MINTE

Migrant Integration Through Education

MIGRATION POLICY GROUP

POLICY BRIEF

Policy brief: From temporary protection to lasting integration – lessons from Central and Eastern Europe, and EU recommendations

Gergana Yovova, Migration Policy Group (MPG)

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A through-line across the Migrant Integration Through Education (MINTE) project findings is that the temporary nature of the protection status of Ukrainian forced migrants has created an impending uncertainty about their future in the EU. This uncertainty in turn hampers the sustainability of successful integration initiatives, their proper coordination, as well as the will to conceive of long-term integration strategies and policies. Calls for a longer-term, more stable approach have repeatedly been voiced across the EU. And in early June 2025, over three years after the initial activation of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), the European Commission (EC) published a much-anticipated proposal for a council recommendation to transition out of temporary protection. In light of that, and drawing upon the MINTE findings, this brief offers further advice on moving towards longer-term integration solutions, particularly in the case of the forced migrants who choose to stay and unlock their full potential in the EU.

Introduction

Over three years after the start of Russia's war against Ukraine and the subsequent initial activation of the EU's Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) in 2022, questions about the long-term situation of Ukrainian forced migrants in the EU loom. In looking for answers, the experiences of some of the Central and Eastern European countries which welcomed the largest numbers of migrants bring lessons.

Through its outputs so far, the MINTE project has looked into integration policies and strategies, emergency response coordination, as well as digital and ICT solutions offered to Ukrainian temporary protection holders in Central and Eastern European countries, as well as in Israel. The project explored national and local levels of governance alike. Throughout these queries, numerous good practices in the reception and early integration of people feeling the war against Ukraine were identified. However, a through-line repeatedly present in the findings reveals that the temporary nature of the protection status of Ukrainian forced migrants creates an impending uncertainty about their future in the EU. This uncertainty in turn hampers the sustainability of successful integration initiatives, their proper coordination, as well as the will to conceive of long-term integration strategies and policies.

This brief thus offers recommendations for a more stable approach to integration, ultimately tied to a call for moving beyond the temporary framework and towards a longer-term understanding of integration that would also allow to foster the full potential of Ukrainian forced migrants in the EU. These recommendations are also adapted to take into account the much-awaited European Commission (EC)'s Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a Coordinated Approach to the Transition out of Temporary Protection for Displaced Persons from Ukraine,[1] published on 4 June 2025.

Lessons from Central and Eastern Europe

How a temporary framing discourages sustainable policy

The swift activation of the TPD and the remarkable ways in which state, civil and private actors came together across the EU to meet the initial reception and early-integration needs of those arriving from Ukraine has rightfully been lauded. The temporary protection (TP) regime has proved to be a success in allowing the immediate, emergency response to the needs of the large number of forced migrants arriving in the EU.[2]

Innately temporary, however, the TP regime has already been renewed a number of times, for short intervals of time. As the national-level MINTE findings reveal, the lack of long-term certainty about the legal status of Ukrainians who arrive in the EU has obscured their future prospects and ability to make plans. Over three years into the war, there is a marked need for longer-term strategies, beyond the scope of the TPD.

In Central and Eastern European countries, the uncertainty about the legal status of Ukrainians has been both mirrored and prolonged by the short-term framing of integration strategies, too.

On the one hand, Ukrainian forced migrants in Poland and the Czech Republic alike benefitted from targeted, ad-hoc policies, which singled out Ukrainians among other groups of forced migrants who could not benefit from such special measures. At the same time, however, these targeted measures have been overwhelmingly conceived as temporary, mirroring the nature of the TP regime. In the Czech Republic, for example, the last integration framework specifically targeting Ukrainians expired

[1] European Commission (4 June 2025) *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a Coordinated Approach to the Transition out of Temporary Protection for Displaced Persons from Ukraine*. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2025%3A651%3AFIN

[2] Martin Wagner, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) (4 March 2025) *Phasing Out Temporary Protection? Shaping EU Policies through National Experiences.* https://www.icmpd.org/blog/2025/phasing-out-temporary-protection-shaping-eu-policies-through-national-experiences

in March 2025.[3] As a more sustainable solution, the latest MINTE brief for the country calls for the inclusion of Ukrainians in the broader framework for migrant integration instead, especially as most of them have already stayed in the country for over three years, even if their presence is seen as temporary.

