed by Russian forces.
10. Any forced displacement, particularly to the Russian Federation or Belarus, is a violation of international humanitarian law³ as is the bombing and shelling of cities in western Ukraine, which have also received millions of displaced persons, threatening the infrastructure of cities and regions that are not equipped for the population growth they have experienced since the war began.

11. This report provides an overview of the humanitarian consequences for displaced persons and refugees who have fled the war in Ukraine in order to propose solutions, which have added value within the framework of existing Council of Europe instruments, on how to respond in the long term to the full range of challenges caused by the Russian Federation's aggression against its Ukrainian neighbour and its population.

12. These proposals are based in particular on fact-finding visits I made to Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine in April and May 2022 (see the programmes of these visits, [AS/Mig/Inf\(2022\)03](#) and [AS/Mig/Inf\(2022\)04](#)), which enabled me to assess the situation with my own eyes. I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Ukrainian and Romanian parliamentary delegations, as well as to the Council of Europe Office in Warsaw and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Office in the Slovak Republic for their assistance in organising these visits. I would also like to thank the Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Migration and Refugees, Leyla Kayacik, as well as Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos, Scientific Advisor to the Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), for the exchanges of views that the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons held with them last March and April.

13. I would have preferred not to have had the experience of a country in Europe, in the 21st century, being attacked precisely because it is committed to the values of democracy and human rights, on pretexts as perverse as they are deadly.

2. Figures and words

2.1. People who fled the fighting

14. As of mid-May 2022, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine stood at 8 029 000⁴ or 18.2% of the population, a figure that has increased by 24% since 17 April. According to IOM estimates, 22% of these IDPs indicate that at least one member of their family is a child aged between 1 and 5 years, while 55% indicate that they live with at least one person aged over 60 years. 23% of IDPs report that at least one member of their family has a disability and 31% report that at least one member of their family has a chronic illness.

15. Nearly 66% of the IDPs surveyed indicate that they need financial assistance as a priority, 23% indicate a need for medicine and medical care and 17% for food.⁵

16. At the same time, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that over 6.5 million Ukrainians had fled the country and over 2 million had returned to Ukraine.⁶ As UNHCR points out, this figure reflects cross-border movements and does not necessarily indicate a sustainable return. So far, the largest influx of refugees from Ukraine to neighbouring countries has been in March, with 3 381 926 people leaving the territory (compared to 1 501 654 in April). Since the start of the war, Poland has received over 3 million refugees, Romania almost 1 million, over 400 000 have arrived in the Republic of Moldova and the Slovak Republic respectively, and over 600 000 in Hungary.⁷

17. These few staggering figures, showing that more than a quarter of the Ukrainian population has had to leave their homes, give the measure of the need for humanitarian aid, not only in Ukraine but also in the border countries, which have suffered a significant impact with the mass arrival, mainly of women and young children, whether on foot, by car or by train. Fortunately, the almost immediate mobilisation of all actors, including those of the international community, meant that urgent needs were met as soon as the first people reached the borders. While chaos reigned in the first few days, efforts were quickly made to welcome the Ukrainian refugees in a dignified and lawful manner.

3. Article 49, Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, 12 August 1949, [Treaties, States Parties and Commentaries](#), (icrc.org).

4. IOM, "Ukraine Report - Internal Displacement Report – General Population Survey Round 4 (29 April – 3 May 2022)", ([iom.int](#)), 9 May 2022.

5. Ibid.

6. [Operational Data Portal – Ukraine refugee situation](#), 22 May 2022.

7. Ibid.

2.2. Humanitarian aid

18. If the most urgent needs had to be addressed on 24 February, three months later it is necessary to talk about long-term needs, not only during the war, but also afterwards, when Ukraine will have to be rebuilt. With the fall of Mariupol, it is clear that the Russian army has no other objective than the total annihilation of Ukraine. We can therefore anticipate the colossal figures that will follow. We are talking about US\$599 billion needed for reconstruction. At the same time, the commitment of the international community is unprecedented, with more than US\$9 billion in aid to Ukraine already on the table.

19. The United Nations and its partners, who have been involved in providing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable communities in eastern Ukraine for more than eight years, have increased their level of support to meet the massive and urgent needs for relief and protection of civilians across the country. As a result, a total of US\$44.4 million has been allocated in 24 *oblasts*, helping more than 2.1 million people in need, including through the protection of civilian infrastructure in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law, and the provision of basic services in conflict-affected areas.⁸

20. These figures, which are constantly evolving, are still incomparable to the needs, since of the 12 million tons of humanitarian aid needed every day, only 3 million tons arrive in Ukraine.

21. A donors' conference was held on 5 May in Warsaw, hopefully marking the start of a "Marshall Plan" for Ukraine, as called for by President Volodymyr Zelensky and the President of the European Council, Charles Michel. On this occasion, President Zelensky launched the UNITED24 operation, a one-stop shop for charitable donations to Ukraine.⁹ The funds will be transferred to official accounts of the National Bank of Ukraine and allocated by the designated ministries to cover the most urgent needs in defence and mine clearance, medical aid and reconstruction. As he stressed, the funding for Ukraine is clearly an investment in the security of the whole region. As a result of the Warsaw conference, more than US\$6.5 billion in humanitarian aid from public and private funds was pledged to Ukraine.¹⁰

22. The European Union, united in its support for Ukraine, has intensified its political, humanitarian, financial and military support to Ukraine since the beginning of the war. By mid-May, it had mobilised €4.1 billion in macro-financial aid (assistance, budget support, emergency aid, crisis response aid and humanitarian aid), in addition to €1.5 billion in military expenditure. This is unprecedented.

23. In its Strategic Reconstruction Plan, unveiled on 18 May, the European Commission proposes to provide an additional nine billion to help rebuild Ukraine, as well as the creation of a 'Rebuild Ukraine Platform' which, in the medium to long term, and with the support of the G7, G20, third countries and international financial institutions, and even cities, could coordinate assistance for the reconstruction of the country once the war is over.¹¹

24. It is difficult not to feel dizzy when reading these figures, but the unprecedented scale of a war being waged in Europe emphasises the need for a united and supportive Europe.

25. With its specific mandate, the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), based on a partial agreement of the Council of Europe, also has a fundamental role to play, as rightly pointed out in the report entitled "Consequences of the Russian Federation's continued aggression against Ukraine: role and response of the Council of Europe".¹²

3. International humanitarian response

3.1. The main UN agencies

26. The response of the United Nations (UN) and its agencies to Russia's aggression against Ukraine was immediate, and the UNHCR and the IOM stepped up their presence on the ground to provide assistance to displaced persons and refugees, to Ukraine and to host countries. The two agencies play a key role and are working together, as I observed at the Slovak-Ukrainian border in Vyšné Nemecké, where their white and blue tents were set up side by side.

8. "Ukraine Humanitarian Fund: 1st and 2nd Reserve Allocations 2022 Dashboard (As of 25 April 2022) – Ukraine", ReliefWeb.

