



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
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Brussels, 13 April 2022

State of play on equal treatment of Ukrainian refugees
Follow-up to the European Commission's meeting of 6 April 2022
Written submission from the European Women's Lobby

The European Women's Lobby (EWL), wishes to thank the Commission and in particular Commissioner Dalli, for organising the very important meeting on 6 April 2022. Further to this meeting, the EWL is submitting this written contribution.

The information we are providing, including recommendations, come from our contacts in Ukraine, namely the National Women's Council of Ukraine, as well as from our members particularly in the neighbouring countries who are providing direct services to women and children fleeing Ukraine. Specific information from some countries is provided in an annex to this document.

No words can describe the horror, anguish and trauma that women and girls are experiencing in Ukraine. The horrors of the recently discovered (Boutcha) partially burned naked bodies of women, is a stark reminder that rape and sexual violence are weapons of war. Women always bear the raw realities of all wars; their bodies are the battlefields on which their perpetrators claim victory.

The reality is that the majority of those fleeing Ukraine are women and children, given the fact that men must stay in the country. All EU responses must therefore include a gender equality dimension, i.e. the different situation of women and men must be taken into account when setting specific measures for the reception of refugees from Ukraine.

It is crucial to recognise that women are not homogeneous and have different life-experiences and different needs. The intersectional approach also needs to be addressed in all of the EU responses.

EWL key messages:

The majority of those fleeing Ukraine are women and children, including non-accompanied minors. Therefore, all EU responses must include a gender dimension.

Women and children, particularly non-accompanied girls are at a huge risk of sexual exploitation, prostitution and trafficking (sexual and labour exploitation), by pimps, criminal gangs, networks, individuals that exploit their vulnerability at the borders, and are also 'recruited' on social media. All EU measures must address the sexual exploitation of women and girls and promote the Nordic/Equal model regarding prostitution.



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Rape and sexual violence are recognised as war crimes and a breach of international humanitarian law. We call on the EU to take an active role in facilitating the coordination of the documentation of women and girls experiences who have fled Ukraine, including a range of experiences relating to rape and all forms of sexual exploitation. This means ensuring that the EU supports the International Criminal Court (ICC) to enable the Commission of Inquiry to undertake its work and has the resources to do so, in terms of human capacity and funding.

Civil society, including women's human rights and other non-governmental organisations as well as private households are providing the lion's share of support on the ground, with limited resources. It is crucial that these are provided with adequate resources particularly as the situation will be long term.

The lack of data, particularly, sex, age, ethnicity, disability, disaggregated data, impedes targeted and specifically designed policy responses as well as services and support, therefore we call for timely data and research.

There are some specific concerns on 'invisible' groups within Ukraine, including but not limited to the status and situation of: women victims of surrogacy, children awaiting for and/or in the process of international adoption, children in orphanages, disabled persons in institutional settings, the elderly that often remain in the country and the Roma community. The status, situation and needs of these groups should be addressed.

We are concerned by reported differentiated treatment at the EU borders between Ukrainian citizens' and all other refugees. This must be addressed to safeguard social cohesion as it fuels inter-ethnic conflict and exposes structural racism in EU. All refugee lives matter.

Looking forward, women are agents of change. We call on the EU to set in place a long-term post conflict strategy, by coordinating the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and in this context provide funding to women and their representative organisations to prepare for their engagement and leadership in the (current) and post conflict processes.

Create an EU inter-institutional Task Force comprising of the three EU institutions (Commission, Council and Parliament) with representations from civil society, including organisations that are providing direct support on the ground: women's organisations, gender equality organisations, human rights defenders and human rights organisations.



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Specific messages and recommendations

1) Sexual violence against women and girls in transit and in host countries

1.1) An EU coordinated approach

Sexual exploitation harms and kills thousands of women across Europe every day. Women and children arriving in EU host countries are traumatised by the war and very scared of what might happen to them in the new country (discrimination, sexual violence, etc.).

