

Ukrainian Refugee Dilemma in Europe

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia have resulted in the greatest influx of Ukrainian refugees to Europe since World War II. According to UNHCR estimates, 5.3 million people were displaced from Ukraine since the onset of the invasion on February 24 to April 25, 2022. Many sought safety in neighbouring countries such as Poland, Romania, Moldova, and Hungary, while many with ties to the UK wished to travel all the way to the British Isles.

According to most statistics, there are around 25,000 children, 9,300 of them single-parented or among the migrants. Children are a real concern, and they will require quick protective care and attention. As the military confrontation progresses, civilian losses soar, and proofs of horrendous war crimes exposed, the economic struggle deepens. The flood of millions of Ukrainian immigrants into the EU has created a slew of social (integration, identity), economic (financing), and political concerns and management challenges, but it has also drawn unprecedented political support.

Challenges and issues for the European countries:

The accelerated deterioration of Ukraine's security situation has resulted drastic displacements domestically nation's borders. Protection and emotional assistance for these individuals - primarily women and children - appears to be a top concern, in addition to the basic requirements. Right now, all eyes are on their entrance and reception, which is understandable. However, the EU will soon have to determine how to best assist these incoming migrants to settle there. The Temporary Protection Directive has been activated, allowing (mostly Ukrainians) them to access integration-related services and jobs. European governments are now facing various challenges in making this a reality.

1) An operational and administrative stumbling block

The government's resources are insufficient to appropriately house and safeguard the large number of Ukrainian migrants. In many countries, the reception to refugees has mostly taken place at a local level (as in Poland, for example), from spontaneous citizen efforts. This responsive action by the host citizens creates a conducive environment to guarantee the efficiency of these efforts by the EU. In Spain, the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and

Migration, in collaboration with the La Caixa Foundation, has created a programme for Spanish families interested in welcoming Ukrainian refugees, a public-private partnership mechanism that has never been utilised to shelter refugees before.

2) A financial problem for both member states and for the European Union

At this point in time when the crisis has just begun, no neighbouring nation can estimate how many more Ukrainian refugees will enter their borders and how long will they stay in these countries. This makes it difficult to estimate the economic cost that they may have to bear to host the refugees. The EU have already begun allocating resources to assist member states in accepting refugees: €20 billion from the Cohesion Fund, which has had its processes amended to allow such spending, as well as assistance from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the REACT-EU fund.

This expense is in addition to the other economic consequences of the conflict in Europe, and it comes at a time when the EU is still recovering from the COVID-19 outbreak, which had disrupted supply chains and necessitated an energy transition which weighed upon the financial policies. Additionally, expenditures by member states and the European Union on sheltering the Ukrainian refugees will have to be added to the budget required to satisfy asylum claims from other immigrants.

3) A social integration problem

The decision of these refugees to return is dependent on time spent abroad, the proximity of host nation, and the relative gap in welfare of between the original and host countries' quality of life. If the conflict last for years, families with children educated in host nations are the least likely to return. Access to housing and job are two of the most challenging aspects of integration in the medium in the long run. Both are limited in many European countries, notably in Spain, where individuals are having significant difficulty in finding steady employment, as well as renting or purchasing houses. Other public goods, like access to healthcare and education for young people, are fairly simple to obtain in when compared to these two aspects, but they do face some unique challenges, such as the language of instruction and the low prevalence of COVID-19 immunisation among the Ukrainian populace. Access to work, which is granted immediately under Temporary Protection, will be particularly difficult for women who have fled Ukraine with young children, because they will be burdened by their parenting obligations in addition to communication issues.

Considering that the majority of the immigrants are women and children, this path to integration through employment seems more challenging in the current wave.

Europe's response to this problem:

The political institutions' decision mirrors the sentiment in Europe, which is strongly in favour of taking in Ukrainian migrants. There have been no demonstrations against this policy in any European country, even by conservative groups. Meanwhile, such extraordinary gesture highlights the distinction between the reactions elicited by these immigrants by refugees arriving in Europe from other regions of the world, primarily the Middle East and Africa. Physical closeness, perceptions of cultural proximity to Ukrainian culture, and, most crucially, how Europeans connect with the cause of Ukrainian resistance to the Russian invasion all work in favour of giving Ukrainian refugees a favourable circumstance in Europe. Unlike military confrontations in other areas of the world, where much of the west is uninformed on the timeline of events, Europeans in this case have no question about how the conflict arose or who is to blame for the conflict. Furthermore, Vladimir Putin's Russia, is observed a security threat, and those escaping are welcomed not as immigrants but with a shared sense of brotherhood in confronting a common enemy. In wars that force refugees to flee to other nations in Europe from Asia and Africa, this link is substantially weaker or non-existent.

The fact that the EU's Eastern members burdened by the arrival of refugees time has drastically changed the political landscape in which arguments regarding the EU's refugee policy are placed. For the time being, neither Poland nor any other Eastern European countries have requested that refugee distribution mechanisms be activated in order to relieve the burdens they are facing, most likely to avoid a future situation in which the rest of the Union asks them to accept the resettlement of refugees arriving from other parts of the Union once the crisis has passed.

However, it remains to be seen how this experience will influence how states approach long-overdue reforms of the European refugee system, which is stalled owing to a lack of consensus. Similarly, despite help from Brussels, it is unclear if the states' own asylum procedures will be able to retain their capacity for taking in non-Ukrainian migrants in the same numbers while still catering to the requirements of Ukrainians.

Conclusion:

It's hard to predict how the entry of millions of Ukrainians would affect EU host nations. The EU has responded with extraordinary speed and generosity, resulting in a widespread mobilisation of corporate and governmental projects. In the long term however it brings out several issues. The being migrant integration, the availability of organisational, in the long term however it brings out several issues administrative, and financial resources allocated to them and other refugees. To meet the requirements of those escaping conflicts in other areas of the world, it is vital to avoid this crisis from monopolising available capacities, which are already scarce.

This article originally appeared on Nepal Institute for International Cooperation and Engagement (NIICE) website.

<https://niice.org.np/archives/8082>

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