9. United24 – The initiative of the President of Ukraine (u24.gov.ua).

10. "War in Ukraine: Warsaw conference raises 6.5 billion dollars for Ukraine" (lemonde.fr).

11. Ukraine: Relief and reconstruction (europa.eu).

12. Doc. 15506.

27. UNHCR's activities in Ukraine focus on the needs of displaced people. UNHCR co-ordinates the Protection and Shelter Clusters. The UN agency is also involved in financial and material support to the population. For example, it has set up reception centres for displaced persons and provides them with significant financial assistance, in particular by allowing them to obtain a bank card ("cash assistance", which has benefited nearly 700 000 displaced persons in eleven regions).¹³

28. Inside Ukraine, many trapped people are unable to meet their basic needs for food, water and medicine. The delivery of life-saving aid remains difficult, with a lack of safe humanitarian access. UNHCR and other international agencies continue to work to reach hard-hit areas to deliver this life-saving assistance through inter-agency humanitarian convoys.

29. In the border countries, UNHCR plays an important role in the prevention of human trafficking, abuse and exploitation. For example, child and family protection support centres (Blue Dots) have been set up in cooperation with UNICEF. These Blue Dots bring together a minimum package of protection, social and counselling services for children and families. They aim to improve accessibility and standardisation of services provided by different partners, as well as predictability through a recognisable blue dot label.

30. UNHCR does not limit itself to providing direct assistance to refugees and displaced persons, as it is also engaged in awareness-raising activities with border authorities on gender-based violence and child protection. In collaboration with other agencies, such as the IOM, UNHCR provides psychological support, ensures the protection of the most vulnerable people, notably by raising awareness of the risk of human trafficking.

31. In general, UNHCR has deployed its co-ordination mechanisms to facilitate the work of the different actors on the ground, to improve the delivery of assistance to refugees and to ensure their safety.

32. Its field experience is crucial to complement the emergency assistance provided by the Ukrainian authorities, the border States and the many other actors, including those from civil society.

33. For its part, IOM's priority is the short, medium and long term safety and protection of all people affected by the war.¹⁴ Its interventions are in line with and complement the plans launched in April by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Ukraine Flash Appeal" and the UNHCR with the "Regional Refugee Response Plan".¹⁵ It is responsible, in particular, for collecting, analysing and disseminating data which is an essential element in enabling the Organisation, but also the governments of neighbouring countries, to better understand the needs of people fleeing the war and to act as quickly as possible.

34. IOM is an active member of the UN Country Team and the UN Humanitarian Country Team and participates actively in several working groups at regional and national levels (Information Management Working Group, Cash Working Group, Protection Working Group, Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Working Group, Anti-Trafficking Task Force) to intervene in several areas, including financial assistance, prevention of human trafficking, health, and provision of basic necessities.¹⁶

35. Thus, IOM plays a key role in co-ordinating the emergency response in support of Ukraine, as I have seen in the Slovak Republic (see para 53).¹⁷ One of the important functions of IOM is to inform border crossers at the points of entry into the Slovak Republic (Vyšné Nemecké, Ubľa), at large-scale centres, such as those in Michalovce and Humenne, and at the *Hot Spot* in Košice about the services available to foreigners in the Slovak Republic within the framework of the Migration Information Centre (legal advice and advice on social issues, on available language courses, cultural orientation, etc.). It provides direct humanitarian aid according to the needs on the ground (blankets, hygiene kits, disinfection, breastfeeding centre, defibrillator), contributes to the protection and prevention of trafficking in human beings by providing transport for vulnerable persons, contributes to the accommodation of refugees, in particular through contracts with Airbnb, and participates in the direct financial support of refugees through cash-based interventions. As part of its mandate, IOM is also active in mental health and psychological support for migrants, emergency-affected communities and host communities. IOM's role in assisting voluntary return and reintegration in the country of origin is also important. Finally, IOM manages the Slovak Republic's humanitarian hub for Ukraine (see para 53).

13. "Ukraine situation: Flash Update #12", ([unhcr.org](https://www.unhcr.org)), 11 May 2022.

14. IOM, "Regional Ukraine Response – Situation Report #18", [ReliefWeb](https://reliefweb.int), 12 May 2022.

15. IOM, Ukraine and Neighbouring countries Response, [Flash and Other Appeals, Global Crisis Response Platform](https://www.iom.int) ([iom.int](https://www.iom.int)), April 2022.

16. IOM Press Release, "Global Needs Increase for Over 8 Million IDPs in Ukraine", IOM Switzerland, 10 May 2022.

17. [Home – International Organization for Migration \(IOM\) Slovakia](https://www.iom.int).

3.2. The European Union

36. The European Union took swift and decisive action to condemn the Russian Federation, including through a series of sanctions packages, and its help provided to Ukraine and Ukrainians. A series of decisions were taken and initiatives launched to help people fleeing the war and seeking refuge in neighbouring countries.

37. In particular, the activation of the EU Temporary Protection Directive (European Council Decision of 4 March 2022) was both a crucial and welcome step, as it provided a clear legal framework for receiving Ukrainians in EU countries.

38. In addition, the “Solidarity Platform”, the “operational” arm of the EU and its member States’ co-ordination of humanitarian assistance initiatives, undoubtedly plays a major role in the provision of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine.¹⁸ It is the main co-ordination and operational mechanism of the European Union. Its role is to examine the needs identified in the member States and to coordinate operational follow-up in response. It co-ordinates the transfer of persons from the Republic of Moldova to EU countries. So far, 7 EU countries and Norway have pledged to receive 14 500 persons from the Republic of Moldova. The first transfers started on 19 March. Finally, the platform is developing guidelines and standard operating procedures to facilitate these transfers, with particular attention paid to the situation of children, especially unaccompanied minors.

39. Therefore, already on 28 March, the European Commission, in co-ordination with the French EU Presidency, presented a 10-point plan for enhanced European co-ordination on the reception of people fleeing the war against Ukraine.¹⁹ The roadmap is being developed but already on 11 May, the Solidarity Platform committed itself to monitor and implement a Common Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings to address the risks of trafficking in human beings and to support potential victims among those fleeing the war in Ukraine (see para 95).

40. Finally, the European Commission is co-ordinating the largest operation of the European Union’s Civil Protection Mechanism.²⁰ In addition to providing financial assistance for humanitarian projects (food, water, shelter, education) in Ukraine and neighbouring countries, it also provides medical equipment, notably through the RescEU mechanism, and assists in the evacuation of chronically ill people to hospitals across Europe.²¹

41. The various EU agencies are also involved. The Fundamental Rights Agency, FRA, visited in early March the four EU countries that share a border with Ukraine: Hungary, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic. This mission resulted in the first FRA Bulletin “The War in Ukraine – fundamental rights implications within the EU”, which focuses on the situation of people who have fled Ukraine to these four countries.²²

42. Europol has deployed operational teams in Ukraine’s neighbouring countries²³ which support national authorities with security checks and investigations at the EU’s external borders in order to combat the terrorist threat and criminals attempting to enter the EU through the flow of Ukrainian refugees.²⁴

43. As for the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), the agency has organised, since the beginning of March, activities to raise awareness of the challenges and risks generated by the current Ukrainian refugee crisis and to share good practices in border management for people working in the field of border security and management.²⁵

44. In order to support member States in managing people fleeing Ukraine to neighbouring countries, Frontex (the European Border and Coast Guard Agency), as of 12 May 2022, had deployed 527 officers at the EU-Ukraine borders.²⁶ It has also organised humanitarian flights for non-Ukrainian citizens to reach their home countries.²⁷

18. [EU solidarity with Ukraine, European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-articles/detail/15547).

