

CPMR Regions’ Actions and Needs in Support of Ukraine

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1 INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this issue paper is to identify the areas in which regional authorities are contributing to the European solidarity movement in support of Ukraine following the Russian attack launched in late February 2022. It considers the regions' short-term responses and anticipates actions that may be carried out in a longer-term perspective. In this respect, the needs of the regions are also highlighted to determine the necessary support and framework to carry out their actions effectively.

The first part of the paper focuses on how the European bloc has reacted since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, in a movement of solidarity rarely before witnessed. The response has been multi-faceted. In the immediate term the EU and Member States have been providing military and humanitarian support, financial aid, civil protection, and of course welcoming the millions of people fleeing the war. In the longer term, reflections are already underway on how to organise the post-war reconstruction process in the context of Ukraine's newly granted accession status.

Against this general background, the second part of the paper looks at the place the regions are occupying when it comes to manifesting their solidarity in the immediate wake of the crisis and offers some reflections on how to shape future actions together with the regions. Examples are based on an internal survey launched in April 2022 among CPMR members and information gathered during a meeting of the CPMR Migration Task Force on 17 May 2022.¹ They are not exhaustive but meant to provide evidence to feed into the recommendations.

The final part aims to highlight challenges and provide some recommendations based on the knowledge and experience gained from the current situation in several CPMR regions. The issues covered include emergency funding mechanisms, long-term integration and inclusion of refugees and participation in Ukraine's future reconstruction.

2 CONTEXT

2.1 The war on Europe's doorstep, a test of solidarity

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched an unjustified and unprovoked attack on Ukraine, which has shaken the European continent and is having devastating effects in terms of human suffering, with countless civilian casualties and millions of Ukrainians internally displaced or seeking refuge in other European countries. For those left behind, destruction of the country's vital infrastructures is causing disruption and hardship, and the cost of repairing the damage is currently estimated at around 350 billion euros.²

Added to this humanitarian disaster, EU citizens and businesses are bracing themselves for a tough winter 2022 in the face of the economic turmoil caused by the war resulting from broken supply chains and soaring food and energy prices.

¹ Survey Respondents: Abruzzo (IT), Alentejo (PT), Andalucia (ES), Basque Country (ES), Calabria (IT), Catalonia (ES), Corsica (FR), Murcia (ES), Rogaland (NO), Sicily (IT), Skåne (SE), Stockholm (SE), Sud (FR), Valencia (ES), Vestfold & Telemark (NO)

² Source World Bank 9/9/2022 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/09/09/ukraine-recovery-and-reconstruction-needs-estimated-349-billion>



European solidarity is being put to the test in terms of its capacity to support Ukraine and its people and to stand up to its neighbour's aggressor, as well as to help its own citizens cope with the aftershocks of the invasion which are generating a cost-of-living crisis just as the world has begun to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the outbreak of the war, the spontaneous show of solidarity seen at the European level from the EU institutions, countries, regional and local authorities down to the citizens on the ground in support of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people has been quite unprecedented.

Responses and initiatives at the EU level have been launched at record speed.

- **A series of sanctions against Russia** targeting strategic sectors of its economy and oligarchs close to the regime, restrictions on the granting of visas and blocking of state-owned media outlets and suspension of EU cooperation programmes with Russia;
- **Humanitarian aid** to Ukraine with direct funding and in-kind assistance amounting to over €700 million;
- **Exceptional macro-financial assistance package** of up to €9 billion to keep Ukraine's economy and state functions running;
- **Support for refugees** fleeing the war through the activation of [the Temporary Protection Directive](#) allowing them to obtain a residence permit and immediate access to education and the labour market;
- **Funding through [Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe](#)** allowing Member States and regions to provide emergency support to people fleeing from Russia's invasion of Ukraine;
- **Launch of the '[Ukraine reconstruction platform](#)'**, an international coordination platform co-led by the Commission representing the European Union and by the Ukrainian government to oversee the implementation of the country's reconstruction plan;
- **Establishment of the '[RebuildUkraine](#)' Facility** as the main legal instrument for the European Union's support, through a mix of grants and loans.

With still no certainty as to how long the conflict will last, the war and its aftermath will continue to dominate the EU agenda in the months and years to come.

2.2 Refugees welcome.

2.2.1 2015 vs. 2022. What it means for the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Throughout its attempts to build a common European migration and asylum policy, the EU has persistently struggled to reach consensus. On 23 September 2020, the European Commission proposed a new Pact on Migration and Asylum taking stock of the lessons learnt from the 2015 migration crisis and advocating a comprehensive and sustainable approach addressing both the internal and external dimensions of migration management. It seeks to mobilise all relevant stakeholders including Member States, regional and local authorities, NGOs, civil society and not least migrants themselves.

However, since the Pact and the associated legislative proposals were unveiled two years ago, institutional negotiations have been moving extremely slowly. While some progress has been made, agreement is still pending on key texts including the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation.



During the 2015 crisis sparked by conflict in the Middle East, focus was mainly on the Mediterranean countries whose regional and local authorities were on the frontline to receive and care for the large numbers of asylum seekers arriving in their territories. Despite appeals for solidarity to relieve pressure on these countries and share responsibility among all Member States, no common agreement was reached. It was precisely those countries that are now facing the biggest inflows of Ukrainian refugees that were the most reticent to agree to a mandatory relocation mechanism at the time.

Furthermore, regions and local authorities that had been calling for immediate support from the EU had to wait one year before measures were taken to free up unused cohesion funds and provide them with much needed resources to alleviate the crisis.