Given the reality that women and girls are at a heightened risk of sexual violence in transit, but also in the host countries, we recommend that the **EU provides guidance to the Member States for a coordinated approach and makes EU funding conditional**, including the **Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund**¹ (2021-2027) which has a budget of 9.9 billion Euros.

Recommendations:

We call on the EU to provide **political and policy guidelines** to Member States as part of a coordinated approach on the provision of services to women and girls in transit and as refugees in EU host countries. Robust financial support, political will and policy guidance is of utmost priority.

Such **political guidelines** should include, but not limited to:

- Support in relation to **violence against women**, including rape, to undertake effective human rights compliant investigations into all incidents and threats of gender-based violence within their jurisdiction.
- **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)**: including access to the full spectrum of these services free of charge, to avail of accessible safe abortion services, especially in cases of rape, and abortion care, access to emergency contraception and other contraception, maternal health care including ante and post-natal care for pregnant women, for those that have recently given birth and for those that are breastfeeding;
- **Medical care**, including access to medicines including preventative medicine, and access to public health schemes, for example, cholera, diphtheria and poliomyelitis are not eradicated in Ukraine
- **Psycho-social counselling** services and support, to deal with the trauma of war and flight, and adapting to a new country;
- **Legal advice** on both their rights and status.

¹ This fund “aims to further boost national capacities and improve procedures for migration management, as well as to enhance solidarity and responsibility sharing between Member States, in particular through emergency assistance (..)” [Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund \(2021-2027\) \(europa.eu\)](#)





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- Access for **children** to kindergartens and schools and **increase the capacity of care services**, which also should be taken into account in the EC's forthcoming **European Care Strategy**
- Access to **quality jobs, social protection** and **safe accommodation and housing**.
- Support **women who have to take care of their children** in their new homes and cannot join the labour market in the immediate term.
- **Support** the many Ukrainian women **who have already worked** in EU countries (often in the care sector, as cleaners and household workers), and whose children live in Ukraine - enable them to reunite their families immediately and offer them support if unable to work and **recognise qualifications** obtained outside the EU and professional experience.
- **Language courses** for women and their children.
- Special support for **single mothers**.
- **Regularly update** information packs for easy access: QR codes, websites, concise leaflets in different languages
- Provide an **EU-wide anti-trafficking hotline** with trained operators that is widely advertised and accessible in different languages: English, Ukrainian, Russian, etc.
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1.2) Address specific issues from an intersectional approach, this list is not exhaustive:

- Special attention for the situation of **non accompanied minor girls** who are extra vulnerable and are more exposed to human trafficking and various forms of (sexual and/or economic) exploitation. For example, in Belgium there is a system of (voluntary) guardians: persons who support unaccompanied minors.
- **Girls and the women with disabilities**: in situations of crisis or conflict, persons with disabilities a face disproportionate risk of abandonment, violence, death, and a lack of access to safety, relief, and recovery support. Women and girls with disabilities are at increased risk of sexual violence and children with disabilities are more exposed to abuse and neglect.
- **Roma women and girls** that are part of a minority group that is also present among refugees from Ukraine. This group are in a very vulnerable position and there are many reports that Roma refugees are being discriminated at all level in the receiving countries, from postponing their registrations for temporary protection status to refusing to provide them housing or other forms of support.

Recommendations:

- Urgently invest extra resources in (professional) guardians who can help ensure this support so that the rights of these children are guaranteed at all times.
- Thoroughly screen every private reception initiative, especially for minors.
- Provide a 'crash course'/training in human trafficking detection for foster care services, guardians and, local authorities, in particular, cities and municipalities.

Recommendations:



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- The obligations under the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** must be upheld, in particular **Article 11** on situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies and **Article 6** on women and girls.
- Protection for all people from and in Ukraine must not be limited to Ukrainian citizens; racially or ethnically motivated discrimination must be unequivocally rejected. It is crucial that there is no differentiated treatment within the EU between Ukrainian refugees and all other refugees. This is vital for social cohesion, to prevent inter-ethnic conflict and racism in the EU. All refugees lives matter and they should be protected by the EU's values, rule of law, equality between women and men and anti-discrimination policies. Citizens of other nationalities residing in and fleeing from Ukraine, who cannot return to their country, must be given equal treatment.