19. “Home Affairs Council: 10-Point Plan on stronger European coordination on welcoming people fleeing the war against Ukraine”, [europa.eu](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-articles/detail/15547).

20. European Commission, “European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations”, [Ukraine, \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-articles/detail/15547), 12 May 2022.

21. See the European Commission’s dedicated page: [EU Aid to Ukraine, \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-articles/detail/15547).

22. “The war in Ukraine – Fundamental rights implications within the EU – Bulletin 1”, FRA [europa.eu](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-articles/detail/15547).

23. “War in Ukraine: Europol deploys operational teams to all frontline partner countries”, Europol [europa.eu](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-articles/detail/15547), 1 April 2022.

24. “Europol’s solidarity with Ukraine”, Europol [europa.eu](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-articles/detail/15547), 29 April 2022.

25. “CEPOL launches series of webinars on the impact of Ukraine conflict on law enforcement”, CEPOL [europa.eu](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-articles/detail/15547), 9 March 2022.

26. “Update on Ukraine: more than 6 million refugees cross EU’s borders”, [europa.eu](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-articles/detail/15547) 12 May 2022.

45. Finally, the recently established EU Asylum Agency (EUAA) has set up the Ukraine Emergency Response Board to better co-ordinate support to member States with asylum and reception needs and to assist them in implementing the EU Temporary Protection Directive. In addition, training is being offered in each neighbouring country to enable the various actors to strengthen their capacity to manage this crisis²⁸ as well as practical recommendations concerning in particular the emergency reception of displaced persons in Ukraine.²⁹

3.3. The Council of Europe

46. Our Organisation took a historic decision to suspend the Russian Federation the day after its aggression against Ukraine and to exclude it on 16 March, following [Opinion 300 \(2022\)](#) adopted unanimously by our Assembly.³⁰

47. Through the rapid reaction of its statutory bodies, the Council of Europe has demonstrated its relevance and added value in supporting one of its member States, Ukraine, in the face of an atrocious and totally unjustified war.

48. The Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, has been actively involved since the beginning of the war in Ukraine in addressing its human rights consequences.³¹ Her activities have resulted in statements and reports relating to the situation of refugees and displaced persons.³²

49. The Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees, Leyla Kayacik, engaged in the implementation of the “Council of Europe Action Plan on the Protection of Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025)”,³³ visited Ukraine’s neighbouring countries as a follow-up to the extraordinary meeting of the Council of Europe Network of Focal Points on Migration on the situation of persons fleeing Ukraine.³⁴ Her forthcoming recommendations are awaited with great interest.

50. I have already mentioned the important contribution of the CEB in responding to the challenges caused by the humanitarian crisis (para 25), to which should be added that of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Organisation’s monitoring mechanisms which reacted rapidly within their respective mandates, and more generally the Priority Adjustments to the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2022 adopted at the Turin Ministerial Conference held on 20 May.

51. At this point, I would like to stress that the current situation has been an opportunity for all Council of Europe bodies to show that they can and do work together. It is indeed through concerted and complementary actions that the best results are achieved, and the outcome of the Turin Conference are there to prove it.³⁵

4. My observations in the field

4.1. Humanitarian aid

52. The first thing that stands out is that the humanitarian needs far outweigh the considerable quantity of goods stored in the two warehouses I visited in Košice (Slovak Republic) and Chernivtsi (Ukraine).³⁶

53. The 5 000 square metre warehouse near Košice airport is managed by IOM, which has been present in the Slovak Republic since 2001. Today, it is the hub in the region that co-ordinates humanitarian efforts for Ukraine. The goods are stored before being sent to Uzhgorod in Ukraine, where they are transported to their final destination, such as Dnipro, Zhitomir, Chernivtsi or Zaparozhije. Approximately 25 trucks per day are

27. “Ukraine: Frontex support to Member States”, ([europa.eu](#)), 4 May 2022.

28. “The EUAA training officials in the context of the war in Ukraine”, EUAA ([europa.eu](#)), 4 May 2022.

29. “EUAA lays out next steps to protect Ukrainians staying in private accommodation in the EU”, EUAA ([europa.eu](#)), 19 May 2022 and “Private accommodation for persons displaced from Ukraine”, EUAA ([europa.eu](#))

30. “Council of Europe suspends Russia’s rights of representation” ([coe.int](#)); “The Russian Federation can no longer be a member State of the Council of Europe, PACE says” ([coe.int](#)).

31. War in Ukraine, Commissioner for Human Rights ([coe.int](#)).

32. “Commissioner urges all Member States to intensify and better coordinate their efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of people fleeing the war in Ukraine and to protect their human rights”, ([coe.int](#))

33. Special Representative of the Secretary General on migration and refugees, ([coe.int](#)).

34. “SRSG to visit Slovak Republic and Czech Republic”, ([coe.int](#)).

35. “Condemnation of Russia, Council of Europe priorities, aid to Ukraine – foreign ministers conclude their work”, ([coe.int](#)).

36. Unless otherwise indicated, the information is taken from meetings during my fact-finding visits.

transported, mainly from Greece or Turkey. The range of products stored on the imposing shelves is extremely varied, since all the needs of daily life must be met simultaneously: hygiene kits, blankets, nails, tarpoline, plywood, kitchen appliances, construction tools, mattresses, etc.

54. The warehouse, which opened on 25 February, employs Ukrainian refugees and students, among others. The IOM faces many challenges, including the issue of drivers, who refuse to go to Ukraine, while Ukrainian men are not allowed to leave their country if they are under 60 years. Apart from the issue of the separation of rails in the former Soviet Union countries different than from the rest of Europe, a strategic decision has been taken not to use the railways; this option is therefore not on the table.

55. IOM is trying to meet the most urgent needs in an extremely volatile situation, where many Ukrainians are trying to return home after losing everything, and have to go back to a safer place where they can find temporary accommodation. Housing is undoubtedly one of the greatest long-term challenges that Ukraine and the bordering countries face, as even when the war is over, millions of Ukrainians will have nowhere to return.

56. For the time being, the most urgent needs are being addressed. For example, the IOM has concluded an agreement with Airbnb, in co-operation with the municipality of Košice, by renting flats for up to three months, where refugees will be temporarily housed. In Poland, the organisation has also used the Airbnb platform to house third-country nationals prior to their repatriation to their country of origin.

