Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 15718
20 February 2023

European solidarity in the context of asylum and international protection

Report[1]
Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons
Rapporteur: Lord Alexander DUNDEE, United Kingdom, European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance

Summary

Europe faces the highest numbers of refugees and displaced persons since Second World War, mainly due to the military attack by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. European solidarity is therefore necessary among member States and in particular with Ukraine in the context of asylum and international protection of persons fleeing war, conflict, persecution and situations of human rights violations.

The Development Bank, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the INGO Conference, the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest, and the North-South Centre in Lisbon could have a key role to play, as bodies of the Council of Europe, for providing help to relevant persons in member States. The Committee of Ministers could highlight the Organisation's role regarding humanitarian aid and its contribution to European solidarity action. Closer co-operation should also be attained with the European Union and the United Nations to achieve more effective humanitarian action for displaced persons, refugees and people under international protection in Europe.

1. Reference to committee: Bureau decision, Reference 4595 of 24 June 2021.

Contents **Page**

A. Draft resolution 3
B. Draft recommendation 5
C. Explanatory memorandum by Lord Alexander Dundee, rapporteur 6
1. Introduction 6
2. Elements of European solidarity 7
3. Council of Europe action 9
4. European Union action 11
5. United Nations action 11
6. Humanitarian non-governmental organisations 12
7. Conclusions 12

A. Draft resolution[2]

1. Aware that Europe faces the highest numbers of refugees and displaced persons since Second World War, mainly due to the military attack by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the Parliamentary Assembly welcomes the high level of European solidarity shown among member States and with Ukraine in the context of asylum and international protection of persons fleeing war, conflict, persecution and situations of human rights violations.

2. In view of its Resolution 2448 (2022) "Humanitarian consequences arising from the Russian aggression against Ukraine", the Assembly calls on member States, the European Union and the United Nations to maintain, and if possible increase, the level of their humanitarian solidarity with displaced Ukrainians as the Russian military persists in targeting and attacking the civilian infrastructure within Ukraine.

3. Recalling its Resolution 2404 (2021) "Instrumentalised migration pressure on the borders of Latvia, Lithuania and Poland with Belarus", the Assembly is appalled by the abuse of migrants and refugees for political purposes and invites all member States to review their visa and immigration arrangements as well as their readmission agreements and practices, in order to prevent vulnerable persons from falling victim to migrant smuggling and organised crime.

4. Taking into account its Resolution 2409 (2021) "Voluntary relocation of migrants in need of humanitarian protection and voluntary resettlement of refugees", the Assembly approves the response of a few member States which have already relocated or resettled vulnerable refugees from overwhelmed locations in Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine as well as from Libya and other countries. Equally to be welcomed is the decision by European Union member States to apply the Temporary Protection Directive and offer public transport free of charge to displaced Ukrainians. All member States of the Council of Europe should strengthen solidarity through more voluntary relocations and resettlements.

5. Considering its Resolution 2380 (2021) "Humanitarian action for refugees and migrants in countries in North Africa and the Middle East", the Assembly reminds member States that European solidarity should also be extended beyond the European continent, especially to those countries along the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea; these being transit countries for irregular migrants seeking to reach Europe. Conflicts, climate change and poverty are ever forcing from many different places the numbers of persons who wish to reach a few member States.

6. Following its Resolution 2356 (2020) "Rights and obligations of NGOs assisting refugees and migrants in Europe", the Assembly applauds the immense humanitarian contributions made by so many NGOs. Without NGO actions and co-operation, member States on their own would not be able to cope sufficiently with the humanitarian demands of millions of refugees and persons at present under international protection in Europe. Since NGOs and charities are the mainstay of all humanitarian efforts on the ground, this work thus deserves the full support of member States, the European Union and the Council of Europe, in particular through its International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) Conference.

7. Welcoming the Cities4Cities initiative of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe for twinning with Ukrainian cities, the Assembly recognises the central role played by local authorities when people first arrive in search of asylum or international protection. Member States and the European Union should, therefore, support local authorities financially, technically and in administrative ways in order to improve their ability to take on emergency situations caused by the arrival of large numbers of persons.

