



## Resolution 2562 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

# An urgent call to Europe and its partners: envisioning immediate and long-term policy solutions in support of the displaced people of Ukraine

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly is appalled by the continuing full-scale war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and deeply saddened by its devastating consequences. The mass killings, destruction, abductions and constant terror to which the people of Ukraine are subjected must stop immediately. History has demonstrated many times that no State or empire can last when it imposes its power through the means of military coercion. Council of Europe member States should stay united in expressing their resolute condemnation of the Russian dictatorial regime's aggressive stand against its neighbours and Europe as a whole.
2. Since the start of the high-intensity military aggression by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022, millions of Ukrainians have left their homes, seeking refuge. By the end of February 2024, two years later, more than 5.9 million Ukrainian citizens have moved to Europe and more than 500 000 have moved outside Europe, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In addition, in Ukraine, there are about 5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).
3. The Assembly underscores that keeping a human-centred approach in policy making in times of crisis is crucial. Bearing in mind the importance of finding the right balance between protecting civilians affected by the war and enhancing the capacity of the State to defend itself when its existence is under threat, appropriate consideration should be given to the effect of measures taken on Ukraine's population, overall. The lives and dignity of millions of people depend on that.
4. The Assembly underscores the need to provide adequate protection to help the people of Ukraine to come through the pain and suffering, the challenges that forced them to leave their homes, local communities and country. States should do their utmost to assist Ukraine to support its people, wherever they are: inside Ukraine, fighting to protect the integrity of their country, or abroad, in Europe or elsewhere. In particular, more needs to be done to free those who are held in captivity or who have been deported to the occupying State.
5. The Assembly praises the Council of Europe member States that took immediate action to protect the people who fled the deadly attacks by the Russian Federation. It welcomes the solidarity demonstrated by the European Union member States, which enabled the presence on their territory of about 4.5 million people at the end of February 2024, based on European Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof (hereinafter "the Temporary Protection Directive"). However, given that the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine continues, millions of Ukrainians are still unable to return home. Therefore, the Assembly calls upon European Union member States to enable the prolongation of the duration of the initially agreed temporary protection, or the opening of new avenues for allowing a regular and

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1. *Assembly debate* on 27 June 2024 (21st sitting) (see [Doc. 16002](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, rapporteur: Ms Lise Selnes). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 27 June 2024 (21st sitting).



legally certain presence of peoples of Ukraine on their territory with access to rights available for asylum seekers. The non-European Union Council of Europe member States are encouraged to implement similar measures.

6. The Assembly will follow closely the developments in Ukraine with a view to assisting specific groups of people, step by step. This Resolution sets the scene for future targeted actions specific to each group: internally displaced persons, those who fled the war of aggression and are now under temporary protection in Europe, and those who were forcibly displaced or deported to the Russian Federation and Belarus, including prisoners of war.

7. *Regarding the internally displaced persons in Ukraine*, the Assembly notes that not everyone could or was willing to leave the country seeking safety. Many stayed in Ukraine to defend their country and support their loved ones at the front, sometimes by paying the highest price.

8. The Assembly should act resolutely to contribute to the protection of IDPs in Ukraine. It calls for the rapid provision of sufficient humanitarian support to ensure that IDPs in Ukraine are safe and protected. The Assembly welcomes the European Union's contribution to humanitarian support to Ukraine. It notes that, on 20 March 2024, the European Commission paid the first €4.5 billion of support under the European Union's new Ukraine Facility. This payment will ensure that Ukraine can continue paying salaries and pensions and providing basic public services so that the country can focus its efforts on winning the war.

9. The Assembly deplores the challenges faced by the internally displaced children, who are further traumatised by the constant bombing by the Russian Federation. Specific protection measures must be put in place for them, as mentioned in [Resolution 2529 \(2024\)](#) and [Recommendation 2265 \(2024\)](#) "Situation of the children of Ukraine", and [Resolution 2448 \(2022\)](#) "Humanitarian consequences and internal and external displacement in connection with the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine".

10. The Assembly calls upon member States' parliaments to enhance their political support to meet the objectives of the humanitarian response plan for Ukraine, with a specific emphasis on the needs of internally displaced children and their families. It has been estimated that a total sum of about US\$5 billion is needed to support war-affected communities in Ukraine, and Ukrainian refugees and their host communities in the region throughout 2024.

11. The implementation of Ukraine's State policy on internal displacement for the period until 2025 should be given the necessary funding and operational support. Adequately protected shelters must be available and made known to IDPs, who are not always familiar with their new residence areas inside Ukraine. Priorities should include free legal aid for accessing identity documents and civil status documents to enable displaced persons to gain access to their rights, support and services. In addition, support to volunteers and humanitarian organisations, including civil society organisations and other local groups working in Ukraine, must be enhanced so that they can continue assisting IDPs.