57. In Chernivtsi, the humanitarian warehouse, located in a former sports centre, has been operating since 24 February 24/7. Food from all over the world is sorted, stored and distributed there. It is run by the State, with humanitarian organisations and individual volunteers working there. The manager complains that the amount of aid has decreased significantly since the beginning of the war, when volunteers used to prepare up to 6 000 shopping bags a day; now there is only enough food to prepare 1 000 bags a day. The person in charge explains that each bag weighs 12 to 15 kilos so that one person can carry it without help. We understand why products in glass jars are not accepted, they are too heavy. Each bag is supposed to last a week, and the manager insists on the need to provide a variety of products to the displaced people. Particular attention is paid to products for babies, not only food, but also pushchairs and hygiene products, so that they suffer as little as possible from this war.

58. I also visited the popular canteen “Dolfin” in Uzhgorod, one of the many places where meals are distributed to displaced people free of charge. The restaurant is run by the organisation “World Central Kitchen” and volunteers. The cheerful atmosphere that reigns there does not manage to conceal the uncertainty that surrounds its functioning. At the time of my visit, the volunteers were worried that the owner would repossess the premises after having made it available free of charge; they were distressed to note the decrease in donations and products made available by the town hall. Indeed, whereas at the beginning of the war, “Dolfin” served more than 5 000 meals a day, by the beginning of May, this figure had dropped to 1 000. In Transcarpathia, the region takes care of the cost of food for displaced people, unlike in other regions where this is the responsibility of the cities, such as Chernivtsi.

59. The State pays an allowance to registered IDPs, 2 000 hryvnas per adult and 1 000 per child. At the beginning of May, although only 2 million IDPs were registered out of an estimated 7 million (the rest probably still have means to support themselves), the computer systems were too slow to respond to all the requests. It was explained to me that too much digitalisation had led to the collapse of the IT system.

60. The military governors of the Transcarpathian and Chernivtsi regions warned that the regions' budgets had almost been spent. Their annual budget, intended for roads and other infrastructure, has been used for emergency aid following the Russian aggression. If the war continues for another two to three months, there will not be enough money to buy the millions of tons of food needed every day to feed free of charge all the displaced people present on their territory.

61. The visit to the two warehouses and the popular kitchen, as well as the meeting with this new generation of Ukrainian leaders who speak of public service and general interest shed a raw light on the need to maintain constant aid for food, clothing, medical and hygiene products, and other products of daily life to Ukraine, while boosting longer-term aid, particularly with regard to housing. This issue is not only relevant for Ukraine, but also for some of the border countries that have hosted many refugees.

4.2. Arrivals and emergency reception in border countries

62. The arrival at the borders and the emergency measures put in place in the first weeks of the war are now well documented. The FRA, which was the first to visit the EU's borders with Ukraine after the war began, recently published a report detailing the reception of Ukrainian refugees in the first weeks of the war.³⁷ Through her visits to the Republic of Moldova, and subsequently to Hungary, Poland, the Slovak Republic, the

Czech Republic and Romania, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe has been able to see the extent of the efforts made by central and local authorities as well as civil society, and has made specific recommendations which I fully endorse.³⁸ For my part, I was also able to witness this humanitarian disaster which unfolded in just a few weeks.

63. No one was prepared for the wave of people who fled the bombing and fighting to neighbouring countries on 24 February.

64. According to all my interlocutors, the first to come to the border to welcome their Ukrainian neighbours were individuals, including members of the Ukrainian diaspora, even before non-governmental organisations and the authorities. In Košice, for example, Ukrainian students present in large numbers were the first to come to help.

65. The profile of the exiles has changed over the weeks, but women and children remain the vast majority, as men between 18 and 60 are not allowed to leave the country due to martial law.³⁹ Initially, the people who left were those who had somewhere to go, to family or friends, who were better off, and who had a car. Then, it was the working classes, direct or indirect victims of the crimes committed by the Russian army, who left, having lost everything. As the weeks went by, elderly people, often isolated, as well as disabled people took the road. Thousands of unaccompanied children, most of them orphans, have also left Ukraine.

66. Heart-breaking scenes occurred at the borders, where families were separated, with the men staying behind, leaving their wives and children to an uncertain future, while they returned to the certainty of war.

67. Neighbouring countries immediately opened their borders, sometimes to the surprise of civil society. The situation was more complicated for Roma and third-country nationals, whose fate I will briefly mention below (paras 112 and 113).

68. Waves of several thousand people crossed the borders in the first weeks, with images of endless queues of vehicles and people on foot. Thus, there were up to 300 000 people a day crossing the Polish border. In the first few days, their registration was very basic as each person spent on average less than two minutes at passport control. With border controls almost non-existent, it is not surprising that there was some confusion at the beginning. For example, some people did not have their passports stamped, and in the case of non-biometric documents, this could cause problems later when they applied for temporary protection under EU Directive 2001/55/E.

69. These early days also saw unaccompanied separated children and women disappear into the wilderness, before measures were taken, including data collection, to address the risks of human trafficking and abuse and exploitation (see para 90).

70. The border countries have shown an admirable welcome and strong commitment, providing from the outset, emergency accommodation, psychological support, free transport, and above all, thanks to the activation of the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive as from 4 March 2022, a residence permit with certain rights, notably in terms of social protection and health.

71. Reception measures were quickly put in place. Local authorities undoubtedly played a fundamental role in managing the arrival and reception of Ukrainian refugees. For example, the Siret transit camp in Romania was set up within hours. These reception centres, set up near the borders, were intended as a break, where people were supposed to spend a few hours to two days, resting, thinking about where they wanted to go, having a hot meal, a shower, getting psychological or medical help if necessary. In the reception centre in Michalovce, they can also apply for temporary protection. All the emergency services are thus concentrated under one roof, or more precisely under the same stars, since they are usually set up outside, for example, on a municipal football pitch, as is the case in Siret.

72. People arriving on foot were transported there from the border by volunteers, the police, bus companies chartered by municipalities, in short, by all the goodwill moved by the fate of those fleeing the war.

73. I was told that as the days passed, the refugees had less and less idea about their final destination. Many decided to stay close to the border so that they could return to Ukraine quickly. Some made the choice to return, thus preferring the status of displaced person to that of refugee. These two-way movements across

37. "The war in Ukraine – Fundamental rights implications within the EU – Bulletin 1", FRA (europa.eu).

38. "Commissioner urges all Member States to intensify and better coordinate their efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of people fleeing the war in Ukraine and to protect their human rights", (coe.int).

39. Про введення воєнного..., 24 February 2022, № 64/2022 (rada.gov.ua).

the borders pose statistical problems as it is difficult to keep track of those who stayed in the border countries and those who returned to Ukraine, especially as some returns are short-term, to visit an old relative, plant a field or check on the state of one's home, before leaving Ukraine again until the next time. This is why it is no longer possible to enter Ukraine on foot from the Vyšné Nemecké border post in the Slovak Republic, an exception having been made when I myself crossed the border to Uzhgorod.