Seven years on, the situation in some Member States is still critical, with national asylum systems struggling to deal with the backlog of claims and asylum seekers often living in very difficult and precarious conditions.

In stark contrast with the situation back in 2015, today the war on Europe's doorstep has sparked a rapid and united response from the EU Member States. Of course, this time the frontline receiving states and the refugee population are not the same, but EU migration policy has once more been brought to the top of the EU agenda. On 7 September 2022, the European Parliament and the five rotating Presidencies of the Council of the EU formalised a [roadmap on the 'Pact on Migration and Asylum'](#), in which all parties commit to doing their utmost to adopt all the legislative texts of the 'Pact on Migration and Asylum' by February 2024, before the European elections are held in 2024.

2.2.2 Immediate protection for Ukrainian citizens

On 4 March 2022, for the first time ever, the EU triggered the [Temporary Protection Directive](#), which grants Ukrainian citizens the right to live and work within the EU and access social services without the need to apply for asylum for up to three years.

This Directive was adopted back in 2001 following the conflicts in former Yugoslavia. It is designed as an exceptional measure to provide immediate and temporary protection in the event of a mass influx or imminent mass influx of displaced persons from non-EU countries who are unable to return to their country of origin.

It is the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, that decides whether or not it should be activated, especially if it deems that the standard asylum system would be unable to cope with the high demand. Despite it being evoked during the refugee crisis of 2015, it had so far never been used.

As part of the proposals under the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, the Temporary Protection Directive was in fact meant to be repealed and replaced by a new [regulation "addressing situations of crisis and force majeure in the field of migration and asylum"](#). This new proposal is precisely meant to build on the lessons learnt from the crisis the EU faced in 2015 and improve its preparedness to cope with such emergency situations.



2.2.3 Emergency funding measures

- **CARE**

Just one month after the start of the war, the EU adopted measures for emergency funding facilities that Member States and regions could access to cover refugees' needs.

Firstly, the **CARE initiative [Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe](#)** introduced flexibility in the 2014-2020 Cohesion policy rules allowing EU countries and regions to reallocate unspent Cohesion policy funds to provide emergency support to people fleeing Ukraine (temporary accommodation, food and water supplies, medical care or education).

At the same time, [REACT-EU](#) pre-financing for 2021 was increased from 11% to 15% for all member states and from 11% to 45% for countries most affected by the refugees' inflows. A targeted modification was put forward to exempt 2014-2020 and REACT-EU programmes from justifying expenditures up to 40 euro per week for each refugee via dedicated simplified cost option.

It is possible to use the [European Regional Development Fund](#) (ERDF) and the [European Social Fund](#) (ESF) for any type of measure to support people fleeing Ukraine. With CARE, the EU committed to finance 100% (instead of the usual 85%) of cohesion funding spent by Member States for one more year from mid-2021 to mid-2022.

- **AMIF and ISF**

The implementation period of the [AMIF - Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the ISF - Internal Security Fund](#) 2014-2020 (national programmes) was extended by one year until mid-2024. €420 million were thus released to be spent on accommodation, food, healthcare or extra staff.

In parallel, supporting the impacted Member States will be a priority for the available emergency funding under the 2021-2027 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

Finally, Member States and other public or private donors also have the possibility to make additional financial contributions to the 2021-2027 fund.

- **FAST-CARE**

As the crisis has deepened over the last months, stakeholders on the ground, including regional and local authorities, have been calling for more long-term support and funding. As a result, on 29 June 2022 the European Commission proposed -[FAST-CARE - Flexible Assistance for Territories](#). The package extends the support already provided under CARE by offering further support and further flexibility to Cohesion Policy funding.

The new rules provide for additional pre-financing worth €3.5 billion in 2022 and 2023. Already-implemented projects related to the needs of refugees can be reimbursed retroactively, and until mid-2024, 100% EU financing will be ensured for projects promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals. Resources for actions supporting refugees can now be transferred not only between the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund, but also from the Cohesion Fund.



The newly established unit cost to support refugees is raised from €40 to €100 per person per week and its application extended from 13 to 26 weeks from the moment the person asks for protection. Because refugees may change location several times, the location requirement has been removed.

At least **30% of the amount under FAST-CARE is earmarked for regional and local authorities** and civil society organisations, given their essential role in welcoming and supporting people fleeing the Russian aggression of Ukraine.

In addition to supporting refugees, the measures are also designed to mitigate the delayed implementation of EU-funded projects due to the combined effect of COVID and the high energy costs, shortage of raw materials and labour force caused by the war.

2.3 “Ukraine’s place is in the EU”

The message delivered by Ursula von der Leyen is clear. Prior to the war, as a neighbourhood country within the Eastern Partnership, Ukraine already had strong ties with Europe and has been active in EU programmes, partnerships and networks. In particular, there has been a long standing and active engagement of the Ukrainian local and regional authorities, especially with a view to supporting the country’s decentralisation process³.

Ukraine was granted accession status on 23 June 2022, and there is now a strong political will to bring the country even closer to the European Union through specific agreements, such as the one signed on 15 July 2022 to open access for Ukraine to funding under the [EU4Health programme](#) and enable the Ukrainian health system to respond to immediate needs and contribute to long-term recovery.

The future reconstruction of Ukraine is seen by many as an opportunity to speed up and consolidate the accession process, by investing in a smarter and greener economy and pushing through democratic reforms, including a decentralisation process that would see regional and local authorities assuming greater roles and responsibilities.

3 REGIONAL AUTHORITIES AS KEY PLAYERS IN THE SOLIDARITY EFFORT

This chapter is based on responses to an internal CPMR survey to its members and information gathered during a Migration Task Force meeting.

