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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**A predictable and common European way forward for Ukrainians in the EU**

# **A predictable and common European way forward for Ukrainians in the EU**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Since the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the European Union has shown unwavering support through its political, humanitarian, military and diplomatic aid, as well as by being Ukraine's largest financial donor<sup>1</sup>. In parallel, the EU has imposed massive and unprecedented sanctions on Russia and those complicit in Russia's war effort<sup>2</sup>. Member States and their citizens have sent a powerful message of solidarity towards Ukraine and its people fleeing the war, by offering them immediate protection and support, including access to accommodation, healthcare, education and employment. As a result, millions of displaced people from Ukraine have found safety, shelter and opportunities across the EU.

The activation of the Temporary Protection Directive<sup>3</sup> set out a common EU approach, giving predictability and legal certainty both to the displaced persons from Ukraine and to the Member States. It has provided immediate protection, while also preventing an additional strain on already overstretched national asylum systems. Temporary protection, currently in place until March 2026, has therefore proven to be an effective and proportionate response to the exceptional circumstances.

As the situation in Ukraine remains precarious, the Commission is committed to continuing its unwavering support to the country and its people. Many persons enjoying temporary protection have built strong ties with their host societies in the EU, through language learning, employment, education, cultural initiatives and not least their children's integration.

A continued common EU approach is essential to ensure balanced responsibility-sharing among Member States. Following close consultations with Member States under the guidance of the Polish Presidency of the Council, and bearing in mind the views of the Ukrainian government, it is therefore necessary to prolong temporary protection by an additional year, whilst preparing to offer a more stable and lasting perspective to persons enjoying temporary protection, including supporting safe, voluntary and dignified returns to Ukraine.

Ukraine holds significant economic promise and, looking ahead to its recovery and long-term development, the country will increasingly rely on the support of its own citizens to drive reconstruction and shape its future. Ukraine needs its people back, as vital members of their communities, bringing with them the strength, experience and resilience needed to restore everyday life and social cohesion. A common way forward is required, one that offers predictability, stability, and ensures a balanced impact on Member States. This should allow sufficient time for persons enjoying temporary protection to transition to other legal statuses that better represent their actual situation, for example for work, study or family reasons, as well as support for those wishing to go back to Ukraine.

This Communication sets out a common European path for the future of the Ukrainians present today in the EU. It is accompanied by proposals for a Council Implementing Decision on the prolongation of temporary protection, and for a Council Recommendation outlining a series of measures to pave the way for a smooth and well-coordinated transition out of temporary protection and for supporting those who wish to go back home to Ukraine.

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<sup>1</sup> [EU assistance to Ukraine - European Commission](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Sanctions adopted following Russia's military aggression against Ukraine - European Commission.](#)

<sup>3</sup> Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof, L 212/12, 7.8.2001.

## 2. TEMPORARY PROTECTION

The estimated number of persons enjoying temporary protection<sup>4</sup> in the EU+<sup>5</sup> is over 4.4 million<sup>6</sup>, and people continue to arrive.

In the first three months of 2025, almost 142 000 decisions granting temporary protection were issued in the EU+, at an average monthly rate of around 47 000<sup>7</sup> decisions. Around 800 000<sup>8</sup> people have returned to Ukraine from Member States, however current movements are mostly pendular in nature. Asylum applications<sup>9</sup> in the EU by Ukrainians reached almost 27 000 in 2024, with a recognition rate of 87%. Applications have continued to increase in the first months of 2025, with almost 6 000 Ukrainian asylum applications lodged in the EU between January and February 2025<sup>10</sup>.

The Temporary Protection Directive continues to provide a sound legal framework for ensuring the same, harmonised standards of protection for millions of displaced people from Ukraine. The current precarious and uncertain situation in Ukraine shows that safe and durable conditions do not currently exist in large parts of Ukraine for those wishing to go back. UNHCR assesses that most persons enjoying temporary protection are unlikely to return voluntarily in the short term, primarily due to the ongoing safety and security concerns, whilst also indicating concerns about the stability of any potential ceasefire. As such, it is important that the EU stands by its commitment to provide assistance to those displaced for as long as needed, based on our values of solidarity, humanity, and respect for human rights. Therefore, the Commission is presenting a **proposal for a Council Implementing Decision to further prolong temporary protection** for an additional year, until 4 March 2027.

