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| **RESOL-VII/020** | |
| **149th plenary session, 27-28 April 2022** | |

**DRAFT RESOLUTION**

**EU regions and cities' support for Ukraine**

**Submitted by the EPP, PES, Renew Europe, ECR, EA and the Greens groups**

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| **Deadline for tabling amendments: 27 April 2022 no later than 4 p.m. (Brussels time)**  **Amendments to the resolution must be submitted, preferably in English, French or German, through the online tool for tabling amendments (available on the Members' Portal:** <https://memportal.cor.europa.eu/>**).**  The Helpdesk (+32 (0)2 546 96 97, email: [helpdesk@cor.europa.eu](mailto:helpdesk@cor.europa.eu)) is at your disposal to provide you with any assistance you may need. In addition, a user guide is available at <https://memportal.cor.europa.eu/>.  Urgent resolution submitted in accordance with Rule 45(4) of the Rules of Procedure, to be discussed on the second day of the plenary session on 28 April 2022, as foreseen by Rule 45(3) (b). It will be removed from the plenary session agenda if not approved by the Bureau on 26 April 2022.  Number of signatures required: 6 |

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**Draft resolution on EU regions and cities' support for Ukraine**

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS (CoR)

# Condemns the unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 by the Russian Federation supported by Belarus;

# Calls for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and the opening of safe humanitarian corridors; Russia must immediately stop military action and withdraw all military and paramilitary forces and administrative officials from the occupied Ukrainian territories;

# Stresses that this invasion is a criminal act against the people of Ukraine and Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and a brutal violation of democratic principles and the rule of law; stresses that the indiscriminate attacks against civilians including mayors of cities and villages constitute war crimes committed by the Russian army and are in breach of international law, in particular the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and the Budapest Memorandum; all human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity on Ukrainian territory must be recorded, investigated and processed under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

# Stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, who are defending their country against the Russian invaders; expresses its deepest grief about the loss of life and human suffering caused by the Russian atrocities;

# Reaffirms its support for Ukrainian local and regional authorities and calls for the immediate release of Ukrainian mayors and civil servants kidnapped by Russian occupation forces in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention;

# States that only the people of Ukraine can democratically chose their leaders at national, regional and local level and declares that it will not recognise or collaborate with any regional or local leadership installed by Russia in Ukraine;

# *Delivering concrete solidarity with local and regional authorities*

# Highlights the extraordinary solidarity with people fleeing the war in Ukraine shown by EU citizens; commends the European Union authorities for their unity in the face of Russia's war on Ukraine, for stepping up solidarity through direct humanitarian aid and emergency civil protection assistance, and for activating the immediate protection mechanism for those fleeing the war; highlights that this help will need to be significantly increased in the coming months in order to avoid a humanitarian crisis in EU border regions;

# Commits to further mobilise cities and regions to deliver aid to refugees from Ukraine; points in particular to the needs in the border regions in terms of logistical support for initial reception and transit;

# Invites local and regional authorities from Europe to request or offer support via the Help Ukraine: Info-Support Hub[[1]](#footnote-1) launched by the CoR;

# Echoes the call of Ukrainian and EU local and regional authorities to revitalise or establish partnerships, and city and region twinnings, in view of the reconstruction process;

# *Strengthening Ukraine's European perspective*

# Underlines that Ukraine's decentralisation and regional development reforms have contributed significantly to the consolidation of local democracy, strengthened self-governance and the overall resilience of the country's local communities, which is an important element of Ukrainian resistance against the Russian invaders. These reforms were implemented with substantial support from the European Union's regions and cities, including through the "U-LEAD with Europe" programme, and with targeted support from the CoR, within its Ukraine Task Force and through peer-to-peer cooperation activities. The success of these decentralisation reforms have brought Ukraine closer to the European Union and its values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law;

# Calls on the international community to prepare an assistance and recovery plan for Ukraine to support Ukraine's economy, its institutions and public services, and the reconstruction of its destroyed infrastructure; welcomes in this context the European Council's decision to set up a Ukraine Solidarity Trust Fund and calls for an International Conference to raise funding among partners; underlines that Russia, being responsible for the destruction caused, must also contribute with war reparations to the rebuilding of Ukraine;

# Supports a swift opening of dialogue with Ukraine regarding the EU accession process in line with Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union and under the revised enlargement methodology, with a stronger focus on the rule of law and democratic institutions; this dialogue should not put the ongoing accession process of the Western Balkans countries at a disadvantage; in the meantime, Ukraine's integration into the EU single market along the lines of the Association Agreement needs to be pursued without delay;

# *Financing support measures*

# Welcomes the European Commission's CARE (Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe) and CARE+ packages, and the flexibilities in the framework of REACT-EU, and underlines the benefits of directly involving regional and local authorities in the planning, management and implementation of the CARE and REACT-EU packages; stresses that adaptations of cohesion policy programmes need to be consistent with the principle of "do no harm to cohesion" recently introduced in the 8th Cohesion report;

# Welcomes the suspension of cross-border cooperation programmes involving Russian and Belarusian partners; calls for the existing programmes between EU regions (Poland, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia) and Ukraine to be strengthened; underlines that the financial support for local and regional authorities bordering Ukraine and non-bordering countries receiving the highest number of refugees is highly insufficient and needs to be significantly boosted given their role not only in providing shelter to refugees but also in integrating them into their education, healthcare and housing systems;