8. Appreciating the very strong financial solidarity shown by the European Union with Türkiye for hosting some 3.7 million displaced Syrians since 2015 under the EU-Turkey Statement, as well as with displaced Ukrainians both inside Ukraine and abroad, the Assembly calls on member States to match these achievements by providing bilateral financial assistance and support through the United Nations.

9. Approving the appeal for more European solidarity made by members of the Assembly's Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons together with members of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Migration of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe on the occasion of the joint web conference hosted by the United Kingdom Parliament on the eve of World Refugee Day 2021, the Assembly invites national parliaments and the European Parliament to regularly hold thematic debates to identify needs and strategies for greater European solidarity action in the context of asylum and international protection.

---

2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 26 January 2023.

10. As a result of the action decided upon by member States after the Russian military attack against Ukraine and also in view of the increasing numbers of arrivals of refugees from other countries, the Assembly invites:

10.1. the Council of Europe Development Bank to continue its effective support for displaced Ukrainians as well as other refugees and persons under international protection in member States;

10.2. the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to help local authorities, which host large numbers of internally displaced persons, refugees and persons under international protection, to pursue local needs assessments and communicate them to national parliaments and governments;

10.3. the INGO Conference of the Council of Europe to foster co-operation among humanitarian NGOs running local action on the ground for meeting the humanitarian needs of refugees and persons under international protection;

10.4. the European Youth Centres of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg and Budapest to do more for displaced young Ukrainians and other young refugees;

10.5. the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe in Lisbon to do more for vulnerable refugees and migrants from the global South who live in Europe.

B. Draft recommendation[3]

1. Referring to its Resolution …. (2023) "European solidarity in the context of asylum and international protection", the Parliamentary Assembly emphasises the importance of encouraging Council of Europe member States to further build up their humanitarian actions to help refugees, persons under international protection and internally displaced persons.

2. Since 24 February 2022, when the Russian Federation attacked Ukraine, several million persons have either been displaced inside Ukraine or else sought international protection in other member States. Since 2015, following the armed conflict in Syria, more than 3 million Syrians have found temporary protection in Türkiye. Since the trilateral ceasefire agreement of 9 November 2020, several hundred thousand displaced persons in Azerbaijan have been able to return to their mostly destroyed homes. Thousands of Cypriots, Georgians, Moldovans and people from the former Yugoslavia are still displaced. Hundreds of thousands of refugees from outside Europe have sought protection in several member States.

3. The Assembly recalls the declaration by the Heads of State and Government of member States adopted at the Warsaw Summit in 2005. In view of unresolved conflicts, this declaration reflects the threat to the democratic stability of the member States of the Council of Europe and the populations concerned, while proposing solutions. Therefore, member States can now proceed within the context and precedent of the 2005 Warsaw Summit's prescriptions calling for concrete action by the Council of Europe to provide humanitarian assistance to member States where high numbers of persons have found asylum or international protection or are displaced.

4. Convinced that the next Summit of Heads of State and Government of member States in Reykjavik in 2023 is an opportunity to strengthen European solidarity within and by the Council of Europe, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

4.1. ensures that Council of Europe co-operation activities include support to humanitarian action for vulnerable refugees and displaced persons in member States in co-operation and co-ordination with other international actors mandated in this field;

4.2. calls on those member States that have not yet done so to accede to the Council of Europe Development Bank so that the geographical reach of the Bank is properly extended, as necessary;

4.3. calls on those member States that are not yet members of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe to accede to the Centre, in order to improve the efficacy of its work for vulnerable refugees from the global South living in member States;

4.4. enters into closer co-operation agreements with the European Union and the United Nations regarding practical humanitarian action for displaced persons, refugees and persons under international protection in Europe.