12. The Assembly welcomes the declaration adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on 26 March 2024, in which it "calls on European cities and regions to continue mobilising and providing large-scale financial, security and humanitarian assistance to their Ukrainian counterparts, and invites European cities and regions to explore possibilities to establish direct, multi-faceted partnerships with Ukrainian cities and regions, ideally with a long-term vision, and to work to remove any bureaucratic obstacles to this assistance". Member States should continue providing support for IDPs in Ukraine through co-operation programmes set up by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and local democracy initiatives, such as the Intercultural Cities programme of the Council of Europe.

13. Long-term support programmes for IDPs living in Ukraine should include financial assistance to enable access to housing, including social housing, as well as loans for rebuilding private housing and other support for durable housing solutions, including sustainable reintegration into the rental market. IDPs and returnees should be supported in having their housing, land and property rights restored. Moreover, those IDPs wishing to start businesses in their new location need financial support, including microfinancing or low interest-rate credit lines. Long-term support should also encompass mental health and psychosocial support services given the trauma the Ukrainian people have suffered. Long-term support programmes should give specific attention to the most vulnerable among the displaced and war-affected people, notably older persons or persons with disabilities. The Assembly welcomes Ukraine's accession, in July 2023, to the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), which enables the CEB to provide grant funds for emergency assistance and the long-term integration of Ukrainian refugees in host communities, as well as specific actions for IDPs in Ukraine.

14. The Assembly highlights the importance of intensified efforts to help Ukraine defend itself and maintain and rebuild its society, with the aim of increasing its strength and resilience for present and future challenges. Investing in Ukraine's resilience now amounts to investing in making Europe as a whole stronger, with a better protected Eastern border, following the decisions of the European Union to grant Ukraine candidate status for accession. The measures stipulated in Assembly [Resolution 2539 \(2024\)](#) and [Recommendation 2271 \(2024\)](#) "Support for the reconstruction of Ukraine" provide an excellent blueprint for action.

15. *As regards the externally displaced persons under temporary protection in Europe*, the Assembly welcomes the European Union's decision to activate the Temporary Protection Directive for Ukraine. It supports the proposals to either prolong the validity of the directive, which is due to expire in March 2025, or to identify a longer-term residency solution for Ukraine's citizens currently living on territory of the European Union, while ensuring and safeguarding the capacity of Ukraine to continue to defend itself and to rebuild its society, counting on the participation of its citizens including those now out of the country.

16. The Assembly reaffirms the rights of all individuals, including the temporary protection beneficiaries, to apply for asylum at any point as protected under international and European Union laws, and affirmed by the jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the European Union.

17. To this end, European Union member States may consider granting Ukrainians under temporary protection the right to permanent residency in the host country after a three-year period of residence, regardless of age, gender, disability, religion or other circumstances. The Assembly welcomes the decisions in this direction taken under the national legal systems by some non-European Union Council of Europe member States. As regards Ukrainians who have changed their country of asylum, States could similarly grant permanent residency in the new host country, after reaching a three-year period of residence, provided that such term is considered sufficient for integration into a new place of residence by the host country.

18. The future of the Ukrainian population which has sought safety in other European countries should be considered from the long-term perspective of future membership of the country in the European Union. Granting long-term residence to these future European Union citizens would allow them to integrate faster and be better able to contribute to strengthening the European Union as a whole, especially in the face of the geopolitical challenges of our continent today following the Russian aggression.

19. As regards access to the labour market, the Assembly reiterates its call for policy planning aimed at creating job opportunities for newly arrived persons, in accordance with Assembly [Resolution 2502 \(2023\)](#) "Integration of migrants and refugees: benefits for all parties involved". Council of Europe member States are encouraged to step up efforts to ensure suitable opportunities and to recognise qualifications obtained in Ukraine, providing where necessary continued education to enhance qualifications in accordance with the legislation of the host country.

20. The Assembly welcomes the measures to facilitate access to employment and social security schemes open under the Temporary Protection Directive (Article 12), which stipulates that "[t]he general law in force in the Member States applicable to remuneration, access to social security systems relating to employed or self-employed activities and other conditions of employment shall apply".

21. The Assembly calls upon member States to ensure adequate protection for people with disabilities who had to leave Ukraine and are now under temporary protection in Europe. Mutual recognition of disability status, degree of disability, and medical and disability certificates is essential. States should also enable access to adequate social protection and rehabilitation programmes for those in need of support.