74. Some people left Ukraine by train or bus. Many emergency reception centres are thus situated near railway and bus stations. In Košice, for example, the “Red Star” swimming pool serves as an emergency reception centre, with a capacity of up to 400 people per day, and is run by the city with the support of IOM and civil society, which also provides meals. These shelters often have a precarious status. The deputy mayor of Košice explained to me that the swimming pool would have to be vacated for the summer, while in Michalovce, the owner of the land would like to have it back eventually. Even if the wave of arrivals has significantly dropped, it is essential to maintain such structures in case of new flows of refugees, which would inevitably occur, particularly in the event of fighting and bombing affecting regions that have been spared until now.

75. It is difficult not to compare this openness with the hostile attitude of some countries to migrants from other parts of the world, notably Afghanistan and Syria, and the double standards that have been observed in this area. However, this precedent is to be welcomed, as it proves that when a country has the will, it can open up to others. This is a positive message that should be taken advantage of.

76. The fact that the countries bordering Ukraine managed to organise the reception of Ukrainians so quickly, without a pre-established crisis plan, is to be welcomed. However, it should be remembered that without civil society, the authorities would not have managed to do this on their own. The private sector also played a significant role. In Michalovce, for example, my Slovakian interlocutors pointed out that its reception centre is a good example of co-ordination between the State, civil society and the private sector. The person who runs the centre comes from the event industry.

77. The reception centres I visited have sufficient capacity and relatively good living conditions. Many rely on volunteers, who are sometimes left to their own devices. They told me that they were overwhelmed at the beginning, not sufficiently co-ordinated with the authorities, especially at the border. Co-ordination mechanisms have gradually been put in place, but civil society still feels that it is not treated as a full partner.

78. The issue of co-ordination with the national authorities, notably the Ministry of the Interior, is key to ensure effective management. There are tensions between the municipalities, which are governed by opposition parties, and the central government, making it difficult to transfer funds.

79. The outpouring of solidarity was immediate, spontaneous and boundless. However, as the months go by, it is no longer possible to count on it in the long term and permanent solutions must be envisaged, particularly in terms of housing.

4.3. Temporary protection

80. The Temporary Protection Directive was activated on 4 March 2022. Since then, the four EU member States bordering Ukraine have transposed it and incorporated the implementing decision into their national legislation.⁴⁰ They apply temporary protection to Ukrainian nationals and beneficiaries of international protection, including stateless persons, and their relatives. However, the protection of non-Ukrainian third-country nationals who are fleeing war varies.

81. As Ukrainian nationals with biometric passports can enter the Schengen area, and Romania, without a visa for 90 days, the application for temporary protection was not always made at the outset. Indeed, many Ukrainians hoped to be able to return home after a quick victory of the Ukrainian army. Unfortunately, as the weeks passed, there was less certainty of a quick return. Also, given the extent of the damage caused by the Russian army, it is clear that thousands of people will have nowhere to return.

82. Beneficiaries of temporary protection receive a residence permit valid for one year, which can be extended up to three years. They enjoy rights and benefits such as access to employment, housing or accommodation, social protection and medical care. Children have access to education and families have the right to reunite. Beneficiaries also have access to banking services and can move freely within EU countries for 90 days within a 180-day period.⁴¹

40. “The war in Ukraine – Fundamental rights implications within the EU – Bulletin 1”, FRA (europa.eu).

41. Temporary protection (europa.eu).

83. Non-Ukrainian third-country nationals who are permanently resident in Ukraine must also be protected, in accordance with Article 2.2 of the Implementing Decision. EU member States must either apply the EU temporary protection regime or provide adequate protection under their national legislation. EU member States may also extend the scheme to other legally residing non-Ukrainian third-country nationals (Article 2.3 of the Implementing Decision). This applies to those who entered the EU after 24 February 2022 and who cannot safely return to their country or region of origin.

84. In Poland, civil society pointed out a number of shortcomings in the Act of 12 March 2022 transposing the Directive, particularly with regard to foreign mothers of Ukrainian children and access to certain services. Amendments were subsequently adopted to remedy this.

85. Article 10 of the Directive requires member States to provide information, including in writing, to persons eligible for temporary protection. This information was not always provided in a systematic and reliable manner at the outset, although the situation has improved significantly since then. In practice, this information is often provided by civil society, as for example in the Slovak Republic where the NGOs “League of Human Rights” and “Mareena” created the first websites providing information on the procedures and rights related to the Directive.

86. In the Slovak Republic, applications for temporary protection can be made at four locations, including the reception centre in Michalovce. As the Regional Office of the Refugee Police in Košice only registers children under 6 years of age, pregnant women and persons over 65 years and persons with disabilities, other applicants for temporary protection had to be transported from Košice to Michalovce to apply there. The number of people registered in Michalovce was disproportionately higher than in Košice (7 100 compared to 3 500), while most of them resided in Košice. This created bureaucratic problems requiring refugees to change their place of registration.

4.4. Risk of human trafficking and forced labour

87. International actors on the ground identified the risk of human trafficking as high from the start of the war. The Council of Europe's bodies and institutions reacted swiftly by calling on States to act urgently to protect refugees fleeing Ukraine from human trafficking. For example, on International Women's Day on 8 March, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe called for special protection for women and girls,⁴² as did the Commissioner for Human Rights following her visit to the border countries⁴³, and the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) in a statement on 17 March.⁴⁴

88. Our interlocutors unanimously stressed the chaos that reigned in the first days and confirmed the high risk of human trafficking. As most of the people fleeing Ukraine were young women with or without children, it was a golden opportunity not to be missed for the traffickers who take advantage of human misery.

89. However, measures were soon taken to prevent women fleeing the war from falling into the clutches of traffickers. For example, at Vyšné Nemecké, one of the border crossing points between the Slovak Republic and Ukraine, a “meet and greet” point has been set up where vehicles picking up refugees are registered and their drivers checked. However, the risk is not completely eliminated in the case of “voluntary departure”, since in this case the police cannot do anything to prevent the passenger from leaving for an unknown fate. Moreover, the place is located in the middle of nowhere and is not clearly marked, so it is easy to miss it and use this pretext to go directly to the border and park quietly.

90. While UNHCR and UNICEF have set up Blue Dots, IOM has put up banners at the border and distributed leaflets warning of the risk of human trafficking, with the aim of increasing the vigilance of those crossing the border and helping them “to help themselves”. The non-governmental organisation “La Strada” also plays a preventive role, particularly with regard to forced labour, another danger for people fleeing Ukraine. Even if the numbers are difficult to estimate, the risk of undeclared people without adequate wages and without any social protection cannot be minimised.

91. Other measures have been put in place, such as the registration of those offering accommodation or the organisation of discreet police operations at arrival points.

42. “War in Ukraine: protecting women and girls”, (coe.int).

43. “Commissioner urges all Member States to intensify and better coordinate their efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of people fleeing the war in Ukraine and to protect their human rights”, (coe.int)

44. “Human trafficking experts: States urged to protect refugees fleeing Ukraine”, (coe.int).