3. Draft recommendation adopted unanimously by the committee on 26 January 2023.

C. Explanatory memorandum by Lord Alexander Dundee, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. When many migrants and potential asylum seekers entered Türkiye trying to reach other European countries, more than 13 000 of them assembled at the Turkish-Greek land border in February 2020; and the Government of Türkiye announced that it would no longer prevent migrants from leaving Türkiye to Greece.[4] Thousands allegedly managed to cross the border to Greece,[5] while Greece had also the highest number of migrant arrivals across the Mediterranean Sea in the European Union at that time, with more than 6 000 people in the first two months of 2020. The home affairs ministers of the European Union reacted accordingly.[6] In September 2020, the overpopulated and notorious camp Moria on Lesbos was set on fire and thereby totally destroyed, leaving thousands of asylum seekers without accommodation.[7] All this happened when the Covid-19 pandemic struck Europe and elsewhere; thus causing borders gradually to become closed for health reasons.[8]

2. Against the backdrop of this emergency situation in Greece, on 24 June 2021, the Parliamentary Assembly held a current affairs debate on "The need for an effective solidarity mechanism between European countries to relieve migratory pressure on front line countries". Following this debate, the Assembly entasked the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons to write a report on European solidarity in the context of asylum and migration; for which report I was subsequently appointed rapporteur. Previously, I had been member of the *ad hoc* sub-committee established for a fact-finding visit to Lesbos, Greece from 10 to 12 May 2021.

3. Within only a few months after the war launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, more than 4.8 million Ukrainians had already fled to other European countries.[9] Representing the largest displacement of persons in Europe since World War II, this also caused an immediate and unprecedented solidarity among member States, the European Union, the United Nations, humanitarian organisations and thousands of individuals, as a result coming together within various initiatives and charities. More than 7 million internally displaced persons from eastern Ukraine are currently living in temporary accommodation in western Ukraine.

4. The knock-on effects of the war on food and energy prices as well as on the global economy in general are likely to induce severe poverty in many countries, thus forcing a growing number of people to migrate. For instance, more than 1 000 mainly Tunisian asylum seekers recently came by boat to Lampedusa, Italy.[10] Per capita in Europe, Cyprus holds the highest number of asylum seekers, who have travelled there from the north across the Green Line.[11] And in just one day alone on 22 August 2022, some 1 300 asylum seekers arrived from France across the English Channel into the United Kingdom.[12] This report is, therefore, all the more timely: taking into account the present increased and ever rising level of migration following Russia's attack upon Ukraine.

5. "Migration" where conjoined with "asylum" is usually understood to be work migration or general migration. In that context, European solidarity is hardly relevant, because regular migrants will have a visa or work permit for a given country in any case. Equally, whether Ukrainians in other member States, or Syrians in Türkiye, displaced persons are often afforded a temporary protection status. European solidarity becomes necessary, however, when individual member States are overwhelmed by the number of persons seeking asylum or international protection. Therefore, I have proposed adapting the title of this report to "European solidarity in the context of asylum and international protection".

---

4. www.france24.com/en/20200229-greece-stops-4-000-migrants-at-turkey-border.
5. www.dw.com/en/greece-blocks-10000-migrants-at-turkish-border/a-52595440.
6. www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/03/04/statement-on-the-situation-at-the-eus-external-borders/.
7. www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54082201.
8. www.iom.int/news/first-comprehensive-global-analysis-covid-19-travel-restrictions-border-closures-weighs-future-impacts-mobility.
9. www.unhcr.org/news/press/2022/6/62a0c6d34/unhcr-updates-ukraine-refugee-data-reflecting-recent-movements.html.
10. www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/07/24/over-1-000-migrants-arrive-in-italy-within-hours_5991282_4.html.
11. www.infomigrants.net/en/post/42186/cyprus-reports-a-rise-in-migrant-arrivals.
12. www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-kent-62644946.

2. Elements of European solidarity

6. European solidarity in the context of asylum and international protection happens at various levels: for instance, by the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Union, member States bilaterally, local and regional authorities, local communities, humanitarian organisations, private corporations and individual persons. It is this mix of humanitarian actors which can generate within a short time frame the huge amount of humanitarian aid needed. Especially in emergency situations, it is not enough to call for solidarity from others, but it is necessary for everyone at all levels to start practical and concrete humanitarian action, reflecting the wise words of John F. Kennedy: "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country".[13]

7. In the first half of 2022, the European Union Agency for Asylum counted more than 4.6 million persons seeking asylum or international protection in the EU+ countries, including some 4.2 million displaced Ukrainians.[14] In addition, more than 7 million Ukrainians are internally displaced persons, requiring humanitarian help in their new Ukrainians host cities and localities.[15]