In Poland, similarly, despite specific targeted short-term strategies, there is no comprehensive integration policy that would allow Ukrainian forced migrants a sense of longer-term security.[4] Such a long-term perspective, however, is necessary if forced migrants are to be incited to invest in their own integration by, for example, learning the country's language and culture. The Polish government has indeed sough solutions outside of the TP status. Since April 2023, for example, it has allowed, under certain conditions, Ukrainian forced migrants to transition to a temporary residence status of three years. Yet, this solution requires a trade-off between different types of benefits available under the different statuses, and is still ad-hoc in nature, excluding also certain more vulnerable groups, including seniors who are no longer employed. Similarly, alternative statuses are available in the Czech Republic too, but these are only targeted at higher-income individuals, while also curbing their access to the social welfare system.[5] In fact, a recent report by the Cedos think tank, the Ombudsman of Ukraine, and the Council of Europe (CoE) expressed concerns[6] that people with disabilities, elderly people as well as single parents have so far been particularly disadvantaged in the implementation of such alternative schemes.

As a comparison, the MINTE project has also looked into the situation of forced migrants in Israel. There, forced migrants are seen to fall under two categories: *olim*, or Ukrainian or Russian migrants to Israel with Jewish ancestry who are granted Israeli citizenship upon arrival under the 1959 Law of Return, and other refugees fleeing Ukraine or Russia. The former category – *olim* – is supported by the Ministry of Aliyah and has benefitted from a number of successful targeted measures since their arrival.[7] On the other hand, however, the MINTE findings reveal that Ukrainian refugees in Israel – whose status is less secure than the one of *olim* – face uncertainty about their future much like the forced migrants who arrived in the EU.

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[3] Jelínková, M., Hála, J. (2025) *MINTE Policy Brief II: Designing Migrant Integration Policies in the Czech Republic in the Context of Forced Ukrainian Migration*. https://minte.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PB_2_Czechia_version_1.pdf

[4] Bielewska, A., Ślęzak-Belowsk, E. (2025) *MINTE Policy Brief II: Digital spaces, skills and competencies of Ukrainian forced migrants in Poland,* https://minte.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PB_2_Poland_version_1.pdf

[5] Jelínková, M., Hála, J. (2025) *MINTE Policy Brief II: Designing Migrant Integration Policies in the Czech Republic in the Context of Forced Ukrainian Migration*. https://minte.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PB_2_Czechia_version_1.pdf

[6] Cedos, Ombudsman of Ukraine, Council of Europe (CoE) (2025) *Forced Displacement Abroad*. https://rm.coe.int/forced-displacement-abroad-v2-2-/1680b4e6c5

[7] Amit, K. (2025) *MINTE Policy Brief II: Digital Spaces, Skills and Competencies of Ukrainian Forced Migrants in Israel.* https://minte.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PB_2_Izrael_final_version_1.pdf

Overall, more than three years after the initial activation of the TPD, the temporary status of Ukrainians displaced in the EU appears to have also protracted a shorter-term approach to integration, causing a burden for both receiving societies and forced migrants alike.

From rigorous emergency responses to more timid long-term coordination

The MINTE findings further reveal that the framing of the arrival of Ukrainian forced migrants as a temporary, crisis situation, has created issues in terms of the coordination of longer-term responses.

As previous MINTE research reveals, shortly after the start of the war and as forced migrants started to arrive in Central and Eastern European countries, civil society and private actors quickly stepped up, providing much-needed expertise. This was especially crucial in the context of at-the-border responses and early integration activities alike. In the Czech Republic, for example, civil society also provided training in cases where state actors initially lacked know-how.[8]

While this proved the value of multi-stakeholder cooperation, the ownership and coordination of the overall response was diffused among state and local authorities, civil society and private actors. In the Czech Republic, for example, the responsibility for the coordination of activities related to the arrival of Ukrainian forced migrants shifted among different institutions and bodies.[9] At the same time, the MINTE findings note, the interest in the coordination of activities appears to have faded away, with measures also sometimes implemented without the necessary evaluations.