As the EU will continue to offer temporary protection and the ensuing rights, displaced people from Ukraine should be reassured that applying for international protection is neither necessary, nor required. Providing persons enjoying temporary protection with clarity and legal certainty, as well as encouraging people to transition towards other legal statuses that better reflect their actual situation, will also avoid an additional strain on national asylum systems.

In the three years since the activation of the Directive, the need to provide for temporary protection, coupled with the possibility for temporary protection to be enjoyed in the Member State of choice, has impacted the reception systems of Member States in an uneven way. The impact in some cases has been further compounded by the additional pressure of having to simultaneously cope with large numbers of asylum applications, as well as practical issues such as housing. Going forward, it is important to continue working towards ensuring a greater balance of effort among Member States.

In particular, Member States should reject requests for residence permits from individuals who have already received a residence permit for temporary protection in another Member State and are already benefitting from temporary protection rights on that basis<sup>11</sup>. This can help to

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<sup>4</sup> [Eurostat | Data](#).

<sup>5</sup> EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland.

<sup>6</sup> In March 2025, the Member States with the largest number of persons enjoying temporary protection were Germany (1 184 890), Poland (997 120), the Czech Republic (365 055), Spain (233 825), Italy (165 225) and Romania (182 835). When considering only the EU Member States, the number of beneficiaries of temporary protection amounts to nearly 4.3 million.

<sup>7</sup> -21% compared to the monthly average recorded in the first three months of 2024, and -24% compared to the monthly average for the whole of 2024. [Eurostat | Data](#).

<sup>8</sup> [IOM DTM Ukraine — Returns Report — General Population Survey Round 20 \(April 2025\)](#).

<sup>9</sup> [Eurostat | Data](#).

<sup>10</sup> +86% compared to the same period in 2024; [Eurostat | Data](#).

<sup>11</sup> See in this regard Case C-753/23 paragraph 30.

avoid multiple registrations for temporary protection and ensure that the rights attached to such protection are enjoyed in only one Member State at a time.

### **3. OFFERING A LASTING PERSPECTIVE AND SUPPORT TO UKRAINIANS IN THEIR CHOICES**

More than anything, Ukraine needs its people, to restore the threads of society and rebuild its economy and infrastructure. At the same time, many displaced Ukrainians are building new lives within the EU. Ukraine is actively working to create favourable conditions for the safe return of its citizens and residents, with EU support, both through incentives and through outreach to Ukrainians living abroad. Meanwhile, access to employment and education granted by Member States brings benefits not only to those who are eligible and choose to stay in the EU but also to those planning to return home. To offer a more stable and lasting perspective, the Commission is committed to supporting displaced people from Ukraine in making informed decisions about their future.

#### ***3.1 Supporting Member States with the inclusion of displaced Ukrainians within the EU***

Employment and education are at the heart of the rights that displaced people from Ukraine are enjoying in the EU, in addition to accommodation, healthcare and social assistance. The efforts to provide access to the labour market and to grant access to education under the same conditions as EU nationals will bring benefits in the future both for those who are eligible and choose to stay in the EU, and for those who will go back home.

Access to **employment** has made a major contribution to helping displaced persons from Ukraine find their place in their host societies, making a positive contribution to local communities. Work to prevent skills being lost has been combined with help for displaced people who obtained European qualifications to find befitting employment in Ukraine. EU-level initiatives and funding are supporting Member States' efforts for the integration of displaced persons from Ukraine in the EU labour market<sup>12</sup>. Public employment services play a key role in active labour market policies to make the best use of the jobseekers' skills, ensure matchmaking on the labour market and the exchange of good practices and information. The comparison established in 2023 between the European Qualifications Framework and the Ukrainian national qualifications framework contributes to a smoother integration in the EU labour market. The Commission also launched a web-based EU Talent Pool Pilot<sup>13</sup> to help match displaced Ukrainian jobseekers with job vacancies published by EU employers. Euraxess, the EU platform for employment in research and innovation, offers specific job opportunities for Ukrainian researchers under its ERA4Ukraine initiative, including in European Research Council teams.