1. Supports the establishment of a permanent crisis reserve to cushion future emergencies, complementing or reinforcing the existing contingency and flexibility instruments; calls for the creation of a single facility gathering all funding available to local and regional authorities for sheltering refugees, with a view to simplifying, mainstreaming, and accelerating the use of funds at their disposal;
2. Notes that, in the case of the most affected Member States and regions, it might be necessary to revise their Recovery and Resilience Plans, on the basis of a proper consultation of regional authorities, particularly in the light of the growing economic impact of the war on EU countries;

*Reception of refugees fleeing from Ukraine*

# Stresses that local and regional authorities are on the frontline when it comes to receiving the millions of refugees in neighbouring countries, as well as the internally displaced people in Ukraine[[2]](#footnote-2), this being the biggest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War;

# Welcomes the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive, which now has to be fully implemented in a well-coordinated, generous, inclusive and flexible way, guaranteeing access to the labour market, housing, healthcare, education and welfare support for all people fleeing Ukraine, with a focus on vulnerable groups, especially women and children, and regardless of their origin, ethnicity, political affiliation or sexual orientation;

# Draws attention to the specific features of the Directive on Temporary Protection (2001/55/EC), which gives refugees the freedom to choose the EU Member State in which they wish to settle temporarily (Article 26), and underscores that recognising free movement rights and the autonomy of refugees has the positive result of alleviating pressure on national asylum systems, and on the reception capacities in border regions;

# Calls for the setting-up of a voluntary European relocation scheme, taking into account the reception capacities of regional and local authorities; reiterates here its call for EU cities and regions to be granted direct access to EU funding for migration and integration; calls on the Commission to put forward a working refugee distribution scheme for future refugee crises; calls on EU Member States to recognise and follow up on such voluntary pledges;

# Stresses that many Ukrainian refugees are particularly vulnerable and approximately half are minors; points out that, among the hundreds of thousands of children fleeing, many are unaccompanied and need special protection and care; supports a "Child Protection Package" for Ukrainian refugee children, with priority given to the need for them to attend school and to continue their education in Ukrainian;

# Calls for strong measures to prevent human trafficking, as the majority of people fleeing Ukraine are women and children, and human rights reports have shown an increase in cases of organised crime groups targeting and exploiting them, particularly for the purposes of sexual or labour exploitation;

# Underlines the need to provide language courses, education and training; points in this regard to the potential of the CoR's Cities and Regions for Integration of Migrants network;

*Impact on EU policies*

# Encourages immediate steps in all European regions to reduce the EU's dependence on third countries, and particularly on Russian energy imports, and calls on the European Commission to support their efforts;

# Considers the REPowerEU plan[[3]](#footnote-3) a way to accelerate the clean energy transition, increase the EU's energy security, reduce the EU's dependence on imports of fossil fuels and raw materials from the Russian Federation, and thus diminish the political, economic and security risks resulting from these imports;

# Insists that the impacts of the war should not come at the detriment of climate action and sustainability, as provided for both in the Paris Agreement and in the UN Agenda 2030 on sustainable development, and reaffirms its commitment to the European Green Deal, which is also the path for strengthening the EU's strategic autonomy;

# Echoes the call of Ukrainian local and regional authorities on the international community to assist them with managing the environmental emergencies caused by the invasion, including at the sites of nuclear power plants and chemical factories;

# Welcomes the European Commission's decision to start negotiations with Ukraine for the country to join the LIFE programme in order to benefit from financing to help restore its environment after the destruction from the Russian invasion, be it pollution, destruction of ecosystems, or other long-term effects;

# Stresses that the conflict will inevitably have severe consequences for the EU's agri-food sector, considering that Ukraine and Russia are significant exporters of several agricultural products (such as grain and oilseeds) as well as of nitrogenous fertilisers; underlines that the EU must reinforce its commitment to deliver on sustainable food systems while guaranteeing the affordability of quality food for everyone by reducing dependencies on key imported agricultural products and inputs; expresses deep concern about the fact that the disruption of exports from Ukraine and Russia has already led to huge global increases in the prices of agricultural commodities and that the consequences are being felt especially in the world's poorest countries and regions;

*Further considerations*

# Supports the rights of the Russian and Belarusian people who protest against Putin's war and defend their rights to fair elections, freedom of expression and assembly, and demands the immediate release of unjustly detained protesters;

# Supports further coordinated robust sanctions against Russia and Belarus to effectively thwart Russia's capabilities to continue the aggression; suggests that the Commission present guidelines on the enforcement and implementation of the sanctions, given that there is still divergence, including at regional and local level, in the instruments and procedures being used to verify the ownership status of companies, assets and real estate;

# Underlines that all candidate and potential candidate countries for EU membership should be encouraged to follow the sanctions agreed upon at EU level to stress their commitment to the EU and its values;

# Condemns Russian propaganda and hate speech, which fuels the conflict and assists the perpetrators of war crimes; calls for effective measures at European, national, regional and local level to counter and dispel such propaganda;

# Instructs its president to forward this resolution to the European Commission, the European Parliament, the French and Czech presidencies of the Council of the EU, and the President of the European Council, and to the President, the Government and the Parliament of Ukraine.

Brussels,

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| The President of the European Committee of the Regions     Apostolos Tzitzikostas |  |

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1. Help Ukraine: Info-Support Hub – is a matchmaking platform to link transit regions and overburdened local and regional authorities with those from other EU Member States that have capacities to help. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Ukraine Refugee Situation (unhcr.org)](https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Commission Communication on REPowerEU: joint European action for more affordable, secure and sustainable energy, 8 March 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)