The local level, in addition, has long been lauded as key to integration. In both the Czech Republic and Poland, integration centres have been opened with support from the European Commission's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). In terms of coordination, however, both countries experienced issues, although in different ways.

On the one hand, integration centres have been running in each of the Czech Republic's 14 regions since 2010.[10] While the majority are operated by the interior ministry, others are run by civil society. Regional governments have often outsourced their responsibilities for migrant integration to other

[8] Jelínková, M., Hála, J. (2025) *MINTE Policy Brief II: Designing Migrant Integration Policies in the Czech Republic in the Context of Forced Ukrainian Migration*. https://minte.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PB_2_Czechia_version_1.pdf
[9] Jelínková, M., Hála, J. (2025) *MINTE Policy Brief II: Designing Migrant Integration Policies in the Czech Republic in the Context of Forced Ukrainian Migration*. https://minte.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PB_2_Czechia_version_1.pdf
[10] Jelínková, M., Hála, J. (2025) *MINTE Policy Brief II: Designing Migrant Integration Policies in the Czech Republic in the Context of Forced Ukrainian Migration*. https://minte.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PB_2_Czechia_version_1.pdf

actors. Yet, with many different actors involved in the response to the needs of Ukrainian forced migrants, and with the relevant legislation targeting the latter changing a number of times, the country admitted to the pressing need for regional coordinators. And although regional governments have become more involved since 2022, only 5 out of the 14 Czech regions have appointed regional coordinators for integration. This, MINTE finds, reflects the generally limited willingness of regional authorities to take on a more active role.

In Poland, in addition, 49 one-stop-shop integration centres were planned to open after the start of the 2022 Russian war against Ukraine. However, protests have challenged, and, in four cases, prevented their launches.[11] This points also to the parallel need to communicate well the need for integration to the general public too, also countering misinformation.

Finally, lack of funding and human capital to sustain and coordinate successful initiatives has also been noted as an issue in both countries, especially as it concerns local and civil-society-led initiatives, the overall MINTE findings reveal.

Another comparison comes from Israel. Ukrainian *olim* and refugees who settled there in areas later affected by the war that broke out in October 2023 had to flee again, thus becoming displaced for the second time. It is in the context of this new emergency that state and local actors mobilised again to provide various well-coordinated services, particularly in terms of information dissemination.[12] As noted before, this is especially true for Ukrainian *olim* who enjoy a more secure status than other Ukrainian refugees, however. In a broader sense, it appears that, regardless of the country, the emergency framing incites better coordination, which may however be difficult to sustain in the long term.

Overall, the vigorous, quick and at times spontaneous multi-stakeholder cooperation was crucial for the initial response to the arrival of forced migrants in Central and Eastern European countries. Outside of the initial emergency, however, the ownership and coordination of further integration measures became diffused among authorities, civil society and private actors. This makes it difficult to sustain, streamline, or, if need be, replicate the successes of the response in the case of future crises.

It is therefore vital to ensure that the know-how generated through the complex multi-stakeholder responses over the last few years is not lost, and ownership is taken. Crucially, an institutional memory of what worked well should be created, with countries not over-relying on temporary, ad-

[11] Bielewska, A., Ślęzak-Belowsk, E. (2025) *MINTE Policy Brief II: Digital spaces, skills and competencies of Ukrainian forced migrants in Poland,* https://minte.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PB_2_Poland_version_1.pdf

[12] Amit, K. (2025) *MINTE Policy Brief II: Digital Spaces, Skills and Competencies of Ukrainian Forced Migrants in Israel.* https://minte.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PB_2_Izrael_final_version_1.pdf

hoc bodies created only in the context of emergency response, or on fully outsourcing the response to civil society and other actors.