22. The Assembly highlights the importance of creating opportunities for the displaced people of Ukraine to preserve and promote their cultural heritage. Bearing in mind [Resolution 2558 \(2024\)](#) "Countering the erasure of cultural identity in war and peace", the Assembly recommends that member States hosting temporarily displaced persons from Ukraine:

22.1. facilitate their access to their own heritage, encouraging cultural exchange programmes, partnerships, joint artistic collaborations and the organisation of cultural festivals and exhibitions;

22.2. provide support and resources for artists, writers, musicians and other cultural professionals by funding initiatives, grants and residency programmes;

22.3. promote the Ukrainian language by supporting independent publishers and translations of Ukrainian literature and by setting up dedicated bookshelves in libraries.

23. *As regards, in particular, support for Ukraine's children living abroad*, States could do more to better regulate, in the host countries, the residency, movement and protection of the rights of the children of Ukraine. Special attention should be paid to children without parents and children who have moved with guardians or caregivers, to ensure their rights to access education, medical care and social support according to their age and life circumstances. In that regard, the Assembly calls upon member States to implement the decisions agreed upon in [Resolution 2529 \(2024\)](#) and [Recommendation 2265 \(2024\)](#) "Situation of the children of Ukraine".

24. States should give immediate priority to ensure the teaching of the Ukrainian language to Ukrainian children in educational institutions, given the role played by language in supporting national identity. States should enhance the capacity of their education systems to allow for the integration of Ukrainian pupils and students into the European education system, enabling the mutual recognition of qualifications and diplomas. Co-operation must be enhanced to ensure recognition of the results obtained in the Ukrainian education system by European countries, at an equivalent level. In case of discrepancies in educational programmes, States could provide additional courses to reach a comparable level, thereby enabling the recognition of education obtained in Ukraine.

25. States can foster technical co-operation between experts from the Council of Europe member States in order to finetune policies and practices for the protection of the rights of children of Ukraine residing on their territory, including by taking part in the work of the Council of Europe Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine. The consultation group was established as a follow-up to the Reykjavik Declaration "United around our values", adopted at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, held on 16 and 17 May 2023.

26. *Moreover, as regards support for Ukraine's elderly people living abroad*, the Assembly notes that many elderly people had to flee Ukraine and are now living abroad in a situation of extreme vulnerability. While recognising the additional demands this places on the social security systems of host countries, the Assembly considers that States can identify the means to support vulnerable elderly Ukrainians, as recommended by the Temporary Protection Directive (Article 13), which stipulates that "Member States shall make provision for persons enjoying temporary protection to receive necessary assistance in terms of social welfare and means of subsistence, if they do not have sufficient resources, as well as for medical care ... the assistance necessary for medical care shall include at least emergency care and essential treatment of illness".

27. Granting Ukrainian pensioners the status of pensioner in the host country with the provision of the necessary social welfare support, albeit temporarily, would allow for dignified living for those who suffer severe hardship, having lost all their livelihoods and having no time, energy or resources to recover and rebuild their lives from scratch.

28. Helping Ukraine's older generation would also facilitate the transmission of culture and identity to the younger generation. Without such efforts, the younger Ukrainians now living outside the country may lose their ties with their home, weakening the future of Ukraine after the war has ended. More should be done, therefore, to promote intergenerational solidarity to help Ukraine stand strong for the years to come.

29. *With regard to mirroring European Union actions in the non-European Union Council of Europe member States*, the Assembly notes the efforts to welcome the externally displaced persons in those non-European Union Council of Europe member States which provided immediate protection and temporary shelter for hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, despite the challenges that many of these countries face in terms of emergency housing capacity or relief support. The Assembly welcomes the participation of non-European Union member States in the continued relief work and refugee resettlement schemes, finding appropriate solutions for millions of Ukrainian people displaced beyond the European Union.

30. *With regard to facilitating return and resettlement*, the Assembly recommends that specific actions be taken to prepare a return to Ukraine after the war, as referred to in the Temporary Protection Directive (Article 21), which states that the "Member States shall take the measures necessary to make possible the voluntary return of persons enjoying temporary protection or whose temporary protection has ended. The Member States shall ensure that the provisions governing voluntary return of persons enjoying temporary protection facilitate their return with respect for human dignity."

31. The Assembly notes that the return of displaced persons to their homes cannot happen overnight and may require years of preparation, which should start already now. Return will certainly involve the provision of financial assistance for resettlement, and the question of resettlement and reintegration allowances over a given period will need to be settled.

32. The Assembly recommends initiating programmes to help the Ukrainian diaspora support or maintain connections with Ukraine in host countries by establishing Ukrainian cultural centres, promoting language learning, culture, history and fostering co-operation within the Ukrainian community to enable future returns. The provisions of Assembly [Resolution 2388 \(2021\)](#) and [Recommendation 2207 \(2021\)](#) “For a European policy on diasporas” can guide these efforts.