In March 2025, 1.3 million displaced minors<sup>14</sup> from Ukraine were benefitting from temporary protection, including 840 000 **children** at compulsory schooling age<sup>15</sup>. 700 000 are estimated to be enrolled in local schools from early childhood education and care to upper secondary education across the EU<sup>16</sup>. With support from the European Education Area strategic framework, the EU supports Member States through policy guidance, peer learning, online platforms, funding – notably Erasmus+ – and data collection, as well as exchange of good practices. Maintaining links with the Ukrainian language and culture will help reintegration

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<sup>12</sup> See [Communication on Guidance for access to the labour market, vocational education and training and adult learning of people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine](#).

<sup>13</sup> [EU Talent Pool Pilot](#).

<sup>14</sup> [Eurostat | Data](#).

<sup>15</sup> The estimate on the number of children at compulsory schooling age is based on the Education and Training Monitor 2023: [Education and training monitor 2023 - Publications Office of the EU](#).

<sup>16</sup> [The inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in EU education systems](#).

into Ukraine's education system. In particular, access to cultural life also supports emotional well-being, with support from Creative Europe aimed at facilitating the social and cultural integration of displaced persons. The 2023 Arrangement for Cooperation on Education between the Commission and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine specifically encourages enrolment in host country schools and the mutual recognition of academic qualifications. The Ukrainian government has already put measures in place to ensure easy recognition of education when returning to Ukraine.

The EU has been supporting Member States hosting displaced people from Ukraine through **EU funding**, in particular under the relevant Home Affairs Funds and cohesion policy funding<sup>17</sup>. These funding possibilities provide the flexibility to reflect specific national contexts and financial needs, including for the integration of the persons enjoying temporary protection. Cohesion policy has provided EUR 13.6 billion of additional liquidity for Member States accommodating people from Ukraine, and another EUR 1.4 billion has been reallocated within existing funding programmes to provide direct support to displaced people from Ukraine. The EU is making available a further EUR 3 billion until the end of 2027, to support Member States in implementing the Pact on Migration and Asylum and to cater for persons enjoying temporary protection. Around EUR 1 billion from the mid-term review of Member States' programmes will in addition be made available for the same period to address relevant priorities under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), including the hosting of persons enjoying temporary protection.

### ***3.2 Supporting the creation of Unity Hubs***

Following the initiative of the Ukrainian Minister of National Unity to set up centres in the EU that could help maintain a connection with Ukrainians living abroad, some Member States have taken up this idea and are currently in the process of establishing Unity Hubs on their territory. Unity Hubs provide information, referrals and advice to displaced people from Ukraine. As well as facilitating the return of those wishing to go back to Ukraine, this can also support integration into host societies and in the labour market of those who wish to stay, with a better development and use of their skills.

To help finance Unity Hubs, Member States can draw on the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) programme. International organisations, such as the UNHCR, IOM and ICMPD, can also support displaced persons from Ukraine to make well-informed voluntary decisions whether to remain in host countries or to go back to Ukraine, through the provision of accurate and independent information and counselling. Member States are encouraged to make use of the knowledge, capacities and networks offered by these organisations, as well as of support offered by partner countries, to make the most of the Unity Hubs.