The results show that several CPMR member regions are highly mobilised in providing support for Ukraine according to their competences and capacities. They are making key contributions to solidarity efforts in the wake of the Ukraine crisis, by providing humanitarian aid and receiving and ensuring the integration and inclusion of refugees, while also assisting their own businesses and citizens to cope with the economic effects induced by the war.

The examples are given as illustrations and are not intended to be exhaustive.

³ through the Working Group on Ukraine set up within the Committee of the Regions in 2015.



3.1 Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection

3.1.1 Direct donations

Regional authorities have been mobilising funds from their own budgets to assist recognised agencies working on the ground in both Ukraine and border countries receiving refugees to alleviate the humanitarian crisis on the frontline.

In addition to monetary support, regions have also been organising in-kind donations, often within the framework of national campaigns.

Région Sud has provided various financial support including €200 000 to the NGO ACTED fully mobilised in Ukraine, €50 000 through the emergency and response fund managed by the French Foreign Affairs Ministry (FACECO) and €130 000 to support French firemen and civil protection active in Ukraine.

Region Skåne has contributed to the national drug donation to Ukraine.

3.1.2 Coordinating offers of NGOs, private entities and citizens

Almost all of the regions who contributed to the survey highlighted the importance of properly channelling the solidarity expressed in their territories. To this end they have been coordinating aid coming from associations, businesses and individuals in order to avoid dispersion and lone initiatives that could in fact be detrimental to Ukrainians.

Providing guidance and information for those wanting to help has been considered an important added value role for regional authorities. They have therefore set up specific pages on their websites for this purpose.

Abruzzo set up storage and distribution centres for goods collected by various associations and entities.

Andalucia set up a website and advice centre “Andalucia con Ucrania” designed to centralise and optimise support through the Andalusian Agency for International Development Cooperation. It advises the public to avoid donations in kind which are difficult to manage and store on site.

Catalonia set up the Port of Barcelona as a humanitarian aid reception point for Ukraine in response to a request made by the Ukrainian Consulate. This logistics platform, located in the Zal Port, has centralised the material that both citizens and different entities and companies have sent in solidarity with the Ukrainian population and which, once inventoried and prepared, has been progressively sent to the country.

Région Sud set up a unique “Green number” at regional level to better channel corporate and individual donations and volunteers, to help Ukrainian refugees. It has also organised humanitarian convoys carrying essential goods to Ukraine.



3.2 Refugee Reception, Integration and Inclusion

It is widely acknowledged that the regions along with local authorities are key players when it comes to managing refugee arrivals in their territories. Their competences and experience in this matter are crucial to ensure that these persons are taken in charge in terms of their emergency reception needs and longer-term integration and inclusion.

While in general CPMR members are not all among the regions most affected by the movement of Ukrainian refugees, they are nevertheless largely concerned and mobilised to receive persons arriving in their territories.

3.2.1 *A coordinated and holistic approach to emergency reception*

As reiterated by the CPMR over the past years, migration management requires a multi-level governance, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach. In this overall framework, the pivotal role of regions in vertical coordination between EU, Member State and local level, and in horizontal coordination, as a catalyst to pool resources within their territories with all key stakeholders, ensures the effectiveness and efficiency of actions.

Many examples given by CPMR regions are demonstrating how this principle is being put in practice to ensure a coordinated and holistic approach in the immediate response to the Ukrainian crisis.

Competences related to migration management vary widely among European regions. While some are not directly concerned by implementation of actions on the ground, they are nevertheless active in supporting other key stakeholders within their territory such as municipalities, associations and civil society organisations.

In **Abruzzo Region**, 8 reception hubs have been distributed in the 4 provinces. They provide a single reception point with health professionals, volunteer workers, Civil Protection and police, capable of providing all the information and documentation useful to the refugee. Municipal Operational Centres coordinate all the activities, through support functions (health, volunteering, assistance activities), with the help of the Regional Civil Protection Agency.

In **Rogaland** the county set up weekly meetings with the County Governor, police the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and other relevant partners to coordinate and exchange information on measures relating to Ukrainian arrivals. The region also ensures that municipalities with little or no integration experience receive the training and skills they need to provide relevant services for refugees.

In **Catalonia**, Multilevel and Inter-departmental Contingency Boards have been organized through the General Direction of Migration, Refuge and Antiracism (DGMRA) of the Catalan administration and notably, its Committee for the Reception of Refugees. In order to support the emergency reception of refugees in the municipalities, the DGMRA has transferred almost 3M euros to municipalities in order to strength the staff and available resources.

In **Sicily**, an emergency roundtable was established by the Presidency, involving the Prefecture, the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI), the Civil Protection and the Health regional system, the Public Education Institutions and the USI- Ufficio Speciale



Immigrazione (Special Immigration Office) of the Regional Assessorate of Family, Social Policies and Labour.

Though regions in Portugal and France do not have formal competences in relation to the reception of refugees, some of them are playing a leading role in coordinating efforts by other stakeholders in their territory.

Alentejo is undertaking major efforts in inter-institutional coordination to ensure refugee integration in the different areas (education, health, employment) liaising closely with municipalities to coordinate support for example by mobilising Ukrainian facilitators.

Corsica is actively accompanying the association “Solidarité Corse-Ukraine” which was specifically set up immediately after the outbreak of the war. The rapid and effective establishment of the association was facilitated by the presence of Ukrainian women living in Corsica, a core of founding members already acquainted through the regional delegation of Médecins du Monde, a pre-existing inter-associative coordination grouping 14 associations and relationships of proximity and trust with the various public and private actors in the region. The Assembly of Corsica immediately provided institutional assistance to help the association in all areas of its competence.