Zooming in on the digital and ICT services available to Ukrainian forced migrants

Central and Eastern European countries, previously lagging behind, marked significant progress in terms of the development of online services available to migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic and the later arrival of people from Ukraine.[13]

The MINTE project has looked extensively into the digital skills of forced migrants coming from Ukraine, as well as the digital and ICT services made available to them in Central and Eastern European countries and Israel, including in terms of integration. Overall, the project has singled out many good practices. As the upcoming MINTE book's findings suggest,[14] these include online platforms helping Ukrainians access official government services such as the Polish digital ID *diia.pl*, modelled after the Ukrainian e-government system. On the EU level, the project has also noted the crucial role played by private-public partnerships with mobile operators which allowed the continued connectivity of forced migrants. The Joint Statement by EU and Ukrainian Operators to Help Refugees from Ukraine Stay Connected[15] also stands out here.

At the same time, long-term coordination issues transpire also in terms of information dissemination and the use of digital and ICT solutions to assist forced migrants. For example, initiatives relying on partnerships with private actors such as mobile operators have been largely successful but more difficult to sustain after the initial emergency response.

In terms of information platforms, it is also worth noting that a large number of dedicated web pages sprung up immediately after the start of the war. The initial abundance of such online resources, however, also led to information duplication over time, and many platforms were additionally left without updates due to the eventual (volunteer) fatigue, as the forthcoming MINTE book further shows. This creates "digital litter"[16] – or duplicated and old content – which in turn risks instilling confusion.

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[13] Yilmaz, S. (2024) *MINTE Policy Brief I: Promoting Digital Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees in the EU*. https://www.migpolgroup.com/index.php/2023/05/24/policy-brief-promoting-digital-inclusion-of-migrants-and-refugees-in-the-eu/

[14] Ślęzak-Belowska, E., Jelinkova, M., Bielewska, A., Amit, K. (eds.) (forthcoming) *Technology and Forced Migration: Ukrainian Migrants in Central and Eastern Europe. Routledge*

[15] European Commission (5 April 2022) *Joint Statement by EU and Ukrainian Operators to Help Refugees from Ukraine Stay Connected*. https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/joint-statement-eu-and-ukrainian-operators-help-refugees-ukraine-stay-connected

[16] Benton, M. Migration Policy Institute (MPI) (20 June 2019) *Digital Litter: The Downside of Using Technology to Help Refugees.* https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/digital-litter-downside-using-technology-help-refugees

At the same time, forced migrants themselves often prefer channels less often used by the authorities such as various social media and messaging apps. As the MINTE findings conclude, so is the case of Ukrainian forced migrants too, who opt for channels allowing for dialogue and direct communication, such as Telegram. These apps, however, are seldom used by official state actors. This in turn creates room for misinformation, often proliferating on unofficial channels.

Finally, knowing when digital is not the way to go is also important, too. In Israel, alongside a number of digital initiatives supporting Ukrainian *olim* and refugees, attention has been paid to communicating with elderly migrants. For that specific group, which rarely uses online tools, emergency information has been made available via direct communication facilitated by municipalities.[17]

Beyond Central and Eastern Europe and temporary protection: the next steps for the EU

As exemplified above, the integration policies and practices, the crisis response coordination and the post-crisis needs management, as well as the digital services offered to assist the integration of forced migrants from Ukraine would *all* benefit from a less precarious approach. With all this in mind, what happens beyond Central and Eastern Europe, and beyond temporary protection, then?

Calls for moving away from the temporary approach have been repeatedly voiced at the EU level. In her October 2024 letter setting the migration-related goals for the ongoing new EC mandate,[18] EC President Ursula von der Leyen wrote: "We should urgently reflect together on the way forward, respecting Ukraine's own needs, the limits on our resources, and respecting the rights of all those involved. Based on that reflection, the Commission will be able to present proposals that would ensure the necessary legal certainty to continue managing the situation as long as necessary. The Commission will also explore ways to support Member States hosting large numbers of refugees from Ukraine."