In order to support the setting-up of Unity Hubs, the Commission will appoint a Special Envoy for Ukrainians in the EU, who will be tasked with coordinating with national representatives in the Member States, with international organisations that can provide information services and return counselling – notably UNHCR, IOM and ICMPD –, as well as with the Ministry of National Unity in Ukraine. The Solidarity Platform – Ukraine<sup>18</sup> will also serve as a coordination forum at expert level. The Platform brings together the Commission, Member States, and international organisations, as well as Ukrainian authorities. Through the Solidarity Platform, the Commission will also facilitate information exchange and the coordination of support measures, keeping an overview of the assistance provided across Member States, to ensure

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<sup>17</sup> Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe, the so-called 'CARE' package (CARE, CARE-plus and Fast-CARE).

<sup>18</sup> The Solidarity Platform was set up in March 2022 to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Temporary Protection Directive. Its added value lies in the overall coordination of the EU response to the Russian aggression against Ukraine, by offering an informal space for the quick alignment of operational and policy responses by key stakeholders.

credibility and consistency. It will aim to streamline efforts amongst the various stakeholders and raise awareness of the importance of helping the local communities in Ukraine to be ready for returns. Focusing support on local communities will strengthen social cohesion in Ukraine. The Commission will continue to pull together technical and policy expertise for the Unity Hubs' efficient operationalisation, as well as encourage corresponding measures from the Ukrainian authorities.

In Ukraine, the counterpart for the Unity Hubs will be the National Unity Agency as the key implementing body of the Ministry of National Unity of Ukraine. The Agency will support the establishment of Unity Hubs in the EU and facilitate broader initiatives aimed at strengthening national cohesion, advancing cultural and civic ties with the Ukrainian community, as well as supporting voluntary return and reintegration efforts.

The Commission will also provide dedicated technical support to the newly established Ministry of National Unity. This will increase its capacity to establish Unity Hubs, as well as services in Ukraine for those going back, and to coordinate with relevant offices such as the State Employment Services. To improve the overall coordination of initiatives and ensure information is available to the returning population, the Ministry of National Unity will also benefit from support to design and implement recovery and reform priorities important for those who go back, complementing the EU budget support and technical assistance that help Ukraine's recovery and modernise services needed for reintegration, such as housing, education and employment.

### ***3.3 EU support to reintegration in Ukraine***

Ukrainians are the key driver for Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. However, the possibility of going back is highly dependent upon the development of conditions of safety and security inside Ukraine, as well as upon access to livelihoods and housing for those returning from within or outside Ukraine.

While safety is essential for people to go back home, they must also see a future in Ukraine – they need a place to live, proper infrastructure, including functioning energy infrastructure ensuring access to basic and essential services, access to quality education and work opportunities. These are central goals of the EU's support. Social cohesion must also be carefully considered when supporting returns to Ukraine, to ensure that equal consideration is granted to both the needs of people who remained in Ukraine and to the returning population.

A well-functioning **Ukrainian labour market** will be key to attracting – and retaining – human capital, and hence to the country's reconstruction, growth, and social development. Good-quality employment opportunities, with decent working conditions, will be essential to restore a labour force that has been highly impacted by the war, and to improve life in Ukraine. With EU support, as part of the EU accession process, Ukraine is modernising its legislation with the objective of aligning it with the EU *acquis*. Key steps include ongoing work to develop a new Labour Code, a new Employment Strategy, and the finalisation of a new law on Vocational Education, both with the potential to contribute to addressing the shortage of skilled workforce and skills mismatches. The participation of Ukraine in the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand of the European Social Fund Plus<sup>19</sup> will allow Ukrainian entities to participate in calls for proposals for EU-financed projects. The Skills Alliance for Ukraine, co-led by Ukraine and Germany<sup>20</sup>, also supports training opportunities for people from Ukraine.

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<sup>19</sup> The agreement for Ukraine to join the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand is under negotiation.

<sup>20</sup> The Commission participates as observer in the working groups of the Skills Alliance. Over 70 organisations around the world are part of it.