3.2.2 Welcoming and guiding refugees

Regional authorities have been involved in efforts to support Ukrainian refugees from the time they first arrive in their region. They aim to facilitate first reception of these newcomers and ensure easy access to all the necessary information allowing them to find their way around their host communities.

Many of the CPMR regions that responded to the questionnaire mentioned that they have been providing **free public transport** for Ukrainians to reach their destination or place of reception, and also on occasion extending the offer to volunteer workers.

Thanks to one-stop-shops already developed in the regions, it has been possible to quickly put in place **dedicated information services for Ukrainian citizens**. Contents have been translated into Ukrainian on public service web pages and phonelines and physical welcome services provide facilitation through Ukrainian cultural mediators.

Public **cultural and artistic events and exchanges** are a powerful and also convivial way of building bridges between people, raising awareness among host populations and helping Ukrainian refugees make first links with their host communities. Many regional authorities have been organising or supporting such intercultural manifestations as part of their solidarity initiatives.

3.2.3 Delivering essential public services

It goes without saying that most European regional authorities have competences in public service sectors linked to the reception and integration of refugees. In the short term the focus is of course on covering the basic needs of refugees in terms of food, accommodation, access to education and



healthcare. Protecting the most vulnerable persons is also a concern for regions, given that the majority of Ukrainian refugees are made up of women and children and the elderly.

- **Accommodation**

One of the greatest challenges for public authorities is to ensure accommodation for newly arrived refugees. Regions have been active in finding solutions for emergency accommodation to scale up reception facilities for Ukrainian refugees.

They have of course been active in implementing the European Commission's Safe Homes initiative for organising private housing for Ukrainian in need of protection, by making inventories of available accommodation and managing offers from citizens through dedicated platforms.

In **Abruzzo** the Civil Protection Agency published a call for availability of the accommodation facilities in the region, through which it was possible to identify in the short term the accommodation to be made available in addition to that provided by the national CAS and SAI network (Extraordinary Reception Centres and System of reception and integration), given the limited number of places available there.

In **Calabria**, €4 million in funding has been provided to municipalities through the regional Operational Programme to refurbish housing to allocate refugees.

In **Catalonia** the network of youth hostels was made available to NGOs running the state emergency accommodation system.

- **Healthcare**

Many regional governments have competences for public health. Refugees need to receive attention on arrival to ensure their physical and mental well-being. Regional authorities are responsible in many cases for guaranteeing their access to primary healthcare.

For several regions responding to the survey their priority on arrival of refugees is to ensure that persons, especially children, are up to date with mandatory vaccines including COVID.

Psychological support is another crucial service that regions are providing to refugees, many of whom have suffered trauma.

Calabria has given particular attention to health, given that in Ukraine the vaccination coverage rate for Covid-19 is about 35 percent, i.e., among the lowest in Europe. Other vaccine coverage of the Ukrainian population is also low. The Provincial Health Boards are operationally ready to receive the displaced persons by assigning an STP (Temporarily Present Foreigner) code that will guarantee them both Covid vaccination services and other vaccination coverage and all planned health services. For the school-age population, the PHBs will provide for the eventual administration of mandatory vaccines in accordance with current regulations for effective inclusion in schools.



The **Basque Government** Health Service (Osakidetza) guarantees health care to anyone who is under the granted temporary protection regime. This protection includes people who are displaced from Ukraine, as well as people in an irregular situation who, before the invasion, lived in Ukraine and cannot return to their country. All these people have at their disposal, in case of need, the Primary Care network, the Emergency services and the Osakidetza hospital network. For this purpose, they are being provided with the Temporary Health Care Document (DAST), which can be requested at any health center.

Region Stockholm is planning to implement health-promoting initiatives and actions around crisis and trauma in order to prevent post-traumatic stress disorder, given that many are presumed to receive death notices and experience other losses.

In **Region Skåne**, COVID-19 vaccination information is available in Ukrainian and targeted vaccination efforts are planned in collaboration with the Swedish Migration Agency, the County Administrative Board and the municipalities, where mobile teams go out to arrival accommodation and other meeting places to offer vaccination. Care providers must offer displaced people care equivalent to that given to asylum seekers. The great experience of **Partnership Skåne** on psychosocial health will be an important factor in well-being, empowerment and integration.

The region of **Valencia** is cooperating with the Red Cross and the regional health authorities to increase mental health support. In particular, Valencia is offering psychological assistance and has been working on a Mental Health Plan started already during the pandemic that now includes a dedicated work-strand for support to displaced people from Ukraine.

- **Education**

Regions have been liaising with local education authorities and supporting schools to ensure a quick access to education for children and students with adapted curricula. They have been instrumental in providing on-site assistance through Ukrainian facilitators to aid inclusion in schools.

In the **Basque Country** the Department of Education of the Basque Government has a protocol to make the schooling of Ukrainian boys and girls effective. A Monitoring Commission has been created that meets weekly. In each province, a person responsible for dialogue with families has been designated and a record of information is made on the schooling of students from Ukraine, as well as on the situation of students.

In **Calabria**, all educational institutions that receive students fleeing the conflict that will be able to draw on a financial contribution from the Regional Education Department -aimed at identifying specialists to facilitate the inclusion and school integration of Eastern European children. The Funds will be used for psychological support services, linguistic and cultural mediation, and/or other services deemed necessary for the insertion of Ukrainian students at Calabrian institutions devoted to reception.