The Polish Presidency of the EU Council, which takes place in the period 1 January - 30 June 2025, also noted in its programme that responding to the needs of beneficiaries of temporary protection already on the territory of EU countries is a priority.[19] The programme called to add to the EU agenda

[17] Amit, K. (2025) *MINTE Policy Brief II: Digital Spaces, Skills and Competencies of Ukrainian Forced Migrants in Israel.* https://minte.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/PB_2_Izrael_final_version_1.pdf
[18] Politico. (14 October 2024) Letter by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. https://www.politico.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/15/October-2024-EUCO-Migration-letter.pdf
[19] Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU. (2025) *Programme of the Polish Presidency od the Council of the European Union*. https://polish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/media/zkcno325/programme-of-the-polish-presidency-of-the-council-of-the-european-union.pdf

the discussion of "alternative solutions to temporary protection for war refugees from Ukraine in order to prevent secondary movements."

In March 2025, in addition, 109 humanitarian and civil society organisations produced a joint statement[20] calling on the EU to move towards stable solutions for those displaced from Ukraine. The statement flagged the need for more permanent solutions than the repeated renewal of the temporary protection regime. It also, however, noted the parallel need to extend the TP validity with another year – or until March 2027 – to ensure clarity on the future situation of forced migrants while longer-term solutions are being discussed. The statement also emphasised the importance of continuing to provide the full support forced migrants are guaranteed under the TPD.

Indeed, on 4 June 2025, the EC published a Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a Coordinated Approach to the Transition out of Temporary Protection for Displaced Persons from Ukraine.[21] In it, the EC proposes that the TP regime is prolonged with another year, or until 4 March 2027. It also outlines four sets of measures to 1) facilitate the transition from TP to other legal statuses before the end of the TP regime, 2) pave the way for reintegration in Ukraine, 3) ensure information provision to forced migrants, and 4) ensure coordination, monitoring and exchanges of information among the EU countries and with Ukrainian authorities.

In terms of the first set of measures, the EC proposal recommends that forced migrants are allowed to transition away from TP to other national legal statuses, including residence permits based on employment, education, research, or family reasons, as well as long-term residency. Indeed, some states, including Poland and the Czech Republic,[22] have already started experimenting with their own national-level alternatives to TP. As noted above, these solutions have so far mostly been related to employment-based, temporary residence statuses, and as such also exclude members of the displaced population who may not be able to work.[23] It is therefore important to ensure that all groups of forced migrants, including vulnerable people, can regularise their status via alternative pathways that do not require the trade-off of access to rights, too.

[20] Migration Policy Group (MPG) (4 March 2025) *MPG and 100+ NGOs urge EU action for long-term solutions for displaced Ukrainians.* https://www.migpolgroup.com/index.php/2025/03/04/three-years-of-temporary-protection-urgent-need-for-long-term-solutions-for-displaced-ukrainians/

[21] European Commission (4 June 2025) *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a Coordinated Approach to the Transition out of Temporary Protection for Displaced Persons from Ukraine*. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2025%3A651%3AFIN

[22] Martin Wagner, ICMPD (4 March 2025) *Phasing Out Temporary Protection? Shaping EU Policies through National Experiences.* https://www.icmpd.org/blog/2025/phasing-out-temporary-protection-shaping-eu-policies-through-national-experiences

[23] Vaitovich, V. European Council on Exiles and Refugees (ECRE) (14 June 2024) *OP-ED: The EU is stretching the limits of the Temporary Protection Directive beyond 2025, but is it enough?* https://ecre.org/op-ed-the-eu-is-stretching-the-limits-of-the-temporary-protection-directive-beyond-2025-but-is-it-enough/

In this vein, the EC proposal also notes that some EU countries are creating "omnibus" permits, meant to be available to all beneficiaries of temporary protection regardless of their specific circumstances. Finally, the proposal also notes that, in cases where transitioning to other national legal statuses is not possible, authorisation under the Blue Card Directive, the Single Permit Directive and the Students and Researchers Directive should be explored. The EC also stresses the importance of providing clear information to the temporary protection holders in all the above cases.

The current brief offers below further recommendations to ensure a smooth and fair transition to legal statuses outside of the TP framework. **Crucially, the EU should additionally delineate detailed guidance and recommendations for transitioning through a common approach, and particularly with a view to long-term integration.** While the EC recommendation allows for countries to opt for a variety of legal statuses when moving out of the TP scheme, a more ambitious, unified approach would be more beneficial in the long run.