In terms of **funding**, EU support to Ukraine since the beginning of Russia's war of aggression amounts so far to a total of almost EUR 148 billion. The **Ukraine Plan**<sup>21</sup>, an integral part of the **Ukraine Facility**<sup>22</sup>, outlines critical reforms and investments to foster the right conditions for displaced people to go back home. It provides a predictable stream of financial inflows to Ukraine, while driving key reforms over the period spanning from 2024 to 2027. The reforms and investments include a focus on helping people to go back to Ukraine and to support reintegration in their home country and labour market. The Ukraine Plan commits Ukraine to invest in education (EUR 650 million by 2027), healthcare (EUR 400 million by 2027) and social infrastructure (EUR 350 million by 2027). At least 20% of the non-repayable support under the Ukraine Plan - approximately EUR 1 billion - is allocated to the needs of subnational authorities, in particular local self-government.

The **Ukraine Investment Framework**<sup>23</sup> plays a crucial role in preserving human capital and creating conditions for return. Education, housing, healthcare, care economy and social protection are priority sectors. Ongoing projects support the restoration of municipal infrastructure and help finance businesses affected by the war. New investment programmes accepted in March 2025 will support housing needs, and future calls will include access to finance and jobs for vulnerable groups, including returnees.

As part of the **G7 Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration loans** initiative (EUR 45 billion), the EU is providing EUR 18.1 billion in macro-financial assistance (MFA) to Ukraine as direct budgetary support for the country's urgent financial needs. The EU and G7 loans are to be repaid with proceeds from immobilised Russian Central Bank assets held in the EU.

Ongoing **technical assistance** projects in Ukraine can prioritise support to reintegration of people returning home. The EU is providing support through initiatives such as Skills4Recovery<sup>24</sup>, which supports tailored vocational education and training programmes, and EU4Business<sup>25</sup>, which includes advice or capacity building to SMEs wishing to go back<sup>26</sup>. These projects, as well as future projects, can support the Ministry of National Unity, enabling people going back to Ukraine to establish businesses, receive tailored employment services and participate in Vocational Education and Training programmes.

The EU support contributed to the resilience of the country and **helped people to continue living their lives in Ukraine**. The Union Civil Protection Mechanism had supported the power needs of 6.5 million people, and the Ukraine Facility has contributed to the repair of destroyed equipment. The EU's humanitarian aid has supported the Ukrainian population in the sectors of shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene, protection, basic needs, health, mine action and education in emergencies, including the rehabilitation of schools. The EU and Member States

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<sup>21</sup> The Ukraine Plan is Ukraine's reform and investment strategy for 2024-2027, paving the way for regular, quarterly payments under the Ukraine Facility subject to Ukraine meeting pre-agreed requirements. Among others, it includes reforms focused on human capital, such as demographic strategy, employment strategy, improvements in education, healthcare etc.

<sup>22</sup> The Ukraine Facility is a pivotal instrument within the EU's strategy to address the multifaceted challenges confronting Ukraine in the wake of Russia's war of aggression. This dedicated support mechanism, which entered into force on 1 March 2024 and covers the years 2024 to 2027, offers up to EUR 50 billion in financial support.

<sup>23</sup> The Ukraine Investment Framework (UIF) is part of the EUR 50 billion Ukraine Facility, designed to attract public and private investments for the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine. It is endowed with financial instruments totalling EUR 9.3 billion, with EUR 7.8 billion in loan guarantees and EUR 1.5 billion in blended finance. Its aim is to mobilise EUR 40 billion of investments for recovery, reconstruction, and modernisation.

<sup>24</sup> The Joint Action Skills4Recovery is financed by the EU, Germany, Poland, and Estonia. It is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Solidarity Fund PL (SFPL). Skills4Recovery was initiated by the German Government in 2023.

<sup>25</sup> EU4Business is an umbrella initiative that encompasses all EU support to small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in the Eastern Partnership countries, by improving access to finance and business development services.

<sup>26</sup> Support is spread locally: U-LEAD with Europe, with 24 regional offices, provides capacity development measures covering the entire scope of municipal responsibilities during the war of aggression and the recovery.

have donated more than 370 school buses to help children go to school. Erasmus+ has helped print over 1.5 million textbooks since the start of the war, and is supporting capacity building projects in the education, training, youth and sport sectors, to strengthen the provision of high-quality opportunities in the country. The Ukrainian government has already put measures in place to ensure easy recognition of education when returning to Ukraine<sup>27</sup>. Safeguarding and restoring Ukrainian culture and heritage will also facilitate the socio-cultural reintegration of people going back.