33. The Assembly is highly concerned about the fate of the Ukrainians who are now on the territory of the Russian Federation and Belarus, as a result of forcible displacement or deportation. It reiterates its call to take urgent measures to liberate these persons, as stressed in its [Resolution 2495 \(2023\)](#) and [Recommendation 2253 \(2023\)](#) “Deportations and forcible transfers of Ukrainian children and other civilians to the Russian Federation or to temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories: create conditions for their safe return, stop these crimes and punish the perpetrators”. The Assembly calls once more on the Russian Federation to release immediately all persons taken by force to the Russian Federation or elsewhere.

34. The Assembly takes note of the Committee of Ministers’ reply to [Recommendation 2253 \(2023\)](#), highlighting the importance of the work of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and the need to ensure co-operation with the relevant United Nations bodies, notably the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It is also important to involve the United Nations Human Rights Council and seek answers regarding the whereabouts of the missing Ukrainian persons, including those who have been forcibly displaced.

35. *As regards the forcibly displaced children of Ukraine*, the Assembly notes that the children of Ukraine have suffered incredible hardship since the beginning of the Russian Federation’s aggression. Specific measures must be put in place to help children retained in the Russian Federation to be reunited with their family in Ukraine or elsewhere in Europe, as underscored by the Assembly in its [Resolution 2529 \(2024\)](#) and [Recommendation 2265 \(2024\)](#) “Situation of the children of Ukraine”. Children without parental care must be returned to Ukraine or, with Ukraine’s agreement, to another Council of Europe member State. The return of children without parental care needs to be based on the best interests of these children, assessed on an individual basis.

36. In its [Resolution 2529 \(2024\)](#), the Assembly reiterated its call on the Russian Federation and Belarus to “provide the Ukrainian authorities or a third party (a State or an international organisation) with comprehensive and reliable information about the number and the whereabouts of Ukrainian children in this situation, their names and surnames, their origin and the destination of the deportation, in order to ensure their safe return to Ukraine”; and to “provide representatives of the relevant United Nations bodies and other international humanitarian intervention and human rights protection organisations, such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights) and other competent United Nations agencies, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with unhindered, immediate and safe access to the children”.

37. The Assembly underscores the need to enhance co-operation between various organisations to help return forcibly displaced children. Third-party interventions can offer guarantees of impartiality and effectiveness. It is crucial to have access to the territories of the Russian Federation, Belarus and occupied territories of Ukraine to speed up the process of identification, location and repatriation of deported and forcibly transferred Ukrainian children.

38. The Assembly stands ready to continue its role as a facilitator in communicating with different international actors and organisations that operate for an effective search for children, based on access to information about their identity and the conditions of their deportation or forcible transfer. The Assembly would, therefore, support the possible creation of a parliamentary network on the situation of the children of Ukraine, which would help strengthen co-operation to protect the rights of these children.

39. *As regards the Ukrainian prisoners of war*, the Assembly should address this issue and the efforts deployed to negotiate their release as a matter of urgency. The bogus trials opened by the occupying forces of the Russian Federation against Ukrainian prisoners of war should be halted, as they are unlawful under international humanitarian and human rights law, not meeting the minimum international standards of fairness. The Assembly calls for the immediate release and return to Ukraine of the 33 Ukrainian soldiers sentenced to long-term sentences in a penal colony after unlawful trials on 8 February 2024 by the so-called “Supreme Court” of the “Luhansk People’s Republic” in Russian-occupied Luhansk.

40. The Assembly calls upon the Russian Federation to refrain from taking measures that run counter to the Geneva Conventions I-IV and their additional protocols. The Assembly strongly supports measures taken to allow for the exchange of prisoners of war to prevent further violence. The killings by the Russian Federation’s military of unarmed Ukrainian prisoners of war in Avdiivka and the village of Vesele

demonstrated the most cruel and inhuman behaviour by the Russian Federation's army and its sub-contracted military groups: such blatant disregard by the Russian Federation of international humanitarian law should not be overlooked by the international community.

41. Following the Assembly members' Written declaration No. 778 ([Doc. 15790](#)) of 5 June 2023, "Call on the International Committee of the Red Cross and the international community to demand that the Russian Federation fully complies with the international humanitarian law concerning the Ukrainian prisoners of war", the Assembly reminds the Russian Federation that the rules and customs of war agreed upon in codified international humanitarian law must be respected by all to ensure that atrocities committed in times of war in the past are not reproduced.

42. The Assembly calls upon all parties to the conflict to take measures to establish the whereabouts of missing persons. Helping families find their loved ones, or start their process of grieving if their loved ones have perished in the war, is essential for future reconciliation. More needs to be done to assist families in that process. Humanitarian organisations should be allowed to provide adequate support on this issue.

43. Finally, the Assembly reiterates its readiness to assist Ukraine in creating all the conditions necessary for the displaced people of Ukraine to feel safe and to help them return home in future to rebuild Ukraine, so that it can stand strong in its European vocation, and in defending the values shared by all the Council of Europe member States.