8. The movement of displaced Ukrainians to neighbouring countries and further away to third countries has been very high, but nearly equal numbers have returned back to Ukraine. Such figures mirror the difficult humanitarian situation of hundreds of thousands of persons and the challenges faced by local and national authorities in Ukraine and abroad in order to properly look after displaced persons.[16]

9. However, there are major differences among Council of Europe member States regarding the numbers of persons seeking asylum or international protection. Large differences also exist within the European Union.[17] Looking at statistical data, one can see also a significant increase in the number of irregular crossings detected at EU's external borders in Europe (knowing that the same person may cross a border many times, as for instance noted in all Frontex's reports).[18] Most migrants crossing a border unauthorised will apply for asylum or international protection when they are detected, thus requiring accommodation, humanitarian goods and services as well as legal assistance. These situations call for greater European solidarity among member States.

10. Following my request to the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) in the context of this report, I am very grateful for the many responses received from national parliaments to the following questions:

– In your country at this moment, how many persons are recognised as refugees or have received subsidiary, temporary or international protection status, and how many protection applications are pending before your authorities? How many internally displaced persons are in your country?

– Can you indicate the total costs covered by your country's public budget in 2021 and/or 2022 for the above persons in your country, including for instance cash assistance, food and clothing, housing and housing allocations, unemployment payments, family allocations, schooling costs, healthcare costs, legal aid, and court fees?

– How much financial and technical assistance has your country received from the United Nations, the European Union, other States, or humanitarian organisations in this context?

– How much financial and technical assistance has your country provided to the United Nations, the European Union, other States, or humanitarian organisations for the benefit of the above persons in other countries in 2022?

– How many persons have been relocated or resettled to or from your country in 2022?

11. The responses confirm the huge costs to national authorities when hosting persons seeking asylum or international protection as well as the national differences in providing relevant assistance to other countries and international organisations. All responses are available from the Committee Secretariat.

---

13. www.jfklibrary.org/learn/education/teachers/curricular-resources/elementary-school-curricular-resources/ask-not-what-your-country-can-do-for-you#.
14. https://euaa.europa.eu/news-events/over-46-million-people-seek-safety-europe-mid-2022.
15. Ukraine – Overview of Population Displacement and Incidents with Civilian Impact | Digital Situation Reports (unocha.org).
16. https://frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/5-3-million-ukrainians-have-entered-eu-since-the-beginning-of-invasion-HbXkUz.
17. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POP.REFG?locations=EU.
18. «Illegal border crossings into EU up 61% in first two months of 2022» (frontex.europa.eu), https://migration.iom.int/europe/arrivals and https://reporting.unhcr.org/index.php/document/3868.

12. Member States with high numbers of persons seeking asylum or international protection face administrative and financial burdens as persons must receive straight away upon their arrival proper humanitarian aid. This might call for the solidarity of other member States in the form of technical assistance, such as the provision of medical substances and personnel; or the delivery of humanitarian goods and services. Financial support comes only now and again bilaterally; more often instead through the European Union or the United Nations. Solidarity can also be the relocation or resettlement of persons to another country, in order to reduce the number of people in the country of first arrival. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the European Union Agency for Asylum often help national authorities in the processing of applications for asylum or international protection.

13. Such European solidarity is required for several reasons. First and foremost, the humanitarian needs of those arriving in a member State can be met better when other States assist those countries of first arrival. Without European solidarity, front-line countries are likely to be overwhelmed. And this can lead to secondary migration throughout Europe, exposing asylum seekers to the multiple dangers of illegal crossing of borders, such as exploitation and abuse by migrant smugglers and life-threatening means of travel in lorries or boats.

14. A good example of the positive impact of European solidarity can be found in Greece. The European Court of Human Rights had decided on 21 January 2011 in its Grand Chamber judgment of the case of *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece* (Application No. 30696/09),[19] that the material conditions for asylum seekers in Greece had not been as required under the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5), following a letter in 2009 by the UNHCR indicating deficiencies in the asylum procedure and the reception conditions of asylum-seekers in Greece. Greece had gone through a major economic and financial crisis at that time, with migrants entering into Greece from Türkiye in large numbers. Little had been done, in order to improve the humanitarian and security situation inside the Greek camps and to stop secondary migration on the so-called Balkans route.[20] Our committee meeting in the Hellenic Parliament in Athens on 19 September 2022 was an opportunity to learn more about how European solidarity and assistance have already applied to Greece; and how such European solidarity can, therefore, equally apply to other countries in a similar situation.

