

## ILO - La Strada International - ETUC

# PREVENTING EXPLOITATION AND ENSURING DECENT WORK FOR REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

**Friday 24th June, 9:30-12:45 (CEST/GMT+2)**

### Context

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24 has caused a humanitarian crisis. In Ukraine, the continuing war has devastated many once sprawling cities, killed civilians, exposed them to violence and other serious rights violations, separated families, destroyed livelihoods and completely disrupted life in the country.

As of 1 June, almost 7 million Ukrainian residents have fled<sup>1</sup> since the start of the war. They represent the largest movement of persons since World War II. Most of them fled to neighbouring EU Member States – such as Poland (ca 3.5 million), Romania (ca. 970 000), and Hungary (ca. 650 000) but also to non-EU countries such as Moldova (ca. 473 000) and Russia (ca. 945 000). The vast majority of those seeking refuge abroad are women and children. While in recent weeks, the number of people returning to Ukraine has increased substantially, it is too early to determine whether these returns are permanent. At the same time, there is evidence that many cross the border between Ukraine and border countries regularly.

In the wake of the invasion, there has been an outpouring of support for and solidarity with Ukraine and its people in many parts of the world. Their protection and support demands include a need to decent work and a decent income, as the devastating consequences of the war extent to all areas of life and society in Ukraine, including the labour market.

In a resolution adopted in March 2022, the Governing Body of the ILO strongly condemned the Russian aggression and urged all ILO members to *take measures, in accordance with national and applicable international law, to protect and ensure labour rights and a safe environment for all those fleeing Ukraine, in particular those in vulnerable situations*<sup>2</sup>.

In an initial assessment of the socio-economic impact of the war on Ukraine and its neighbouring countries, the ILO has highlighted its deleterious effects on jobs, with an estimated 4.8 million jobs already destroyed<sup>3</sup>. The assessment furthermore notes that many of the adults fleeing tend to be highly skilled women who were previously employed. Nevertheless, the report underlined the significant labour market integration challenges neighbouring countries such as Poland, Romania, Hungary and Moldova are facing due to the sheer numbers of persons seeking refuge on their territory.

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<sup>1</sup><https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_839998.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_839998.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>[https://www.ilo.org/europe/publications/WCMS\\_844295/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/europe/publications/WCMS_844295/lang--en/index.htm)

In a vital and unprecedented step, the Council of the EU decided to activate the Temporary Protection Directive<sup>4</sup> in early March. This Directive grants persons falling under its scope important rights, such as a residence permit, social care, access to health care and education, and importantly, immediate access to the labour market.

Encouragingly, some of those fleeing have already found employment in the EU. In Poland, about 102 000 Ukrainians - 75% of them women - have already found jobs<sup>5</sup> and more than 50 000 Ukrainians have reportedly been hired in the Czech Republic<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, according to the Dutch public employment agency, more than 4,300 refugees from Ukraine are now working in the Netherlands with many of them placed through recruitment agencies.<sup>7</sup>

Foreign workers often face exploitative working conditions in multiple sectors, such as domestic work and agriculture and their situation has gained political attention in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, NGOs, trade unions and intergovernmental organisations and networks such as La Strada International<sup>8</sup>, the ETUC, the OSCE<sup>9</sup>, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT)<sup>10</sup> and others have warned on the need to prevent potential abuse and exploitation of those fleeing the war, including in the labour market<sup>11</sup>.

## Purpose

In this webinar organised by ILO, ETUC and La Strada International, we aim to gather the respective perspectives and experiences of relevant actors at the international, European, and selected national levels, NGOs, employers' and workers' organisations on the challenges persons fleeing Ukraine face in finding decent work. Questions we seek to answer are:

- What are barriers to finding decent work, including obstacles related to the implementation of the EU Temporary Protection Directive and access to the labour market?
- Which sectors do persons fleeing Ukraine find work in?
- What measures have been taken to ensure that they have access to decent work?
- What are success stories? What are elements that contributed to this success?
- Are there indications of labour exploitation and how could abuse best be prevented?

While it is still too early to assess comprehensively the experiences of persons having fled Ukraine on the EU and Moldovan labour market, we hope to gather first experiences and evidence that could support a more comprehensive assessment at a later stage.

## Target audience

This webinar is of interest to government officials in different EU Member States who work on integrating former residents from Ukraine into the labour market, employers' organisations and trade unions, NGOs, international organisations, officials of the EU institutions working to provide support to those persons fleeing Ukraine. It is also of interest to the research community.

## Format

The event will take the form of a webinar. The questions posed above will be addressed in the two panels. The webinar will be held in English and interpretation from English into Ukrainian will be available.

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<sup>4</sup><https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32022D0382>

<sup>5</sup>102,000 Ukrainian citizens have already found employment in Poland - Ministry of Family and Social Policy - Portal Gov.pl ([www.gov.pl](http://www.gov.pl)) 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2022

<sup>6</sup><https://interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/79308/> (May 19 2022)

<sup>7</sup>A total of 47,930 Ukrainian refugees in the Netherlands are now registered in the Personal Records Database (BRP); nearly 10 percent of that number are now employed, UUV, May 2022

<sup>8</sup><https://www.lastradainternational.org/news/new-report-sounds-alarm-on-ukraine-trafficking-risks/>

<sup>9</sup><https://www.osce.org/secretariat/513913>

<sup>10</sup><https://icat.un.org/events/05-2022/icat-issues-joint-press-release-human-trafficking-context-war-ukraine>

<sup>11</sup><https://www.lastradainternational.org/news/new-report-sounds-alarm-on-ukraine-trafficking-risks/>

## AGENDA:

**9:30**

### Opening and Welcome

- **Ms Lieve Verboven**, Director, ILO Office for the EU and the Benelux countries
- **Ms Suzanne Hoff**, International Coordinator, La Strada International

**9:40-11:00**

### Panel 1: Perspectives and experiences from the international and European level

- **Mr Igor Degnera**, Acting Interim Head of the Ukrainian Labour Inspection (SLS – State Labour Service) (tbc)
- **Mr Pedro Assures Rodrigues**, Head of the Enforcement and Analysis Unit, European Labour Authority
- **Mr Xavi Gomila**, Global Public Affairs Manager, World Employment Federation
- **Ms Mercedes Miletti**, Advisor of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

Moderator: Ms. Lieve Verboven, Director ILO Office for the EU and the Benelux countries

**11:15-12:45**

### Panel 2: Perspectives and experiences from the national contexts

- **Mr Bart Stalpaert**, Director, Social Information and Investigation Service (SIIS), Belgium (tbc)
- **Mr Vasyly Andreyev**, Vice Chair, Federation of Trade Unions in Ukraine, President of the Construction and Building Materials Workers Union of Ukraine (PROFBUD)
- **Mr Benjamin Cope**, Researcher, Foundation Nasz Wybor
- **Mr Zsolt Dudas**, Project Manager in Ukraine, International Labour Organisation

Moderator: Suzanne Hoff, International Coordinator, La Strada International

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