In **Rogaland**, the focus is on upscaling the high school and upper secondary school system to receive Ukrainian youth.

Région Sud has offered free accommodation and catering for young Ukrainian students in the secondary schools and higher education.



3.2.4 *Protecting and caring for the most vulnerable*

The majority of Ukrainian refugees are women and children, including unaccompanied minors, who are especially vulnerable and require particular attention to prevent exploitation, trafficking and sexual abuse. Regional authorities have a duty in particular to guarantee that children's rights are respected, and many have responsibility for the institutional guardianship of unaccompanied children.

In **Catalonia**, the Department of Equality and Feminisms has deployed intervention and information points for human trafficking prevention in the train stations and the reception hub in Barcelona. Another protective action has been the contracting of a service in Ukrainian language for attention in case of gender-based violence.

Sicily Region has given substantial attention to the situation of unaccompanied Ukrainian minors coming mainly from orphanages in the origin country. To avoid separating the children, it maintained the same structure of these orphanages, by hosting from 30-50 children per facility. The long-time experience of Sicily Region in managing and tutoring unaccompanied minors, consequence of the arrival of thousands of MNSA through the Central Mediterranean route, has enhanced a well-structure of tutoring, not only regarding their educational and working path, but also through the assignment of voluntary tutors that are able to accompany the minors' integrational path.

Region Skåne supports cultural actors working with children from Ukraine housed at the Migration Agency's accommodation. The method of working with refugee children was developed in 2015-2016, when a large number of refugees came to Sweden from Syria. This initiative is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, where, among other things, it is established that all children have the same right to leisure, play, recreation and free participation in cultural and artistic life.

3.2.5 *Preparing for medium to long-term integration and inclusion*

While current efforts are focusing on covering Ukrainian refugees' short-term and basic needs, regional authorities are also working on comprehensive strategies and plans to ensure their longer-term socio-economic inclusion.

These strategies, which are not necessarily limited to Ukrainian refugees but can cover all other beneficiaries of international protection, are important to map out paths that can help individuals towards their inclusion and social integration. The CPMR regions that have responded to the survey, and many others within CPMR membership, already have substantial experience in the field and are building on this experience to develop specific actions targeting refugees from Ukraine.

Regions have highlighted the importance of developing a comprehensive approach in these strategies by covering all sectors that are relevant to the integration and inclusion of refugees and working in collaboration with all key local stakeholders on the ground with respect to their design and implementation.

The regional authorities are making use of the funding facilities offered by the EU to support actions in the field of integration and inclusion.



- **Facilitating language learning and access to the labour market**

Région Sud has been providing support in French as a foreign language training for refugees accommodated on the Corsica Linea ferry (1700 persons).

Catalonia has created a subsidy for companies, NGOs and municipalities to stimulate the hiring of forcibly displaced people. The grant will cover the entire salary and occupational or language training. At the same time, the job profiles of displaced people are being examined, as well as their occupation in their countries of origin, in order to design a vocational training adapted to their needs.

Region Skåne has been undertaking an early action with a win-win integration perspective to utilise foreign competence and expertise to strengthen industries and employers skills supply in the region. Region Skåne's International Office has been in contact with Ukrainian health care professionals about requirements to work in Sweden. Meetings are arranged to inform about Swedish health care and how foreign-educated persons can take the first step to get their education validated.

In **Valencia**, many companies from Ukraine are coming to the region, which is working on a system to help entrepreneurs set up their business system (administrative and legal assistance) and is setting up tech hubs (e.g. in Alicante) that would offer opportunities for displaced people from Ukraine.

- **Developing paths to integration and inclusion**

The **Basque Government** is organising solidarity, taking as a reference the Basque Community Sponsorship model. Newcomers, beyond the services that institutions can provide them, will also require social support coverage that should be oriented, at least, in three directions: i) provide help, companionship and human warmth to displaced people, ii) help them learn the language and iii) accompany them in familiarizing themselves with their new living environment, both in the use of services, shops or transport, and in knowledge.

Corsica Region is supporting the association "Solidarité-Corse-Ukraine" in the organisation of a systemic study on the medium- and long-term reception of refugees with anticipation of problems (skills assessment for better employability, adapted jobs, schooling, language learning, care of psycho-trauma...), knowing that these refugees could leave as soon as the situation improves.

The **Region of Murcia** will use the REACT-EU Fund to reinforce the Social Services of Primary Care, present in all the municipalities of the Region of Murcia, so that they have the necessary professionals for the holistic attention of displaced people, including the design of individualized itineraries of inclusion and social integration, the provision of economic aid for the coverage of basic needs that are valued necessary (aid for the rental of housing, food, clothing, school materials, etc.) and the development of actions that promote the reception, integration and intercultural coexistence of displaced people in the host society.



Region Stockholm is mobilising regional actors and identified potential actions that could be covered by ESF CARE, including the scaling up of the “Welcome House” or similar concept that can be adapted in certain respects for Ukrainian refugees with a focus on , among other things, target group-adapted social guidance and piloting, skills surveys, job matching, work preparation activities such as CV and interview training.

3.2.6 Peer-to-peer cooperation and sharing of experience

The European Commission has reiterated the opportunities provided to Member States in the European Integration Network (and, by extension, also to their regions and cities) to benefit from ‘twinning’ opportunities, during which they can learn how other Member States/regions/cities – some of which may have more developed integration policies – have tackled similar challenges. The Commission will invite Member States to come forward with proposals on such Mutual Assistance Projects (MAPs) at the next meeting of the European Integration Network meeting in the autumn 2022.