15. Political and humanitarian circumstances have significantly changed since, with the European Union funding newly constructed Reception and Identification Centres on several Greek islands[21] including Lesbos.[22] In addition, some member States have accepted voluntary relocations of thousands of vulnerable refugees from Greek camps,[23] as recommended in Assembly Resolution 2409 (2021) "Voluntary relocation of migrants in need of humanitarian protection and voluntary resettlement of refugees."

16. The military aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine has not only caused the largest displacement of persons since World War II, but also the most numerous acts of solidarity with a member State. Member States have accepted millions of displaced Ukrainians, and many States and private donors have pledged hundreds of millions of Euros or US-Dollars for humanitarian assistance in Ukraine and other countries. Nevertheless, humanitarian needs remain huge and will increase further as long as the Russian military attacks continue in Ukraine and in particular against its civilian infrastructure including electric power supplies, waterworks, hospitals and educational institutions.[24] UNICEF indicated that more than 50% of all Ukrainian children were displaced within one month after the invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops on 24 February 2022.[25]

17. The emergency needs for Ukraine have been identified by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) through Ms Wen Li, Director for External Relations in her letter to me on 29 November 2022.[26] She listed the following items:

> *1. Winterised tents with heating system;*
>
> *2. Generators, as much as possible up to 1 MW, according to the following main ranges: 5-7 KW, 10-15 KW, 20-25 KW, 30-40 KW, 50-70 KW, 100-120 KW, 200-250 KW;*

---

19. https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/app/conversion/pdf/?library=ECHR&id=001-103050&filename=001-103050.pdf&TID=cwvzdogrzt.
20. Assembly Resolution 2280 (2019) "The situation of migrants and refugees on the Greek islands: more needs to be done".
21. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/opening-new-reception-centres-greek-islands-leros-and-kos-2022-01-25_en
22. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/how-lesvos-refugee-centre-evolved-year-2022-09-09_en.
23. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/european-solidarity-action-over-5-000-relocations-greece-2022-10-12_en.
24. https://twitter.com/OCHA_Ukraine/status/1612542651160469512.
25. www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-half-ukraines-children-displaced-after-one-month-war.
26. IOM letter of 29 November 2022, at https://rm.coe.int/letter-to-council-of-europe-lord-dundee-on-ukraine-/1680a9cb16.

3. Heaters of any kind (radiators, mushroom heaters, electric heaters, etc.);

4. Boilers;

5. Solid fuel (hardwood, briquettes, pellets, coal);

6. Accommodation containers with heating system;

7. Winter clothes, as many as possible;

8. Beds (portable beds), as many as possible;

9. Construction materials and tools for winterisation (screws, panels, etc.).

18. European solidarity in the context of asylum and international protection should not be limited to the member States or Europe. Displaced Ukrainians and refugees from Russia and Türkiye currently make up the highest numbers of asylum seekers arriving from Europe, but most other asylum seekers derive from countries of origin or transit countries outside Europe. Therefore, member States and the European Union should also show proper solidarity with non-European countries, in particular along the southern Mediterranean Sea, the Middle East and northern Africa, in accordance with Assembly Resolution 2380 and Recommendation 2203 (2021) "Humanitarian action for refugees and migrants in countries in North Africa and the Middle East".

19. In this context, the 6th Ministerial Conference of the Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development which took place on 13 and 14 December 2022 in Cadiz (Spain), adopted Political Declaration and Action Plan establishing a co-operation programme for the period of 2023-2027, which aims to co-ordinate national efforts in the area of migration management through the Rabat Process and its partner countries.[27]

20. The resettlement of refugees has considerably increased in 2021 and reached the highest numbers ever for Europe: the main countries of origin were Syria (11 500) and Afghanistan (7 600), accounting for 70% of all resettlements. Germany, Italy, Norway and Sweden made most resettlements, accounting for 76% of all resettled refugees in EU+ countries.[28] This increase is in line with the Assembly's call for more resettlements under its Resolution 2409 (2021) "Voluntary relocation of migrants in need of humanitarian protection and voluntary resettlement of refugees".

