

## **Declaration issued by the European Committee of the Regions' Working Group on Ukraine**

30 March 2022

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The European Committee of the Regions reaffirms its full support for the people of Ukraine in defending their territorial integrity, respect for international law, freedom and the democratic values they share with EU citizens.

Local and regional politicians are the building blocks and foundations of democracy, not commanders-in-chief organising the resistance against the Russian invaders; their role is to provide immediate solutions to citizens, while the development of any long-term solutions must be done with their involvement.

Against this background, we welcome the European Union's swift response to the emergency created by the Russian war on Ukraine, and call for more support to be granted by the EU to help regions and cities in need. The EU's local and regional authorities stand ready to shelter refugees who have fled to Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, the Republic of Moldova, and other European countries.

European regions and cities are unwavering in their commitment to upholding the international human rights of displaced people, and call for particular attention to be given to women and children at risk of human trafficking. European regions and cities will continue to welcome refugees, opening up their public services in areas such as education, health and social care, and supporting the integration of refugees into their local labour markets.

Using its extensive network of contacts, the European Committee of the Regions has launched a matchmaking platform to link transit regions and overburdened local and regional authorities with those from other EU Member States that have more capacities to help. The platform includes needs and offers concerning accommodation, employment opportunities and humanitarian assistance to help refugees. We call on local and regional authorities from Europe to request or offer their support via this platform, and we also call on the European Commission to help us to promote it.

There is also a need for a voluntary mechanism that helps European regional leaders and mayors who want to show solidarity by welcoming refugees, therefore sharing the burden with other regions and cities that are facing a growing number of refugees. This way, shelter in dignity can be provided across the EU to all those in need.

The planning and implementation of the European Union's support for displaced people must be based on a bottom-up approach, by directly involving Europe's regions and cities that are working on the frontline of the humanitarian efforts and will bear the brunt of this crisis. We believe that an ambitious Plan for Ukraine must be developed as a matter of urgency, and that a clear perspective for Ukraine to become a potential candidate country must be part of that plan.

We have heard the call from Ukraine's mayors, who are asking for:

- the opening of safe humanitarian corridors;
- European solidarity to develop and adopt decisions concerning reception and relocation in the EU;

- governments of the EU countries bordering Ukraine to engage with international and national organisations that have expertise in emergency response and crisis management;
- urgent measures to be put in place to rapidly reduce dependency on Russian energy supplies, including gas, oil and coal;
- all mayors to speak with one voice: deliberate attacks on civilians constitute war crimes;
- all mayors and civil servants kidnapped in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention to be returned to their families and communities.