1.3) Close loopholes in EU legislative framework on trafficking and violence against women

In addition to the above, the EWL recommends:

- That the EU issues **policy guidelines** to Member States to strengthen the **Anti Trafficking Directive of 2011** (Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims) and to specify that women and girls are explicit victims of the crime of sexual exploitation and prostitution;
 - The guidelines should **also propose** that the Directive includes:
 - **Third parties** profiting from trafficking as promoters of trafficking.
 - **Pimps and traffickers** should face higher sanctions for their actions and more efforts made to prosecute.
 - The **online dimension** of trafficking should be addressed as recruitment is often carried out online.
 - More **resources** should be provided to civil society tackling this issue and as front line services to women and girls directly on the ground.
- With regards to the recent **proposal** for a **Directive on violence against women and domestic violence**, the EWL recommends:
 - To **add sexual exploitation** and to reinforce sanctions on trafficking. Member States need to adopt **adequate standards** which are in line with the **Nordic/Equality Model** against sexual exploitation, including prostitution.

2) Documenting sexual violence against women and girls

Rape and sexual violence are recognised as war crimes and a breach of international humanitarian law. Both the Prosecutor General of Ukraine and the International Criminal Court (ICC) have indicated





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that they will open investigations and we welcome this. However, before justice can be rendered, there are many hurdles to face.

Recommendation:

- Calls on the EU to take an active role in facilitating the coordination of the documentation of women and girls experiences who have fled Ukraine, including a range of experiences relating to rape and all forms of sexual exploitation. This means ensuring that the EU supports the ICC to enable the Commission of Inquiry to undertake its work and has the resources to do so, in terms of human capacity and funding. It is crucial that the ICC does not have to re-prioritise its work, but is given the additional resources required to undertake this work.

3) Preparing for post conflict: Women, Peace and Security

Women are agents of change and their leadership must be strengthened. War and the multiple crisis that the world is undergoing – health, economic, political, environmental – are interconnected and are the expression and result of the predominance of patriarchal societal policies and hyper masculine ideals. It is time for women to be in the driving seat to pave the way for peace and conflict resolution.

Our members and our contacts in Ukraine, estimate that no more than 10% of all Ukrainian migrants will apply for permanent residence in the EU.

We call on the EU to support the implementation of the **United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, peace and security**. We call on the EU to **fund the training of women** to prepare them to participate in the negotiations and post conflict resolution as they are currently absent from current negotiations on crisis and potential peace agreements.

We recall the **European Parliament Resolution of 2010²** on the tenth anniversary of Resolution 1325, which calls on the EU to:

(..) enable women to participate in conflict prevention, crisis management, peace talks and post conflict phases such as post war reconstruction and planning, and calls for an immediate increase in participation by women in all the initiatives aimed at finding solutions to conflicts, including as mediators, negotiators and in the implementation of conflict resolution measures³;

4) EU Inter-institutional task force

Protecting women and girls rights in situations of conflict and war, testified by the situation in Ukraine, and other regions where conflict and war are raging, is our collective responsibility. The EU has the

² European Parliament Resolution, 2010 on 10th anniversary of the UN Security Council on Women, peace and security,

2. [Texts adopted - 10th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security - Thursday, 25 November 2010 \(europa.eu\)](#)

³ [MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on the 10th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 \(2000\) on women, peace and security \(europa.eu\)](#)





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duty to uphold the values, the mission and the objectives enshrined in the TFEU and the Charter of fundamental rights, which includes equality between women and men.

Therefore, in order to strengthen the monitoring function to ensure that all actors are complying, the EWL proposes that an inter-institutional task force is established. Such a task force should comprise of the three EU institutions (Commission, Council and Parliament) with representations from civil society, including organisations that are providing direct support on the ground: women's organisations, gender equality organisations, human rights defenders and human rights organisations.