Such a common approach would help avoid the emergence of a patchwork of national-level solutions. It would also help ensure Ukrainians are allowed equal access to rights and services across the different EU countries. And while the EC proposal to rely predominantly on national-level solutions may more easily garner support in the upcoming proposal negotiations among the EU Member States, there is still a window to consider a streamlined, common solution. With the likely extension of the TP regime to March 2027, the time for EU institutions and member states to come together and conceive of such a common approach is now.

In the meantime, as some of the EU member states have already started phasing out TP statuses on their own, it is important that alternative arrangements introduced on a country level are inclusive of all Ukrainian forced migrants. Such solutions could potentially be achieved through the "omnibus" permits, suggested by the EC, which would be available to all forced migrants, irrespective of their individual circumstances. This is essential for including vulnerable groups and appeasing the concerns that some forced migrants are left out which have been raised by Ukrainian institutions and civil society alike.[24]

[24] Cedos, Ombudsman of Ukraine, Council of Europe (CoE) (2025) *Forced Displacement Abroad*. https://rm.coe.int/forced-displacement-abroad-v2-2-/1680b4e6c5Sohst R., Tirado T., Salgado L., Slootjes, J. Internation Organization for Migration (IOM), Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Europe. (2025) *Exploring refugees' intentions to return to Ukraine. Data Insights and policy responses.* https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/mpie-iom_ukraine-return-intentions-2024-final.pdf;

At the same time, EU countries should also continue to ensure access to all rights and services provisioned under the TPD while the latter is still active. Once forced migrants have transitioned to other legal statuses, at least equivalent rights and services should be available to them, too.

In respect to the second set of measures – the ones dedicated to information provision, the EC proposal notes that the transition out of TP crucially relies on making sure Ukrainians are fully informed and able to make conscious decisions about their own future. The proposal calls for information campaigns and for optimising the tools and channels used to reach out to TP beneficiaries. It also references the Ukrainian minister of national unity's initiative to set up so-called "unity hubs" – information centres in the EU countries that could both aid the integration and assist the return of Ukrainian forced migrants.

As the MINTE project studied digital and ICT services available to migrants, the project's findings flesh out some recommendations for achieving the above EC proposals in practice, too. **Crucially, states should be encouraged to reinvigorate their work on managing one-stop-shop online resources for migrants and ensure proper access to e-government services, as was the case during the early, emergency phase.** More resources need to be invested to sustain this work, however, especially in cases where it has been outsourced to civil society or other stakeholders with limited support. In addition, it is important to "meet" the forced migrants in the online spaces they use, including social media and messaging apps.

Some other recommendations below also build upon the EC's set of measures meant to ensure the coordination, monitoring and exchange of information among EU countries, by calling for a more harmonised approach and practical guidance. **A key principle that should be better embedded in the EC recommendations is to ensure a participatory approach in all policy-making affecting migrants.** The input and experiences of Ukrainians, who will be directly affected by all decisions about the post-TPD regime(s), should inform all further actions.

Finally, in terms of the measures proposed by the EC to assist the reintegration of forced migrants in Ukraine, it is important to credit the EC for demarcating a gradual and sustainable approach to voluntary returns. This is meant, on one side, to help the efforts to rebuild Ukraine, and, at the same time, respect the circumstances of all forced migrants, including those who may not be able to return, including vulnerable people and children engaged in ongoing education in the EU. Given the intrinsic legality of the temporary protection status of Ukrainians, the EU countries would also be called on to set up voluntary return programmes, as opposed to carrying out returns under the Return Directive. The proposal also suggests allowing exploratory visits to Ukraine.

Indeed, such temporary, exploratory returns to Ukraine are crucial, as in reality return and reintegration represent a long, often less straightforward journey.[25] It is therefore vital to ensure

[25] Cedos, Ombudsman of Ukraine, Council of Europe (CoE) (2025) *Forced Displacement Abroad*. https://rm.coe.int/forced-displacement-abroad-v2-2-/1680b4e6c5

returns are carried out in a careful, circumstance-sensitive manner. It is also vital for the EU to safeguard that voluntary returns are not prematurely singled out as a desired solution by EU countries for lack of long-term integration measures.

