



**European Committee
of the Regions**

Background Note & Questions

for stakeholders' consultation in the preparation of the CoR draft opinion

From Temporary Protection to Sustainable Solutions for Displaced Ukrainians in the EU – the role of cities and regions

Rapporteur Antje Grotheer (DE/PES)

10 July, 10:00 - 11:00 (CET), online, via Teams

Background and recent developments

Over four years on from Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the displacement of millions of Ukrainians remains one of Europe's largest humanitarian and integration challenges. Around 4.4 million displaced Ukrainians are currently granted temporary protection in the European Union, most of whom are women and children. [The Temporary Protection Directive \(2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001\)](#), activated for the first time in March 2022 ([Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/382, 04/03/2022](#)), enabled an unprecedented EU response by granting immediate access to residence, employment, healthcare, education and social support while preventing national asylum systems from becoming overwhelmed.

Recently, on 26 June 2026, the European Commission proposed a further one-year extension of temporary protection until 4 March 2028 ([Commission proposal COM \(2026\)345 final](#)). The proposal reflects the assessment that conditions for safe and durable return are not yet in place, given Russia's continued war of aggression, security risks, extensive destruction of infrastructure and ongoing humanitarian needs across Ukraine. In the proposal, the Commission outlined that around 4.4 million displaced Ukrainians remain under temporary protection and that an abrupt end to the regime could create legal uncertainty¹.

In the context of this latest proposal, the Commission notes the need that further extension of temporary protection should not undermine the legitimate overall ability of Ukraine to defend itself and proposes objective criteria for exclusion of future applicants for temporary protection, notably by requiring persons subject to military obligations under Ukrainian law to demonstrate that they are authorised by the Ukrainian authorities to leave Ukraine in compliance with those obligations.

¹ [Commission proposes to extend temporary protection for people fleeing Ukraine for an additional year \(26 June 2026\)](#)



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While the temporary protection framework has proven highly effective as an emergency instrument, by its nature, it cannot serve as a permanent solution. As displaced Ukrainians have established their lives in host communities, the proposed extension of temporary protection should not delay preparations for longer-term solutions. The importance of implementing sustainable transition pathways, including access to alternative legal statuses and strengthened integration measures, has therefore become increasingly evident. In this new phase, attention has also shifted towards supporting the active engagement of the Ukrainian diaspora in Ukraine's reconstruction efforts.

In this context, the [European Commission in its Communication "A common European way forward for Ukrainians in the EU"](#) (4 June 2025) and [the Council in its Recommendation on a coordinated approach to the transition beyond temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine](#) (adopted in 2025) have also outlined three complementary objectives for a gradual and coordinated transition beyond temporary protection:

- ensuring legal certainty through access to appropriate national residence statuses;
- supporting the continued inclusion and self-reliance of Ukrainians in EU communities;
- preparing, where conditions allow, for future voluntary return and reintegration in Ukraine.

Why this discussion matters for cities and regions

While decisions on legal status are taken mainly at EU and national level, the practical consequences of the transition are experienced and managed locally. Cities and regions have been at the forefront of welcoming displaced Ukrainians and remain responsible for many of the services that determine successful inclusion, including housing, education, healthcare, social support, language training and labour-market integration.

At the same time, important challenges remain. Member States are progressing at different speeds in preparing transition frameworks, and access to long-term residence pathways, housing, skills' recognition and social support varies significantly across EU Member States. Moreover, while labour-market participation among Ukrainians is relatively high, skills' mismatches and underemployment persist, constraining both integration and human capital development, relevant to Ukraine's reconstruction.

As the discussion on the future of displaced Ukrainians in the EU extends beyond questions of legal status and protection, EU institutions, international organisations and Ukrainian authorities emphasise the strategic importance of human capital development for Ukraine's future recovery and reconstruction. This approach reflects the policy objective set out by the European Commission and the Council, whereby continued inclusion in host societies and the possibility of future voluntary return are considered complementary and mutually reinforcing



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objective that contribute to the development and preservation of Ukraine's human capital. Investments in skills, education, qualifications recognition and quality employment benefit both host societies and Ukraine's longer-term recovery prospects.

[The CoR European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine](#) is uniquely placed to contribute to this discussion. Through its network, it can help identify practical challenges, exchange good practices and promote partnerships that link inclusion, skills development and reconstruction efforts. The Alliance can also contribute to discussions on how local and regional authorities could support emerging initiatives such as Unity Hubs and future voluntary return and reintegration.

Therefore, the Alliance, is invited to contribute to the preparation of this CoR own political initiative opinion, which seeks to identify practical recommendations that support sustainable solutions for displaced Ukrainians in the EU and their involvement in Ukraine's long-term recovery, as well as support for their voluntary return when conditions allow.

The timetable for the CoR own-initiative opinion is as follows:

- discussion and adoption at the CIVEX Commission on 9 September 2026;
- adoption in the CoR Plenary session on 13 -14 October 2026.

Questions for the discussion with stakeholders

- To what extent are local and regional authorities meaningfully involved in the planning and implementation of the transition and its relevant measures - including the planning of strengthened inclusion pathways, and in this context, where do concrete coordination gaps emerge between EU, national and sub-national levels?
- What are the main challenges and foreseeable obstacles that EU Member States, cities, regions and Ukrainian people face in the transition beyond temporary protection, particularly in relation to access to national residence statuses and other legal pathways, and what are the key measures needed to ensure a coordinated transition?
- Which measures have proven most effective in supporting the integration and inclusion of displaced Ukrainians in the EU host communities - in areas such as housing, education, healthcare, skills recognition and employment, and how can existing barriers and challenges be addressed more effectively?
- How can national, regional and local authorities better engage and support the development of human capital in a way that benefits both host communities and Ukraine's



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recovery and reconstruction? What good practices and practical approaches are already in place and can be promoted?

- How can local and regional authorities, both in the EU and in Ukraine, support preparatory efforts for the future voluntary return and reintegration of displaced Ukrainians, when conditions allow? What supportive legal, social and economic conditions can be put in place to facilitate voluntary, informed and sustainable return of displaced persons to Ukraine? Are there any good practices already?
- What practical approaches should be developed and promoted to support Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction? Are there any good practices already?
- In light of the recent Commission proposal to extend temporary protection until March 2028 and in particular the proposal not to admit to temporary protection future applicants who are not authorised to leave Ukraine because of the need to comply with their military obligations, what practical implications could this approach have for national, regional and local authorities responsible for implementing temporary protection? What would be the potential implications of this approach for potential beneficiaries of temporary protection?

The stakeholders' consultation will provide an opportunity to exchange perspectives and contribute to the development of recommendations for the CoR opinion. Therefore, you are kindly invited to share their views, experiences, good practices and questions related to the topics outlined above.

We look forward to your valuable insights and fruitful exchange.