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Annex: Specific Information and Recommendations from EWL members in the following countries

Czech Republic – Czech Women's Lobby

The Czech Women's Lobby issued a Statement, which can be accessed [here](#).

It is mostly women with children entering the Czech Republic, and these children need to be taken care of. This is why we need to increase institutional care in order to guarantee capacity for migrant children. It is necessary not only to support schools and kindergartens in being able to integrate these children as quickly as possible, but also to support women who have to take care of their children in their new homes and cannot join the labour market instantly. It is also necessary to support the many Ukrainian women who have already worked in the Czech Republic, and whose children live in Ukraine - we must enable them to reunite their families immediately and offer them support if unable to work. Without immediate consideration of the fundamental importance of care work in migration, Czech support of those arriving will not be sufficiently effective.

Women from Ukraine are often stereotyped in the Czech Republic as manual workers, cleaners or housekeepers with low qualification. The setting of migration policy and the Czech labour market must not support this stereotyping by automatically placing Ukrainian citizens in unskilled or low-skilled positions. Ukrainian women are not coming here to clean our households at low cost, they are fleeing the war. It is absolutely essential that Czech society and employers approach the employment of women from Ukraine from the long-term perspective of their inclusion in the labour market, taking into account their qualifications. These women often have a secondary or higher education, so it is time for the Czech Republic to simplify the bureaucratically demanding process of recognising foreign qualifications or education ("nostrification") which may to some extent prevent the precarisation of their work.

Pregnant women and women with new-born babies are a specific and large migrant group that needs continuous, high-quality and individualized care. We call for the rapid integration of independent midwifery services into the public care system, in line with EU directives.

Hungary – the Hungarian Women's Lobby

NGOs and volunteers are dealing with the influx of refugees at the borders and at train stations. After three weeks, the State created certain mechanisms for a centralised focal point, but far from the stations where refugees have to go making it quite a burden for those who just want to pass through the country. For many of the refugees, including women, the East-European countries are often transit countries - they are leaving for Western Europe (or wait to be able to return to Ukraine) with almost no information on services etc. in the destination countries, this needs to improve.

Responses and sensitivity to women's needs and risks are lacking. For example, there is no screening of voluntary hosts, where sexual harassment/abuse cases have occurred. It is not an easy gap to fill for women's rights organisations, but there is a great need for it. There was no provision of even the most basic hygiene products and services for women, e.g. new mothers and their babies, enough clean, free toilets, shower cabins, provided by the State - and they did not let NGOs provide these. There are basic problems and shortfalls in Hungary in the medical and social services as they are not trauma-trained, which is a great problem when they treat women who are fleeing the war and have experienced rape.

For many of those applying for Temporary Status, it is difficult for them to apply for an abortion even if they need it after rape. Services around abortion are complicated, the required two consultations before an abortion



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will probably be required for Ukrainian women too. The Hungarian government issued a decree recently that allows Ukrainian refugees to avail of medical services according to the same rules as for Hungarian citizens. However, if they would like to access these services for longer than 30 days, they have to apply for temporary protection status (more information [here](#)). Access to emergency contraception is difficult, as a prescription is needed. HWL members are trying to partner with private physicians to provide easier access.

Roma families, often Hungarian speakers, with several generations moving together, are treated negatively, are discriminated against, and sent to the countryside into provisional housing.

The risk of trafficking was recognised relatively early on, now the State tries to raise awareness about it, together with aid organisations (such as the Baptist Aid and others)

Recommendations:

The HWL has produced [information pack in HU, RU and EN](#)

These kinds of information packs should be updated and made accessible easily (QR codes, websites, short leaflets)