92. These necessary measures are clearly insufficient, especially when women seeking to flee Ukraine use social networks to find help, or when unscrupulous people go so far as to cross the Ukrainian border to seek their future victims directly.

93. This is why the joint anti-trafficking plan just unveiled by the European Commission is most welcome.⁴⁵ Developed under the leadership of the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator⁴⁶ and with the support of EU agencies and member States, it aims to raise awareness, strengthen prevention against trafficking in human beings, improve law enforcement and judicial response, as well as enhance victim identification and support. The plan also addresses co-operation at global level and with third countries, in particular the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. It will only be possible to assess its impact once it is operational.

94. Of course, it remains crucial to intensify and systematise efforts to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings, drawing on the guiding principles made by the Council of Europe's specialised body, GRETA.⁴⁷

4.5. The plight of vulnerable people

95. The Council of Europe Action Plan on the Protection of Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025)⁴⁸ provides valuable guidance on how vulnerable persons should be treated. The Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees is personally committed to providing concrete responses to the many challenges posed by the exile of millions of Ukrainians in vulnerable situations.⁴⁹

96. Children are a particularly vulnerable group, especially as 90% of those who fled Ukraine were women and children according to UNICEF.⁵⁰ For this reason, the Committee of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No. 201) (Lanzarote Committee) called for urgent protection of Ukrainian children in migration from sexual abuse in a statement on 25 March.⁵¹

97. The exact number of children who arrived unaccompanied (without any accompanying person) and those who arrived separated (those who arrive without their parents, but accompanied by other relatives or carers, such as family friends) is still unknown.

98. Some children left with a parental note authorising the child to travel with other adults. Others, separated and unaccompanied, were identified and referred to child protection services.

99. Some of the children living in institutions were brought from Ukraine in groups with staff working in these institutions. These groups were evacuated through official channels or private initiatives. Often these children were only transiting through border countries on their way to Germany, Lithuania, Spain or other EU countries.

100. In Poland, my civil society interlocutors expressed concern about the lack of registration of Ukrainian children in the early days. Since then, a register has been set up, obliging the authorities to register unaccompanied children entering Poland. This measure only applies to children of Ukrainian nationality.

101. The Polish law provides that a person can be appointed as a guardian (*opiekun*) for any number of unaccompanied minors as long as their interests are not at odds. The new institution of a “temporary guardian”, created by the new law on assistance to Ukrainian nationals, adopted in March and amended in April, mirrors this provision, allowing for the care of one person over any number of unaccompanied Ukrainian children. If a person is appointed as temporary guardian for more than 15 children, for every batch of 15 children beyond the initial 15, at least one extra paid carer has to be hired by the local welfare office, for at least 40h/week, to assist the temporary guardian with care over the group. Family courts are required to rule on each request in respect of every single unaccompanied child. The new, simplified, procedure provides that where the person to be appointed is already the *de facto* carer for the child, the court may dispense with the

45. [Common Anti-Trafficking Plan](#).

46. [Together Against Trafficking in Human Beings \(europa.eu\)](#).

47. [“GRETA issues Guidance Note on addressing the risks of trafficking in human beings related to the war in Ukraine and the ensuing humanitarian crisis”](#).

48. [Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe \(2021-2025\)](#).

49. [Special Representative of the Secretary General on migration and refugees \(coe.int\)](#).

50. [Research and reports, UNICEF](#).

51. [“Urgent need to protect Ukrainian children in migration from sexual abuse”, \(coe.int\)](#).

public hearing and decide the case solely on the basis of documents. While the NGOs I met welcomed this simplified procedure in some of the most straightforward cases to avoid heavy burdens on family court dockets, they also indicated that it could also potentially create problems.

102. An unusual problem was raised concerning adolescents aged 16 and over, who left without their parents, sometimes accompanied by younger siblings in their care. As minors, they should be given the protection they deserve, while they, and their parents, see themselves as autonomous young adults. The systems in place are not able to provide adequate solutions to such situations.

103. In Romania, the Child Protection Unit has received more than 2 700 unaccompanied minors, of whom only 255 are registered in the social protection system.

104. According to the information I received, 75% of the orphans are disabled. Their long-term fate is of great concern. The city of Iași hosts two placement centres for orphans.

105. Ukrainian children who remained in Ukraine were sometimes lucky enough to stay with their fathers.

106. As Ukraine is a country where surrogate pregnancy is allowed, many babies have been born without their intended parents being able to come and take them.⁵² Some of them are kept by the midwives of the maternity hospitals where they were born. Regardless of their family status, it is important not to forget these children and to consider their best interest.

107. The topic of unaccompanied and separated minors was the subject of the report entitled “Protection and alternative care for unaccompanied and separated migrant and refugee children” to which I refer for a more detailed analysis.

108. The elderly are another group of vulnerable people because of the risk of impoverishment. In Romania, more than 1 000 people have applied for social services even though there is no mechanism to manage social emergencies in the country. The establishment of such a system would be beneficial beyond the Ukrainian refugees.

4.6. Discrimination situations

109. Concerns about discrimination against the Roma minority, non-Ukrainian third-country nationals, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex (LGBTI) people, and other marginalised groups merit a separate study. These concerns have been brought to my attention by representatives of civil society organisations and international organisations I have met.

110. Roma, often stateless, continue to suffer from stigma and discrimination in war. As one of my Slovak interlocutors told me: “here, we have racism under our skin”, referring to the differential treatment of people of Roma origin. During my missions, I heard several examples of discrimination with regard to access to housing, education or the possibility of returning to Ukraine in cases of statelessness. I have also seen with my own eyes how a Roma child was addressed with contempt by a reception centre manager. The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe has also reported allegations of discrimination against Roma in the provision of humanitarian aid or transport. She also reports that Roma have been evicted from places of transit, such as bus or train stations, or from hostels, and is concerned about the availability of adequate accommodation for some Roma families.⁵³

111. Third-country nationals were in principle assisted to return to their country of origin, including through return flights organised by the IOM, but those without consular protection, such as Syrians or Palestinians, found themselves in a grey area without the benefit of the temporary protection reserved for Ukrainians. A number of students would have liked to have had the opportunity to take their exams in Ukraine. Beyond the shocking images of foreign men being pulled out of buses to make room for Ukrainian women and children who had priority, there were clearly double standards applied to non-Ukrainians who fled Ukraine, which merit attention so that Europe could envisage how to abandon the fortress it is locking itself into. The fate of irregular migrants detained in Ukraine should be clarified.⁵⁴

52. “Le désarroi des couples qui recourent à la GPA en Ukraine: ‘S’il faut aller récupérer notre enfant là-bas, nous le ferons’” ([lemonde.fr](https://www.lemonde.fr)).

53. “Discrimination and prejudice against Roma fleeing war in Ukraine must be combated”, (coe.int).

54. “Guerre en Ukraine: des demandeurs d’asile prisonniers au milieu des combats”, *Libération* (liberation.fr).