3. Council of Europe action

21. The Council of Europe is neither a humanitarian organisation, nor has it set standards on solidarity in the context of asylum and international protection. Nevertheless, both the European Convention on Human Rights[29] and the revised European Social Charter (ETS No. 163)[30] stipulate many fundamental rights which apply to asylum seekers and migrants. Through European solidarity, as a result, individual member States will become all the more able to fulfil their obligations under these Council of Europe treaties.

22. The Council of Europe Development Bank was created in 1956, by when tens of millions of displaced persons were living in current member States of the Council of Europe in the aftermath of World War II. Its purpose was to provide those member States with favourable loans for humanitarian projects. Refugees and displaced persons are a prime focus group of the Bank since its foundation.

23. The Bank has funded housing and other necessities for persons displaced by the war in former Yugoslavia.[31] As Türkiye hosts some 3.7 million displaced Syrians, the Bank oversees projects funded by the EU Facility for Refugees in Türkiye for €140 million.[32] Recently, it has set up large bonds for displaced Ukrainians in its member States.[33] The Irish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers has also begun a specific Ukraine Donor Fund, which can as well help Ukrainians in Ukraine, while Ukraine itself is in the process of joining yet still not a full member of the Bank.[34]

---

27. www.rabat-process.org/en/about/rabat-process/cadiz-action-plan/.
28. https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2022-12/AR2022_data_resettlement_factsheet15_EN.pdf.
29. www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Guide_Immigration_ENG.pdf.
30. www.coe.int/en/web/european-social-charter/-/states-parties-to-the-european-social-charter-are-invited-to-report-on-the-rights-of-children-families-and-migrants-by-31-december-2022.
31. https://coebank.org/en/partnering-with-donors/migrants-and-refugees/providing-housing-to-displaced-persons-in-the-balkans/.
32. https://coebank.org/en/partnering-with-donors/migrants-and-refugees/improving-healthcare-for-syrian-refugees-in-turkiye/.

24. Mr Tomáš Boček, Vice-Governor of the Council of Europe Development Bank and former Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for migration and refugees, presented on 13 October 2022 to our committee the scope for further action by the Bank, including its current programme for Ukraine. Governor Carlo Monticelli invited our committee to an exchange of views at the Council of Europe Development Bank in Paris on 7 December 2022.

25. The great efforts by the Bank for refugees and displaced persons over so many decades cannot be welcomed enough. Whereas the budget of the Council of Europe does not contain funds for humanitarian assistance or subsidies, the Bank's statutory purpose does enable it to do this. For instance, in addition to bonds set up for displaced Ukrainians in its member States it has approved € 1.3 billion in loans to meet long-term needs of refugees and host countries.[35] On 16 December 2022, the Bank disbursed a grant amounting to € 900 000 to the Republic of Moldova for the provision of healthcare services to refugees from Ukraine via the Moldovan national health system.[36]

26. More member States of the Council of Europe should join the Bank, and further ways for co-funding should be explored by non-member States of the Bank which are members of the Council of Europe; the latter applying as well to observer States and the European Union. Given the immense challenges for member States caused by extremely high arrival levels of refugees and displaced persons over the last ten years, the Bank must be recognised and equipped as a key agent for assisting member States and achieving greater solidarity in Europe, thus avoiding humanitarian hardships for refugees and displaced persons leading to secondary migration and the delocalisation of refugees.

27. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is using its Cities4Cities platform to promote and support city twinning with Ukrainian cities, which are struggling under the Russian military attacks and millions of displaced persons.[37] I am grateful for the excellent co-operation with Mr Bernd Vöhringer, President of the Chamber of Local Authorities of the Congress and Mayor of Sindelfingen in Germany, who explained to our committee on 7 December 2022 the political work and practical action of the Congress regarding the subject of this report, in particular European solidarity with displaced Ukrainians.

28. Local authorities are typically the first responders when refugees and displaced persons arrive by train, bus, lorry, boat or plane. Mayors and the services of local authorities are often compelled to provide emergency assistance to new arrivals, including accommodation, food and healthcare, but also school education and psychological help. In their efforts for those arriving, the Mayors of Lampedusa in Italy and Przemyśl in Poland have stood out as have so many others in a variety of different cities in Europe. The governments and national parliaments of member States must ensure that local authorities are not left alone and without necessary technical and financial support.