Experience gained by CPMR regional authorities that were on the frontline of the 2015 refugee crisis as well as those that have a long-standing tradition of receiving refugees has been key to providing rapid and effective responses. In these regions, systems already in place were able to be quickly adapted to cater for the arrival of Ukrainian refugees.

Cooperation initiatives allowing the sharing of good practices with less experienced regions now facing the challenge of managing refugees’ reception and integration would indeed be an effective way of boosting capacities. Existing twinings and partnerships with concerned regions are a good starting point for developing such projects.

3.3 Responding to knock-on effects in the territories

The lives of ordinary people are being dramatically affected by a war that is not of their making. In addition to the millions of Ukrainians that have been forced to leave their homes to seek refuge in Europe’s territories, the effects of the war on the economy are starting to be felt by citizens and businesses which are facing rising prices and disruption to supply chains since Russia and Ukraine provide 30 percent of European grain, as well as other important raw materials such as aluminium, platinum, nickel, copper or palladium.

Regional authorities are looking at ways to mitigate as best they can the impact on their own populations and economy.

Murcia Region has introduced a package of measures to help regional businesses. It has been detected that in the region there are more than 400 companies that may initially be directly impacted by supply problems. The region is therefore seeking alternative suppliers in South America (both cereal and sunflower oil) with whom they can put Murcian companies in contact. The region has also established a funding line to provide financial support to businesses facing changes caused by this breakdown of the supply chain.

Région Sud has earmarked €400 000 to provide adapted solutions for businesses depending on sector, in a similar initiative to the one aimed at tackling the COVID-19 crisis.,



3.4 Reconstruction of Ukraine

The European Union is already anticipating Ukraine's reconstruction and on 18 May published a Communication⁴ with proposals to set up a "Ukraine Reconstruction Platform - URP" supported financially through a mix of grants and loans known as the "RebuildUkraine Facility".

While it is the responsibility of the Ukrainian government to draw up its reconstruction plan, the URP is designed to provide a framework to oversee its implementation and coordinate contributions to the reconstruction efforts from EU countries, financial institutions and other relevant partners. The URP would be co-led by the Ukrainian government and the European Commission,

The Commission's proposal states that:

*"The reconstruction effort will need to build on Ukraine's ownership, close cooperation and coordination with supporting countries and organisations, and Ukraine's strategic partnership with the Union. **Reconstruction will also require mobilising resources at regional and local level. Peer-to-peer cooperation and programmes embedded in partnerships between cities and regions in the European Union and those in Ukraine will enrich and accelerate reconstruction.**"*

On this basis, European local and regional authorities and their counterparts in Ukraine are now reflecting on how to work together to address local and regional needs within the framework of the URP. At the European level, the Committee of the Regions has set up a [European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine](#), of which the CPMR is a partner along with other major European and Ukrainian organisations of cities and regions⁵. The Alliance aims to coordinate and facilitate the efforts of European local and regional authorities in Ukraine's sustainable reconstruction and provide feedback to the EU institutions and the Ukraine Reconstruction Platform.

Various European networks, partners of the Alliance, have long established links with Ukrainian cities and regions and are already mobilised in setting up partnerships. The city level has been particularly active in this regard. Eurocities for example signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) on 20 August 2022 with the Ukrainian Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, outlining plans to match rebuilding needs in Ukraine with capabilities of other European cities from its membership.

At the regional level, support seems still mostly focused on immediate humanitarian aid at present. However, regions have the competencies and willingness to act to contribute to the long-term reconstruction efforts. In order to harness this potential, it will be necessary to quickly determine what arrangements could be made to put in place region-to-region cooperation that could complement the city-to-city initiatives that are already taking shape.

A study commissioned by the Committee of the Regions "[Challenges and opportunities of LRAs' involvement in the reconstruction of Ukraine](#)" provides detailed contextual information and sets out some guidelines for cooperation between local and regional authorities in the framework of Ukraine's plan for reconstruction during the war and the 10-year post-war period.

⁴ [EC Communication "Regions Ukraine Relief and Reconstruction"](#) COM(2022) 233 final, 18.5.2022

⁵ [Partners of the Alliance](#): Association of Ukrainian Cities - All-Ukrainian Association of the Communities - Ukrainian Association of District and Regional Councils - All-Ukrainian Associations of Amalgamated Hromadas -Energy cities -Association of European Border Regions -The Assembly of European Regions -Council of European Municipalities and Regions -Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions -Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies -Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy -Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy in Ukraine -Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy Eastern Partnership -Eurocities



It is clear that urgent attention must be given to regions that have suffered the most destruction, but the plan covers all territories according to their specific characteristics and needs. Four types of areas are identified:

- 1) recovery areas (the most affected communities, where the hostilities took place and/or which were occupied, and/or which were destroyed);
- 2) regional poles of growth (are characterized by significantly better development indicators);
- 3) territories with special conditions for development (whose level of socio-economic development is low or where there are objective restrictions regarding the use of the territory's potential for development);
- 4) areas of sustainable development (self-sufficient areas with existing socio-economic potential, which are capable to provide balanced development).

In the spirit of “building back better”, reconstruction projects as a priority should be aligned with the EU Green Deal and be conceived within a long-term perspective of modernisation and sustainable regional development.

In addition to physical rebuilding, institutional capacity building needs could be addressed through peer-to-peer cooperation, focusing on reform, transparency, accountability, and rule of law, democratic participation, multistakeholder engagement, gender equality and inclusion and sustainability.

A flexible and effective way to provide assistance on the regional and local level is to boost twinnings, which can ensure win-win cooperation through, for example, investment and mutual development of business, tourism, social and cultural activities, transfer and exchange of know-how. In this regard, projects at the regional level could provide added value and rationalise resources by covering a greater area than numerous small-scale initiatives.