112. Hate speech, if not hateful attitudes, have affected many LGBTI persons, who represent a particularly vulnerable category of persons. Their specific needs, including not being stigmatised after leaving Ukraine, have been addressed mainly by civil society and international organisations.⁵⁵ On the occasion of the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia on 17 May, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe also recalled the unenviable fate of transgender persons remaining in Ukraine.⁵⁶ In a Declaration adopted on 1st April 2022, Christophe Lacroix (Belgium, SOC), General Rapporteur of the Assembly on the rights of LGBTI persons called on all Council of Europe member States to ensure full respect for the rights of LGBTI persons in Ukraine or fleeing from that country.⁵⁷

4.7. Access to rights

4.7.1. Housing

113. In Ukraine, as in the neighbouring countries, emergency accommodation has been set up in parallel with the reception in private homes that have volunteered. Even several months after the start of the war, the number of beds needed remains impressive. The respective authorities responded quickly to the need for emergency accommodation, with the help of IOM where necessary. Schools and sports halls were requisitioned. Containers were quickly set up, like the ones I saw in front of the Košice train station.

114. Thousands of volunteers welcomed refugees into their homes, in Warsaw, in Uzhgorod, everywhere I went and beyond. Hotel owners have made their hotels available, such as the Mandachi Hotel in Suceava, Romania. However, individual goodwill is not enough to meet the needs.

115. Very quickly, two challenges became apparent. In Poland, the Slovak Republic and in the regions of Ukraine hosting IDPs, such as Transcarpathia or the Chernivtsi region, rent prices soared. Moreover, the number of housing units, especially social ones, was insufficient even before the war in some countries such as Poland and the Slovak Republic. There is therefore not enough to cope with the massive arrival of Ukrainian refugees whose return to Ukraine is hypothetical as long as the war lasts. Building social housing is an absolute necessity according to my interlocutors, while stressing that it must be done without creating ghettos or resentment among the needy local populations who sometimes feel that they take second place to the Ukrainian refugees.

116. Some countries have introduced a stipend to support hosts, but this is insufficient and there is a real risk that local enthusiasm will wane in the long term.⁵⁸ In Ukraine, the State covers the housing costs of those hosting IDPs. As the months go by, NGOs continue to put refugees or IDPs in contact with people who wish to host them in their homes.

117. Large cities like Warsaw are overcrowded with a completely saturated housing market, but the alternative of moving to smaller cities or to the countryside is not always an option as access to employment or childcare would be less easy there.

118. In Ukraine, the situation is the same: rents are skyrocketing and there is not enough housing to accommodate all the displaced people. In addition, reconstruction will have to be carried out in the regions that were affected by the destruction of the Russian army. The challenges are therefore colossal.

119. The housing shortage is accompanied by another challenge that local authorities cannot face alone, that of infrastructure. As the Military Governor of Transcarpathia explained to me, the region does not have the infrastructure to accommodate more than a quarter of the additional population. Hence, water and waste disposal, services and transport need to be upgraded urgently.

120. In Uzhgorod, more than 4 000 people are housed in public places, such as schools and sports halls. These are mostly disadvantaged people, including Roma. In Chernivtsi, 400 public buildings are in use, including a school that I visited, which is spotless and in good working order. As the regional military governor explained to me, one of Ukraine's chances is that President Zelensky had the schools renovated after his election, so they were well equipped to provide adequate accommodation for displaced persons after the war began.

55. "The war in Ukraine – Fundamental rights implications within the EU – Bulletin 1", FRA (europa.eu).

56. "LGBTI people affected by the war in Ukraine need protection", (coe.int).

57. "General rapporteur expresses deep concern for the rights of LGBTI people in or fleeing Ukraine".

58. 4 euros per day in Romania, 30 zlotys in Poland.

121. The school director I met has been transformed overnight into the 'head' of the accommodation centre. He makes sure that everything is in order, that his "boarders" have everything they need, not hesitating to send an old lady from Kharkiv for a nap after lunch, in a tone that is both firm and benevolent. The school houses a small menagerie where a few animals live together in the middle of green plants. This timeless place has become the place where adults and children come to reassure themselves after the too many sirens that scream day and night.

122. This solution, however, is not sustainable, especially since schools will have to reopen at the beginning of the school year. The military governors of the two regions and the mayors of the two cities are also thinking about the drop in temperatures that will come with the autumn. It is urgent to anticipate.

123. A national programme for the construction of housing for displaced persons has been adopted, which will take at least one year to implement. One idea put forward by the Military Governor of the Chernivtsi region is to renovate about 150 public buildings that are not in use by turning them into residential buildings. This is an excellent idea that only needs donors and investors. The Military Governor of Transcarpathia, on the other hand, recommends funding rural residents to renovate and modernise their houses themselves to be able to accommodate displaced persons. Before our meeting ended, my interlocutor showed me a table indicating that 111 000 housing units would be needed in his region alone.

124. All ideas are good, provided that efforts are co-ordinated. The needs are best known at the local level, which is why it is so important to support comprehensive twinning programmes between cities and regions in Ukraine and the rest of Europe.

4.7.2. Education

125. In Ukraine, schools have been closed since 24 February and education is provided online. It can be said that one of the only positive consequences of the Covid-19 outbreak was that the Ukrainian education system was ready for online education. That said, many issues remain unresolved, although it can be assumed that the school year will end without too many problems.

126. Many of the children in the IDP reception centres in Ukraine have no access to the internet, let alone computers, as I have seen. I spoke to completely idle children for whom school was a distant memory.

127. Most of the female teachers are now abroad (see para 137). Will they be encouraged/obliged to return to Ukraine to resume their posts? If not, who will teach when the schools reopen? These questions, currently unanswered, will have to be resolved taking into account the will of each, the security situation, balancing the needs and interests of all stakeholders.

128. For those who have crossed the border, school is a big dilemma for parents, children and the Ukrainian authorities in terms of integration: should they join the national system or should they continue to follow the Ukrainian curriculum in the hope of a quick return? Clearly, the Ukrainian authorities are counting on the return of their nationals as soon as the situation allows and are not prepared to accept the idea of a brain drain.

129. The situation of children attending school abroad varies according to the host country. I have observed that integration into classes is easier in countries used to allophone pupils, such as France and Switzerland, as the education system has the necessary tools to take into account their specific needs.

130. Ukraine strongly encourages its pupils to follow the Ukrainian system of online education. In Poland, the NGOs we met noted with regret the lack of integration of Ukrainian children who have not been able to make friends because they do not attend Polish schools. That said, to provide schooling for the 50,000 or so Ukrainian children present on the territory, 10 to 15 schools would have to be built, which is unthinkable in the short term. The Ukrainian diaspora organisation "Nasz Wybór" has managed to open a school entirely in Ukrainian following the Ukrainian curriculum with eleven grades for 270 pupils. The school is financed by the organisation "Save the Children".⁵⁹ The teachers are refugees, and 22 were recruited from over 200 applications received. An agreement has been reached with the Ukrainian authorities, and the pupils will be tested in Lviv and their results recognised. The school is supposed to operate until the end of the school year, but there is uncertainty about what will happen next.