29. Various other Council of Europe departments have recently found ways to help displaced Ukrainians, for instance through online learning programmes[38] and other particular tools. Further humanitarian ground action by the Council of Europe should also be deployed as soon as it comes to light.

30. The Assembly focused upon the humanitarian consequences and internal and external displacement in connection with the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine in its Resolution 2448 (2022). The former situation on the Greek islands had been addressed in Resolution 2280 (2019); and earlier on, I was appointed by this committee to prepare the reports leading to Resolution 2409 (2021) "Voluntary relocation of migrants in need of humanitarian protection and voluntary resettlement of refugees" as well as Resolution 2380 (2021) "Humanitarian action for refugees and migrants in countries in North Africa and the Middle East".

31. As parliamentarians, we are able to raise issues in our own national parliament, and to help promote or support certain actions. In 2020 and 2021, working with our committee as well as with the *Ad hoc* Committee on Migration of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I initiated European web-conferences by the United Kingdom Parliament during the Covid-19 pandemic. Focusing upon several aspects of and prescriptions for greater European solidarity, these led to a Call for Action at the time of the World Refugee Day 2021 and the 70th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention.[39]

---

33. https://coebank.org/en/news-and-publications/news/ceb-usd-1-bn-social-inclusion-bond-benchmark-benefit-ukraine-refugees/.
34. www.coe.int/en/web/presidency/-/dublin-hosts-annual-joint-meeting-of-council-of-europe-development-bank-ceb-.
35. https://coebank.org/en/project-financing/ukraine/.
36. https://coebank.org/en/news-and-publications/news/ceb-disbursed-grant-financing-healthcare-services-provided-republic-moldova-ukraine-refugees/.
37. www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/cities4cities-launch-of-an-online-matching-platform-for-cities-to-support-ukrainian-local-and-regional-authorities.
38. https://help.elearning.ext.coe.int/.

4. European Union action

32. The European Union is one of the largest humanitarian donors globally. With Türkiye hosting more than 3 million Syrians under temporary protection, the EU has allocated some € 6 billion for humanitarian aid to Türkiye since 2016.[40]

33. EU decisions and legislation are able to advance solidarity in particular, such as the decisions by the Council of the European Union to accommodate Syrian asylum seekers in member States, or the application of the Temporary Protection Directive to Ukrainians displaced by the war in their country.[41] Following the political agreement on 7 September 2022 between the European Parliament and the Council of the EU, the EU has a Joint Roadmap on the Common European Asylum System and the Pact on Migration and Asylum.[42]

34. Since the large arrival of refugees in Europe in 2015, the EU has voluntarily resettled thousands of refugees from Italy and Greece to other EU countries.[43] Voluntary relocations have also taken place to the non-EU States Iceland,[44] Norway[45] and Switzerland.[46] During the French EU Presidency in 2022, EU member States have again agreed to relocate asylum seekers on a voluntary basis from States at external EU borders.[47]

35. For some years, a mandatory relocation among EU member States has been discussed.[48] However, this discussion has not led to any compulsory results, as EU member States themselves have largely the final decision-making power on immigration.[49] It seems difficult to imagine that asylum seekers be transferred to a third country against their will or choice, and that this third country could be forced to accept and host an asylum seeker. In addition, secondary migration within the EU would probably be the result of such mandatory relocations, where both asylum seekers and host countries are opposed to the relocations. Our Assembly has therefore favoured voluntary relocations and voluntary resettlements in its Resolution 2409 (2021).

5. United Nations action

36. The United Nations is typically the organisation which “stays and delivers”, not least during emergencies, catastrophes or even armed conflicts, as in Ukraine now. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is the principal body for preparing humanitarian needs assessments and distributing humanitarian aid through UN bodies such as the IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF, and the World Food Programme. I am grateful to Ms Denise Brown, the UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Ukraine, for her briefing by telephone conference in the context of my report. It goes without saying that European solidarity action should, therefore, be built up in close co-operation with the UN.