There could be a **potential specific role for CPMR regions** in assisting Ukraine's coastal regions along the Black Sea to achieve their sustainable development, while allowing their major ports such Kherson, Mariupol, Mykolaiv and Odesa return to their central place in the world's economy.

The **CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission** has already been following the different initiatives related to the situation in Ukraine, undertaken by the **Think Tank Network on the Eastern Partnership**, the Eastern **Partnership Civil Society Forum**, and **Black Sea NGO Forum** which could prove useful to develop any future initiatives.

European regions could also share knowledge and experience with Ukrainian regional authorities on the setting up of **regional development agencies**. Such agencies would have the task of drawing up regional development strategies and action plans for the effective implementation of the state regional policy.



4 FUTURE CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Keeping solidarity alive

As the war drags on, it will be a challenge to maintain the level of solidarity, since public support may wane as Europe's citizens feel the economic pressures linked to the cost-of-living crisis. However, with no imminent end to the war in sight, continued humanitarian support will be needed on the ground especially as winter approaches.

Regional authorities can be active to lead information campaigns and keep awareness high among their population about solidarity with Ukrainians, but also refugees in general.

4.2 Improving regional capacities for the reception, integration and inclusion of refugees

Regional authorities play a crucial role in dealing with the reception and integration of large numbers of refugees arriving in the European Union.

They are facing challenges related to the provision of services in the fields of healthcare including mental health, language training, education, housing, access to labour market, legal and administrative aid.

It is difficult for regional authorities to track the exact number of refugees in their territory, since many Ukrainians are currently living with family or friends and may be outside the official national reception system or not yet have registered for temporary protection. However, the support capacity of individuals who have opened their homes to welcome displaced people will inevitably be exhausted over time. It is likely therefore that there will be an increasing number of Ukrainian refugees requiring some form of support from regional public authorities in the near future.

A UN survey⁶ shows that two-thirds of people fleeing Russia's invasion plan to remain in their host countries until hostilities subside and security improves. It is therefore necessary to consider the inclusion of these people beyond the initial emergency reception period.

Finally, European interregional cooperation in this field can be helpful to boost the capacities of regions less experienced in integration and inclusion and which are now required to deal with these matters.

Experiences of many CPMR regions are relevant and valuable for lesser experienced regions receiving Ukraine refugees. Cooperation projects and sharing of practices can be an effective way of boosting capacities.

Regions could prepare long-term strategies for Ukrainian refugees as part or on top of their existing strategies addressing asylum seekers. These plans might also take into account those who in due time will return to Ukraine, for example by including skills development that can contribute to the country's reconstruction.

⁶ Lives on Hold: Profiles and Intentions of Refugees from Ukraine <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/94176>



Regions will need to mobilise significant human and financial resources over the longer term to keep addressing refugees' needs, since integration and inclusion are long-term processes. It should not be forgotten that they are providing care and support for all beneficiaries of international protection, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants. Securing sustainable EU support would allow them to improve regional capacities and enhance integration outcomes for refugees as well as migrants in general.

4.3 Emergency funding

Regions responding to the CPMR survey have generally welcomed the swift action of the European Union and highlight the positive benefit of flexibility in the use of EU funds.

However, on the negative side, they regret that the administrative burden does not match the emergency nature of the spending, and there has been a lack of guidelines from the European Commission, especially at the beginning, as to what the funds can and cannot be used for.

Finally, the regions fear a risk of moving funds away from other regional development actions requiring a more structural a long-term approach. In this respect, the CPMR has raised the issue of the recent tendency to use Cohesion policy to respond to urgent crises to the possible detriment of dealing with fundamental structural issues that aim to reduce territorial disparities in the long term.⁷

Furthermore, the proposed regulation on “addressing situations of crisis and force majeure in the field of migration and asylum” states that it is not possible to estimate the possible budgetary impact due to the fact it is linked to a crisis situation. Therefore, it would be accommodated as far as possible within the budget of the existing instruments under the period 2021-2027 in the field of migration and asylum, and where necessary, using the flexibility mechanisms provided within the EU budget for 2021-2027.

On the other hand, some aspects of these emergency funding measures, notably FAST-CARE, could lead to paradigm shift with regard to the future Cohesion policy in terms of a possible end to co-financing, smoother transition between programming periods and higher levels of prefinancing.⁸

The dichotomy between the short and the long term is a real problem that reveals the underfunding of the European budget, which has no room for manoeuvre to deal with emergencies. Cohesion policy should remain focused on long-term objectives, and other crisis management mechanisms (including for migration) should be provided. In this regard and with a long-term vision, a serious debate should also take place on EU own resources so that the Council can work alongside the Parliament to revamp the revenue side of the Multiannual Financial Framework.

⁷ [CPMR Reflection Paper – Cohesion Policy as an emergency-response instrument: A boon or a bane?](#), April 2022

⁸ [CPMR Reflection Paper – Why “FAST-CARE” matters for the future of cohesion policy](#), June 2022



4.4 The future of European Migration and Asylum Policies

If the successive refugee crises of 2015 and 2022 have taught us anything, it is that the global geopolitical context is highly volatile, and the everyday lives of ordinary people can be upended from one day to the next. On a global scale today, there have never been so many people displaced due to conflict, violence and disasters.