**Remittances** from displaced Ukrainian people living in the EU are a source of income that can support the Ukrainian economy and contribute to the reconstruction of the country. In 2024, remittance inflows from the EU amounted to 3.26% of Ukraine's GDP, or approximately EUR 5.6 billion, according to data from the National Bank of Ukraine (NBU). The Commission has engaged with the payment industry to promote practices that make remittances more affordable and accessible, with guidance to facilitate payments between the EU and all government-controlled territories of Ukraine. The Commission continues to support Ukraine's efforts to prepare its application to join the geographical scope of the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA) schemes, which would further facilitate cross-border transfers.

Measures for Ukraine's closer integration into the EU single market set out in the Priority Action Plan for the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (**DCFTA**), together with the reforms under the Ukraine Plan, will provide the basis for sustainable economic growth and employment opportunities, through measures such as improvement of the business environment. Based on a 'single market highway' logic, connections with Ukraine will also be fostered with the aim of reducing barriers to trade, increasing connectivity and boosting regional economic integration.

#### **4. PAVING THE WAY FOR A SMOOTH AND COORDINATED TRANSITION OUT OF TEMPORARY PROTECTION**

Temporary protection was intended to provide immediate relief to people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The activation of the Temporary Protection Directive remains a testament to the Union's unity and to the solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

Nevertheless, temporary protection is by nature temporary. At some future point in time, when the circumstances allow for sufficient certainty about the situation in Ukraine, and in particular the conclusion that safe and durable conditions for return exist, the temporary protection framework will no longer be necessary. Member States should be ready for this change when that time comes.

Since 2022, the EU has combined the legal framework of temporary protection with dedicated action to support Member States care for displaced people coming from Ukraine and to help their inclusion in EU societies. Considering the prolonged displacement and the scale and complexity of the current situation, it is time to start developing a more tailored approach, better adapted to the situation of the people currently benefitting from temporary protection, and with the additional aim of easing the pressure that host societies have been facing.

The Commission is therefore presenting a **proposal for a Council Recommendation** setting out the core components of a coordinated forward-looking response at EU level, to allow Member States to put in place transitional measures.

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<sup>27</sup> Legislation from March 2025 mandates the recognition of learning outcomes acquired abroad, including informal education such as online courses and seminars. The Ukrainian authorities have also issued guidance to Ukrainian schools on assessing learning outcomes achieved abroad, ensuring that pupils who attended local schools in the EU can continue their education upon returning to Ukraine.

#### ***4.1 Transitioning from temporary protection towards other legal residence statuses***

Transitioning out of temporary protection would provide legal certainty and durable prospects to its beneficiaries. Defining a clearer longer-term perspective will also avoid additional pressure on already overstretched national asylum systems.

Over time, persons enjoying temporary protection have become part of the social and economic fabric of Member States. As such, the Commission is recommending Member States to allow persons enjoying temporary protection to **transition towards national legal residence statuses**, especially those related to employment, education or family reasons. This would allow persons enjoying temporary protection the possibility to enjoy a more stable status in their host Member States that better reflects their actual situation.

Based on existing EU legislation, persons enjoying temporary protection are not eligible to apply for **residence statuses defined under the EU legal migration Directives**. To support persons enjoying temporary protection in making informed choices and giving them alternative opportunities, the Commission is encouraging Member States, particularly where access to national legal statuses is not possible, to enable persons enjoying temporary protection and who would otherwise qualify for another status based on EU law to transition to other statuses by applying for authorisations under the Blue Card Directive, the Single Permit Directive and the Students and Researchers Directive<sup>28</sup>. By doing so, Member States would support the sustainable integration of persons enjoying temporary protection in their host countries, including the labour market, and promote a more efficient use of their skills.