37. UNHCR assists resettlement programmes for asylum seekers, for example from Libya to Italy, Rwanda and other countries.[50] The IOM helps such programmes as well; yet also runs Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programmes for persons, who do not wish to pursue further their asylum application but instead voluntarily return to their home country.[51]

---

39. www.oscepa.org/en/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2021/recommendations-issued-to-protect-asylum-seekers-and-ensure-universal-compliance-with-1951-refugee-convention.
40. www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/faq-eu-turkey-statement-1878730.
41. www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-migration-policy/migration-timeline/.
42. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_5985.
43. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/migration-management/relocation-eu-solidarity-practice_en.
44. https://reliefweb.int/report/greece/voluntary-scheme-relocation-greece-other-european-countries-3-mar-2022.
45. www.unhcr.org/neu/52471-un-agencies-welcome-relocation-of-vulnerable-asylum-seekers-to-norway.html.
46. www.swissinfo.ch/eng/asylum-policy_first-30-refugees-from-eu-programme-to-arrive/42063932.
47. https://presidence-francaise.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/asylum-and-migration-the-council-adopts-the-first-stage-of-the-phased-pact/.
48. www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-idUSKBN2BC0JY.
49. www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/152/immigration-policy.
50. www.unhcr.org/resettlement.html.
51. https://eea.iom.int/assisted-voluntary-return-and-reintegration-avrr.

6. Humanitarian non-governmental organisations

38. In view of the humanitarian impact of the Russian war against Ukraine, many humanitarian NGOs have become champions of European solidarity in practical terms. Without such support, governments, the EU and the UN would not have managed to deliver humanitarian aid and solidarity on the ground as effectively as they have. Individuals, charities and foster homes, for instance, have accommodated relocated Ukrainians in large numbers.

39. The UN Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster is running projects and co-ordinating action in Ukraine with many humanitarian organisations and charities and their hundreds of local partners active in Ukraine.[52] Having started at the Ukrainian border in eastern Poland, my family charity Siobhan's Trust is now helping up to 4 000 displaced persons per day with warm food in Ukraine.[53]

40. Since witnessing directly on the ground the most pressing needs, not surprisingly humanitarian NGOs are typically the first to react. They are also the first to notice administrative defects and problems within the scope of wider European solidarity. Therefore, it is necessary for politicians to consult certain relevant NGOs whenever discussing, deciding and implementing policies for European solidarity in the context of asylum and international protection.

41. The INGO Conference of the Council of Europe supports international NGOs, which work for the access of migrant populations, refugees and asylum seekers to their fundamental rights.[54] While such legal and political advocacy work is very important, the INGO Conference might usefully also consider supporting its member NGOs in providing practical humanitarian assistance to those in need.

7. Conclusions

42. While the Statute (ETS No. 1) of the Council of Europe, signed in London on 5 May 1949, does not limit its action to standard-setting, monitoring and co-operation, the Warsaw Summit in 2005 set that focus for the Council of Europe. The military attack of the Russian Federation against Ukraine is a watershed for Europe and has displaced millions of Ukrainians. Against this background, the Council of Europe has a role to play in making sure that its co-operation activities support humanitarian assistance and European solidarity regarding displaced persons, refugees and persons under international protection, in association and co-ordination with other international actors.

43. The Council of Europe Development Bank has earmarked huge sums for Ukrainians displaced to other member States as well as for Ukraine while it is acceding to the Bank. This action should be supported by more member States acceding to the Bank and supporting its action financially. Other bodies of the Council of Europe also have a great potential to become engaged in such European solidarity, in particular the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the INGO Conference, the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest, and the North-South Centre in Lisbon.

44. Stronger co-operation by the Council of Europe with the European Union and the United Nations is essential in this context. The Assembly should be key in mobilising the political support necessary, in order to achieve more European solidarity regarding this major challenge thereby ensuring greater unity among its member States in accordance with the Statute of the Council of Europe. The coming Summit of Heads of State and Government of member States in Reykjavik in May 2023 provides an opportunity for the Assembly to take a lead in this respect.

52. https://fscluster.org/ukraine/overview.
53. https://siobhanstrust.uk/.
54. www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/newsroom/-/asset_publisher/BR9aikJBXnwX/content/mission-visit-to-greece-of-the-committee-on-the-rights-of-migrant-peop-2.