To build upon the latter point, the issue of voluntary returns would likely constitute one of the biggest challenges and points of cooperation between the EU and Ukraine. The future of post-war Ukraine as well as the people who have made the EU their second home may both hinge on it. Regardless of how successful returns and reintegration may be, however, observations from the previous migratory waves to the EU have reified one lesson: that many people will stay for the long term. As the EC also recommends that people are offered to transition to other legal statuses before the proposed end of the TP regime in March 2027, it is likely that many Ukrainian forced migrants would establish even deeper connections with their host countries. **Thus, more focus on long-term integration measures should also be included in the EU's priorities for transitioning to other legal statuses.**

At the same time, another key lesson observed in the EU is that people under various forms of protection – including those granted refugee statuses and subsidiary protection – all face uncertainty about their long-term prospects in the EU. Although in general the EU countries have already established strategic integration frameworks, measures supporting the longer-term integration of forced migrants in particular have been scant across the board.[26]

Yet, curiously, offering better security through integration to all forced migrants may in fact also benefit their later ability to return. A 2024 study[27] found that Ukrainian forced migrants who were better supported in the host countries were more likely to not only integrate faster, but also to express readiness to return and reintegrate in Ukraine.

In this sense, a long-term approach to the integration of all forced migrants appears to be a winning strategy as it would provide the necessary stability – both to those who stay, and those who want to attempt the often-challenging process of return. **The recommendations below are therefore all placed in the context of a larger call for thinking integration in the long term, which, hopefully, will be a consideration for the EU Council as the member states go on to debate and negotiate the EC proposals.**

[26] European Commission, Migrant Integration Hub. (31 March 2020) *What measures are in place to ensure the long-term integration of migrants and refugees in Europe?* https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/publications/what-measures-are-place-ensure-long-term-integration-migrants-and-refugees-europe_en

[27] Sohst R., Tirado T., Salgado L., Slootjes, J. Internation Organization for Migration (IOM), Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Europe. (2025) *Exploring refugees' intentions to return to Ukraine. Data Insights and policy responses.* https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/mpie-iom_ukraine-return-intentions-2024-final.pdf

Recommendations

EU recommendations to move past the temporary protection regime and ensure the fair, longer-term stay and integration of Ukrainian forced migrants in the EU:

- ✓ As proposed already by the EC, extend the protection regime under the TPD until March 2027 to allow time for the smooth preparation for the transition away from TP.
- ✓ The EU should take a more ambitious approach than outlined in the 4 June recommendation to additionally encourage and help delineate a common legal regime after the end of TP. This would avoid the creation of a patchwork of different solutions across the EU. The common new regime should also be conceived with a view to long-term integration.
- ✓ A participatory approach should be embedded in the development of the common, post-TP solution: the EU should work to ensure the involvement of the Ukrainian forced migrants in the decision-making processes that directly affect them.
- ✓ In case no common regime is conceived, the EU should further delineate detailed guidance and recommendations for transitioning away from the TP status into other statuses, and with a view to long-term integration. Such detailed advice should be provided for all alternatives so far offered by the EC in its 4 June proposal, including the national legal statuses, "omnibus" permits or authorisations under relevant EU directives.
- ✓ The EU should also encourage the EU countries to prioritise the development of "omnibus" permits which would be accessible to all Ukrainian forced migrants, irrespective of their individual circumstances.
- ✓ In countries where the national governments already offer alternatives to the TP regime such as pathways to temporary residency, the EU should call for similar solutions to be made available to all Ukrainian forced migrants, including vulnerable groups and those who may not be able to legalise their residence based on ongoing employment, studies or for family reasons.
- ✓ Add focus to long-term integration measures among the EU priorities related to transitioning away from TP, as the added stability will assist both those who stay in the EU and those who return to rebuild Ukraine.

- ✓ Encourage countries to embed a long-term approach to integration in their general national integration frameworks.