#### ***4.2 Preparing for a gradual return and sustainable reintegration in Ukraine***

The EU and its Member States must be ready to support people who will go back to Ukraine now and in the future. The Commission is recommending Member States take the necessary steps to ensure a gradual and orderly return and reintegration, when the time is right and taking into account the needs and capacities of Ukraine. Member States, as well as Ukraine, are encouraged to make full use of the tools already available at EU level.

Those considering going back home to Ukraine should have the chance to make informed decisions. To ensure everyone has equal opportunities, Member States are encouraged to offer a flexible yet structured approach to taking **exploratory visits to Ukraine**. These trips could help people check on their families, homes, or the situation in their communities, before deciding to return.

To support those who wish to go back home, the Commission also recommends that Member States' **voluntary return programmes**<sup>29</sup> allowed under the Temporary Protection Directive be carefully crafted. These would be practical ways to help people go back home safely and with dignity. These programmes should be well planned and clearly communicated. They should consider the situation in Ukraine, the needs of those returning, and the impact on local communities. These programmes should aim to support social cohesion and avoid placing a strain on communities already affected by Russia's war of aggression. To reduce the administrative burden of handling each case individually, the Commission is recommending that Member States continue to grant people in voluntary return programmes the extension of

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<sup>28</sup> Directive (EU) 2021/1883 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment; Directive 2011/98/EU on a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third-country workers legally residing in a Member State; Directive (EU) 2016/801 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pair (recast).

<sup>29</sup> These are not to be considered programmes under the Return Directive, as the persons concerned legally reside in the host Member State until the end of temporary protection and as no return decision is required.

the rights they had as persons enjoying temporary protection until they go back to Ukraine, or until the end of the period provided for under the programme for voluntary departure.

Our efforts to support the safe return and reintegration of displaced people from Ukraine must ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and fairness. The individual situation of some persons enjoying temporary protection and living in the EU may mean that they do not qualify for transition to other statuses nor for return to Ukraine, by reason of their vulnerability coupled with the fact that Ukraine may not have the capacity to cater for their needs immediately after the end of temporary protection – such as those undergoing a medical treatment plan. The Commission is therefore recommending that Member States explore options for these vulnerable persons to continue residing legally in the EU for a transitional period until their return is feasible.

In a similar vein, the education of children should not be disrupted. It is important to ensure that minor children attending schools are allowed to complete their education in a stable environment, together with their families. Member States can make use of the Temporary Protection Directive rules that would allow families whose minor children are attending school to remain in the EU for the necessary period of time, especially if the temporary protection ends before the school year does.

#### ***4.3 Strengthening information provision, coordination, monitoring and data exchange***

Clear, accurate and up-to-date information will be essential. Member States are encouraged to set up adequate communication tools and channels, including information campaigns, while making good use of the existing tools to avoid duplication, and using the Unity Hubs, where established, as well as involving international organisations.

While Eurostat prepares the official European statistics on temporary protection, ensuring a timely situational picture for operational purposes requires Member States to regularly update their temporary protection data in the **Temporary Protection Platform**, including figures regarding inactive registrations. As the transition out of temporary protection will lead to significant changes in the status of displaced persons, it is essential to have an accurate picture of the evolving situation, and coordination and exchange of information between Member States and the Ukrainian authorities is recommended, including in the Solidarity Platform.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The EU's unwavering support to Ukraine will continue as long as necessary. The EU will offer shelter to the displaced people from Ukraine as long as they need it.

We are committed to reuniting Ukraine with its people, once the appropriate conditions of security and stability are in place. By adopting a gradual, flexible and coordinated approach to moving forward from temporary protection, we can make sure that all persons are treated with dignity and respect, Ukraine's needs and capacities are duly considered, and our systems are not subject to disproportionate pressure.

The Commission will continue to work closely with Member States, the Ukrainian government and with international organisations, to ensure that the needs of people displaced from Ukraine to the EU are met, and that they are equipped with all the resources and tools to rebuild their lives and their future.