- Refugee support centres need a special section for mothers with babies and children, e.g. in the Budapest centre, our members together with UNICEF are planning to set up a "Blue dot" for information and support place, where women with children can go, sit down, breastfeed their babies, get information
- Cooperation with Ukrainians who have fled their countries, who are experts on trafficking, psychology, support, education (for kids)
- Research is needed; for example, data on how many women have been sexually assaulted
- Fact finding needed about the preparedness of professionals (all kinds of service providers, social and medical, officials, interpreters) in terms of knowledge, experience, human and financial resources - NGOs do not have resources for researching this
- Trauma guidelines are needed in order to make medical service-providers more informed about how to treat patients with PTSD - NGOs should be consulted on this.
- Mid- and long-term support with employment, decent housing, children's education etc. is needed
- Step up anti-trafficking action: provide information, prevent, investigate, and prosecute trafficking (good example: Unicef and Facebook cooperated: information popped up about trafficking if you reached Ukrainian border), many women are really afraid of trafficking, they need much more support and alternatives!
- An EU-wide anti-trafficking hotline is necessary - not only in English but in Russian, too, with trained operators, well-advertised
- EU-wide efforts are necessary to implement the Equality model regarding prostitution.

Romania – the Romanian Women's Lobby

Refugees come to Romania both through the border points with Ukraine and through those with the Republic of Moldova (a total of 1212.3 km; 29 border points)

Official data are still controversial, as the registration process is not yet established. There is no centralized registration system



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According to the **group of NGOs from Iasi** (North East, close to the border with Moldova), coordinating one of the centre's for aid to refugees', there are approximately 200,000 Ukrainian refugees in Romania, most of them in the Northeast region (around Iasi); a further 300,000 crossed the country to go to other EU member states. According to [G4media](#), 646,087 Ukrainians entered Romania since February 10th and 4332 requested state protection (Temporary Protection). According to [Adevarul/local news Slatina](#), although there are over 70,000 Ukrainian citizens in the territory of Romania, (over 600,000 who have entered our country since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine), there are only about 10,000, in the **care of the state**, in the specially created centres.

According to [G4media](#), the centralized **amount**, at the level of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, for the support of Ukrainian refugees was somewhere around **40 million euros**.

Refugees arrive at reception centres (which are guarded). Upon arrival, they must mention if their intention is to stay in Romania until the end of the war or beyond; those in transit are accommodated in another section. **Data** related to nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, age, disability, marital status are **not registered** and not reported to the Central Coordination Aid service. The specific problems of **groups of women** are not listed/registered: pregnancy after rape, other reported forms of abuse. Only **children from orphanages** are reported because this was a sensitive issue for Romania before 1989.

Refugees' routes are not followed. Refugees just leave; where they leave to, or with whom is not registered, and there is no system in place to check whether they arrived or not. Attempts are being made to "recruit" women, girls, and children not only at the border, but also at the reception centres: families come to offer to host them. All families are refused because there is no one to check (vetting) if the people are trustworthy or there is a danger of refugee trafficking.

The refugee centres in Iasi operate on a voluntary basis. The centre we visited in Iasi operates in a building provided by the City Hall. The beds and mattresses, linen, kitchen utensils and general hygiene products are obtained from donations; food is provided by the Orthodox Church through its Solidarity and Hope Foundation, and - except for the guards, who provide security - all those who work there are volunteers. There are still no funds for personal hygiene kits, reproductive health kits, medicines for the chronically ill, milk and baby food, pocket money.

Job opportunities: according to [rfi.ro](#), dozens of Ukrainian refugees in Iasi determined to settle in Romania are already working in Horeca, IT and construction. The number of those who have found a job is difficult to estimate. If the offer of employers is generous at the Employment Agency, the most efficient way in finding a job are through friends and social networks.

Recommendations:

- A system to **collect data** and follow the routes of refugees
- Assistance in **Violence against Women** (including rape) and **SRHR** related problems, including counselling **psychological counselling**: women and children are traumatized by the war and very scared of what might happen to them in the new country (discrimination, sexual violence, etc.)
- **Legal advice on both their rights and status: access to jobs** (in Romania they need personal hygiene kits, they receive food and shelter, but they have no money to buy anything) **and housing** in the country where they will stay
- **Kindergartens and children's schools** (some children are still learning online)
- **Official language courses** for them and the children
- **Special support for single mothers**



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