Challenges are only set to become greater, as the world faces the risk of escalating conflicts, climate disasters, famine and extreme poverty pushing people to move from their homelands and seek refuge. Immobility or lack of long-term vision at European Union level would directly impact the regions as they continue to bear the brunt of failed EU policy, lack of solidarity, disinformation and inadequate resources to deal with the migration phenomena

Regional authorities could reflect on how to draw lessons from the huge movement in favour of Ukrainian refugees in order, subsequently, to provoke the same momentum towards other refugees who are a little more neglected.

In the future, the EU should do more to ensure a fair, non-discriminatory and equal treatment of all beneficiaries of international protection and vulnerable migrants.

The new regulation “addressing situations of crisis and force majeure in the field of migration and asylum” should take into account both the capacities and challenges of regional authorities with regard to dealing with massive and sudden migration flows.

4.5 Rebuilding Ukraine with the regions

European cities and regions have pledged their support and willingness to contribute to Ukraine’s reconstruction. The challenge now is to transform those pledges into concrete actions.

At the same time, on the Ukrainian side, there is a need to ensure that the Reconstruction Plan being drawn up at the national level provides sufficient room for involving the country’s local and regional authorities.

Expectations from Ukrainian local and regional authorities are high, but the actual capacities of European regional and local authorities will not be sufficient to respond to all the expressed needs, especially in the current context that carries several risks and complexities. There must therefore be a realistic evaluation as to what such cooperation can achieve.



CPMR member Regions could benefit from existing cooperation that has been built through its Balkan and Black Sea Commission with relevant networks in the area⁹ which could provide the relevant contacts and knowledge to develop specific initiatives.

Interested Regions should examine possibilities for securing financial resources that could benefit cooperation partnerships between EU and Ukrainian regions. Such opportunities should be seized through the existing budget (for instance NDICI-Global Europe already has a strand dedicated to neighbourhood cooperation undertaken by regional and local authorities).

In addition, regions might wish to call for additional funding and specific instruments under the RebuildUkraine Facility. In this regard the Alliance of Regions and Cities for the Reconstruction of Ukraine, with the support of the CPMR, proposes to create a funding instrument based on a system of voluntary guarantees from Member States which would enable the EU to issue "Ukraine Reconstruction Bonds".

Regions that have helped with humanitarian aid and sending of supplies to Ukraine could transform local contacts into more lasting relations. However, they need to take care to move away from the "donor-receiver" logic in order to build projects based on a true peer-to-peer partnership with clearly identified roles.

Regions currently hosting refugees in their territories could, as part of their integration programmes, include skills training in areas that could provide added value for the reconstruction efforts that displaced people can bring back and usefully employ once they return to their country.

⁹ The CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission is a member of the Think Tank Network on the Eastern Partnership (<https://dgap.org/en/research/programs/international-order-and-democracy-network-on-eastern-partnership>) and the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (<https://eap-csf.eu/>). It also cooperates with the Black Sea NGO Forum (<https://blackseango.org/>)



5 REFERENCES

Related links of the EU institutions

- European Parliament's [How the EU is supporting Ukraine](#)
- Council of the EU's [EU restrictive measures against Russia over Ukraine \(since 2014\)](#)
- Council of the EU's [Timeline - EU restrictive measures against Russia over Ukraine](#)
- [List of persons and entities under EU restrictive measures over the territorial integrity of Ukraine](#)
- Commission's [EU solidarity with Ukraine](#)
- Commission's [EU sanctions against Russia for following the invasion of Ukraine](#)
- European Committee of the Regions
 - [CoR Stands in Solidarity with Ukraine.](#)
 - The [Info-Support Hub](#) for Regions and Cities is an initiative led by the [CoR Working Group on Ukraine](#) to facilitate concrete help by EU's regions and cities via the CoR and other territorial stakeholders, responding to the needs in Ukraine and in the EU's regions and cities hosting refugees.
 - [Alliance for the Reconstruction of Ukraine](#)
- European External Action Service's [EU Relations with Ukraine](#)
- European External Action Service's [Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine](#)

Listed below some examples (non exhaustive list) of solidarity initiatives launched by European organisations of regional and local authorities:

- **CPMR Political Bureau** [statement on Ukraine](#) adopted at its meeting in Barcelona on 25 March 2022.
Statements of the [Baltic Sea Commission](#) (adopted on 8 March 2022) and [Balkan and Black Sea Commission](#) (adopted on 24 March 2022)
- **Council of Europe:** [Cities4Cities](#) Platform
- **Assembly of European Regions (AER):** <https://aer.eu/aer-releases-statement-on-invasion-of-ukraine/> publication of a list of charities working on the ground to provide humanitarian relief in Ukraine
- **Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR):** <https://www.ccre.org/en/actualites/view/4275> call to sign statement and setting up of a Task Force to coordinate support for Ukrainian municipalities
- **United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG):** statement on Ukraine <https://www.uclg.org/en/media/news/uclg-statement-attack-ukraine>
- **Cités Unis France** in coordination with **UCLG** and **CEMR**: opening of a solidarity fund to support neighbouring municipalities in their capacity to welcome refugees and offer refugees and local inhabitants quality public services (emergency shelter, food, health care, psychological support, etc.). <https://cites-unies-france.org/Fonds-de-solidarite-de-Cites-Unies-France>
- **Eurocities:** <https://eurocities.eu/> sharing of city actions regarding solidarity with Ukraine. Delegation of Mayors and pledge <https://eurocities.eu/latest/on-ukraine-visit-mayors-pledge-sustainable-rebuilding/>



	<p>The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) represents more than 150 regional authorities from 24 countries across Europe and beyond. Organised in geographical commissions, the CPMR works to ensure that a balanced territorial development is at the heart of the European Union and its policies.</p>
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