- ✓ Encourage EU countries to utilise the remaining time granted by the TP regime extensions to coordinate internally and increase their operational and administrative capacity to align with the post-TP schemes. Make EU funding available for this.

- ✓ Base all guidance on good practices and lessons learned from across the EU countries, with a special focus on the states which hosted the largest number of Ukrainian forced migrants such as Poland and the Czech Republic. At the same time, look also at the conclusions drawn from the EU's responses to previous migratory waves.

- ✓ Actively monitor and share further lessons learned during the upcoming transition away from TP across the EU countries, including with the ongoing feedback for Ukrainian forced migrants and Ukrainian institutions.

- ✓ Safeguard that voluntary returns are not prematurely singled out as a desired solution.

- ✓ Ensure that voluntary return schemes are flexible, where necessary circular, and sensitive to the individual circumstances of forced migrants. Conceive them in adherence with best practices as evidenced by research in future voluntary return campaigns, and with the direct input of Ukrainian forced migrants.

- ✓ Ensure the EU countries continue to provide forced migrants with access to all rights and services provisioned by the TPD, and that rights and access to services are not curbed through the transition to other statuses.

- ✓ Strive to achieve the de-facto harmonisation of rights and services available to Ukrainian forced migrants across the different national legal statuses in order to ensure fairness and prevent secondary movements within the EU.

General recommendations for the long-term integration of Ukrainian forced migrants:

- ✓ Move away from ad-hoc, temporary integration policies and instead mainstream the integration of Ukrainian forced migrants in the overall national intergation frameworks.
- ✓ Avoid creating integration policies and programmes singling out specific groups such as Ukrainian forced migrants in order to prevent discrimination and safeguard the longevity of integration efforts.
- ✓ Ensure national integration policies and programmes have a long-term vision embedded in them, but are also flexible and can respond to new (emergency) needs.
- ✓ Embed a participatory approach to the development of integration policies and programmes: seek the direct input of forced migrants who would be affected by these policies.
- ✓ In case Ukrainian forced migrants can take advantage of alternative legal statuses, provide clear information about the application procedures and their rights under the different regimes, and ensure that such alternative pathways are available to all groups, including vulnerable people.
- ✓ (Continue to) ensure forced migrants' access to rights and services as provisioned by the TPD regime, and to at least equivalent ones after the transition to other statuses, with an added focus on access to long-term integration services.
- ✓ In cases of multi-level governance of emergency responses and integration work, establish clear coordination mechanisms. Once the emergency phase is over, ensure the continued governance of integration responses is managed in an equally clear manner.
- ✓ Work to create institutional memory among key actors and avoid addressing the situation of migrant groups via ad-hoc, temporary bodies. This would improve existing services and would also create institutional readiness in case of future instances of mass displacement.

- ✓ Support the work of regional and local actors, allowing also the human and financial resources, and the information necessary to be able to help forced migrants settled in different localities. Support the exchange of good practices, too.

- ✓ Support the work of civil society and private actors through the provision of resources, including funding, and better coordination. Avoid the duplication of services and information, and make sure good initiatives are not discontinued due to fatigue.

- ✓ Create up-to-date, one-stop-shop online resources for migrants and ensure access to e-government services. Avoid "digital litter" by countering the duplication of information and providing timely updates.

- ✓ "Meet" forced migrants in the online spaces they use and not just the official governmental channels. Support state and non-state actors, as well as members of the migrant communities themselves, to provide proper information via online and offline channels, including social media and messaging apps.

- ✓ Analyse data on migrant connectivity and digital literacy, combat digital exclusion, and enhance migrants' digital skills via comprehensive digital literacy programmes tailored to the needs of the beneficiaries.

- ✓ Organise information campaigns and meetings between the forced migrants and the host society to foster integration and counter misinformation.

- ✓ Ensure that online public services are accessible to all groups of migrants – and locals alike, including through assessments of their digital skills and language needs.

- ✓ Continually monitor and evaluate existing integration programmes and policies, with emphasis on acting on the feedback from the beneficiaries themselves.

- ✓ Work on sustainable public-private partnerships that benefit forced migrants' integration, and establish a sound framework to manage these relationships.

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