59. "How a school in Warsaw is educating kids of Ukrainian families who fled to Poland", NPR.

131. In Romania and the Slovak Republic, children are integrated into local schools. In Romania, they are mainly integrated in classes where French and English are taught. Teachers regret the lack of textbooks that meet the needs of newcomers. In the Slovak Republic, Ukrainian pupils are given extra language classes. Classes are overcrowded there, too, as the number of schools is insufficient to cope with the massive influx of school-age children.

132. I have heard the same statement absolutely everywhere I have been: “there are not enough kindergartens, there were not enough before the war”. This shortage undoubtedly contributes to the difficulty mothers of young children have in integrating into the world of work.

133. As for the students, most of them were lucky enough to be able to continue their studies online. Those in Poland will go to Lviv to take their final exams, especially medical students. Although most of the non-Ukrainian students have been repatriated to their home countries, they should also be given the opportunity to take their exams and continue their studies if necessary.

134. I can only hope that the children will soon return home to their fathers, but it would be an illusion to believe that one can live in exile under the illusion that nothing has changed. An online system cannot entirely replace conventional education. Going to school is also about socialising. Learning a language is an asset that must be preserved. It is therefore crucial that the host countries be able to welcome all Ukrainian pupils properly from the beginning of the school year in September and that language courses be systematically provided for them. In Ukraine, schools must be able to return to their aim once displaced persons have been moved in dignified and sustainable accommodation.

4.7.3. Employment

135. If there is one challenge that is far from being solved, it is employment. In Ukraine, millions of Ukrainians are *de facto* unemployed, including displaced persons. In the European Union, although the Temporary Protection Directive provides access to work for Ukrainian refugees who benefit from it, there are a number of practical obstacles: the language barrier, equivalence of diplomas and childcare.

136. To remedy this situation, several systems and mechanisms have been put in place in the host countries. For example, in Poland, “Nasz Wybór” has organised a mentoring system to help women prepare CVs in line with Polish employers' expectations. A fast-track system for the recognition of Ukrainian medical degrees was also introduced. In Romania, the refugee reception centre in Iași that I visited provides Romanian language classes in English. In Chernivtsi, which is entirely Ukrainian-speaking and many of its inhabitants also speak Romanian, Russian-speaking IDPs attend Ukrainian language classes to avoid the risk of being stigmatised.

137. A different problem affects refugee women teachers abroad. As education has been organised online since the beginning of the war, they work full time and receive their Ukrainian salary, which is far too low compared to the cost of living in the European Union.

138. Their presence abroad is of concern to the Ukrainian authorities as it is not clear who will be teaching when schools reopen. The military governor of the Transcarpathian region has confirmed that he is concerned about the lack of staff in kindergartens, schools and hospitals. Companies employing displaced persons receive financial compensation from the State.

139. Paradoxically, the war in Ukraine also caused a labour shortage in Poland, as more than one million Ukrainians lived there before the war, most of them working in construction. These workers all returned to Ukraine after 24 February to defend their country.

140. Many companies based in the war zones have been relocated within Ukraine itself, such as to Chernivtsi and Uzhgorod, as well as abroad. In the Slovak Republic, for example, more than 90 IT companies have been relocated from Ukraine and also from Belarus.

141. In addition to immediate measures, solutions for the future are already being considered. For example, the Chernivtsi region would be prepared to make land belonging to it available free of charge to companies, which would be responsible for building housing and setting up there in the long term.

142. There is no shortage of ideas for those who run the regions and cities of Ukraine. They are the ones who know the needs of their territories best and it is to them that we must turn to analyse the needs and opportunities as closely as possible to reality.

4.7.4. Social protection, health and psychological support

143. The war that Ukrainians have been suffering since 24 February has had a direct impact on their health. The chronically ill, the seriously ill, the mentally ill, the traumatised, pregnant women, women who have given birth, rape victims, all of them have had to deal with overcrowded systems that are not always equipped to receive them according to Hippocratic criteria.

144. Social protection is provided to refugees who are granted temporary protection. In addition, each person receives a small allowance, which amount varies depending on the country, from the first month of obtaining this status. However, this is not enough to live on, and many Ukrainian refugees are supported by their host families. For many of these families, this support is a burden that they will not be able to bear in the long term.

145. Without dwelling on this important issue, I would like to highlight three main problems facing Ukrainians, both in Ukraine and abroad. Firstly, in Ukraine, the number of planned operations has tripled in Uzhgorod with the arrival of displaced persons. It is not only medical staff that is lacking, but also equipment and medicines, produced in Kyiv and Kharkiv. Abroad, women's reproductive rights are undermined in Poland, which has led some to come to the Slovak Republic for abortions. Finally, for chronic diseases, there is not always consistency between the treatments prescribed in Ukraine and those in the host country. Equivalence systems had to be found, which caused anxiety among patients.

146. Fortunately, the language barrier has not always been an obstacle, especially in the Slovak Republic where many Ukrainian doctors were already working, but it is crucial to ensure a rapid bridge for Ukrainian refugee health professionals so that their diplomas are quickly recognised and they can start practising, also to compensate for the sometimes-inadequate health systems of the host countries.

147. There is also a huge need for qualified personnel to provide psychological care for people who have suffered war trauma. I saw drawings of children that clearly indicated that they had been victims of trauma. I was impressed by the emergency care provided by the "IPČKO" Intervention Centre in the Slovak Republic, including the technique of "huggy puppy therapy", and by the efforts made at the refugee reception centre in Iași in the longer term. Quality interpretation is key to the impact of any psychological support.

4.8. Integration

148. Integration is not only a dilemma for Ukrainians who have fled the war abroad. For the host countries, the issue is also relevant, especially in the Slovak Republic, which was initially considered a transit country, but where refugees are increasingly staying. As the figures are not reliable, it is difficult to plan their integration, but what is certain is that the poorer the people who arrive, the more certain it is that they will not go any further. Therefore, we need to support the host countries to help integrate these people. At the moment, the main actors of integration are non-governmental organisations, which offer language courses, cultural activities etc., such as the Polish Centre for International Aid and the Ocalenie Foundation in Poland, or the organisation "Mareena" and the League of Human Rights in the Slovak Republic.

149. Uncertainty is not conducive to long-term projects, but I am convinced that the host societies and the Ukrainians will be mutually enriched by a focused and caring integration, no matter how long the latter are in exile.

5. Conclusion

150. One image has not left me since the journey I undertook to prepare this report. It is the one inspired by Serhiy Osachuk, the military governor of the Chernivtsi region: children playing with building blocks, trying to assemble, combine and join together pieces of all sizes, shapes and colours to build the most beautiful artefact in the world. For him, this is Ukraine: a community that works together to build a country where it is good to live, in the joy and pleasure of the effort. If Russia, with its aggression, has suspended this process, it can never stop it, and the sooner it understands this, the better. The above proposals are intended to help Ukraine never to abandon its ambition and to achieve it as soon as possible.