



# Guidance for European Companies on Hiring Refugees From Ukraine

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# Introduction

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, millions of Ukrainians have fled their home country. This mass exodus of people is one of the fastest forced displacement crises in history and the largest since the Second World War.<sup>1</sup>

Almost two years later, European countries west of Ukraine host 4-5 million Ukrainian refugees,\* with Germany and Poland hosting the most.<sup>2</sup>

*\* Please note that this guidance will use the term "Ukrainian refugees" to refer to all people who have been displaced from Ukraine, including those who are not of Ukrainian nationality.*

The table below shows the top 10 locations in Europe where Ukrainian refugees have been recorded:<sup>3</sup>

Country	Date	Ukrainian refugees recorded in country as of date
Germany	07/10/2023	1,100,720
Poland	10/10/2023	959,875
Czech Republic	08/10/2023	361,385
UK	01/08/2023	210,800
Spain	08/10/2023	190,380
Italy	01/09/2023	167,525
Moldova	08/10/2023	119,375
Slovakia	15/10/2023	109,115
Ireland	01/10/2023	95,905
The Netherlands	26/05/2023	94,415

To help countries deal with such high numbers of displaced people arriving at their borders, the European Union (EU) activated the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) on 4 March 2022 to enable EU Member States to move rapidly to offer protection and rights to people fleeing Ukraine. It grants individuals immediate protection, as well as access to housing, employment, medical care, education, and more for up to three years. The UK, which is no longer an EU Member State, has not adopted the directive, instead implementing alternative national protection schemes.

<sup>1</sup> <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/ukraine-situation>

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

<sup>3</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>



## Who are Ukrainian refugees in Europe?

With Ukraine's general mobilisation order requiring men aged 18 to 60 to stay within the country, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates that 90% of Ukrainian refugees are women and children.<sup>4</sup>

A 2023 survey by the EU Agency For Asylum (EUAA) of more than 4,250 Ukrainian refugees in Europe found most respondents to be "highly educated". More than two in five had a master's degree or equivalent, one in five had a bachelor's degree, and 4% had a PhD. Around one in three respondents had lower levels of education, including secondary (10%), vocational (18%), and primary (1%).<sup>5</sup>

According to UNHCR, **63%** of Ukrainian refugees were employed or self-employed before leaving Ukraine, with "diverse professional and occupational backgrounds".<sup>6</sup> Among the **78%** of respondents to the EUAA survey who are eligible to work, **90%** were employed before Russia's invasion.<sup>7</sup>

The table below shows the top 10 skills backgrounds of Ukrainian refugees as of September 2022:<sup>8</sup>

Skills background*	%
Education	16
Trading	12
Professional services	10
Health and social services	7
Other services	6
Accommodation and food	5
Financial services	5
Personal services	5
Construction	3
Agriculture	3

\* Multiple responses were possible

The main languages spoken by respondents to the EUAA survey are Ukrainian (98%), Russian (88%), and English (50%), followed by German (16%) and Polish (15%).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/ukraine-situation>

<sup>5</sup> <https://euaa.europa.eu/news-events/available-work-facing-challenges-latest-survey-results-highlight-barriers-employment-displaced-ukrainians-eu>

<sup>6</sup> <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/3268>

<sup>7</sup> <https://euaa.europa.eu/news-events/available-work-facing-challenges-latest-survey-results-highlight-barriers-employment-displaced-ukrainians-eu>

<sup>8</sup> <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/3268>

<sup>9</sup> <https://euaa.europa.eu/news-events/available-work-facing-challenges-latest-survey-results-highlight-barriers-employment-displaced-ukrainians-eu>



## Barriers to employment

According to a 2023 survey by UNHCR of more than 3,800 refugee households across Europe, an estimated 33% of Ukrainian refugees are engaged in formal employment, 8% are engaged in informal employment, and 2% are self-employed. Eleven percent are undertaking professional training, and 19% are unemployed and looking for work.<sup>10</sup>

Although childcare has been identified by UNHCR as a barrier to accessing employment, “limited knowledge of the local language”, “skills mismatches”, and “difficulties in skills recognition and lack of decent work opportunities” are more prevalent.<sup>11</sup>

Among unemployed respondents to the EUAA survey, 58% consider finding a job an “urgent” or “very urgent” priority. More than one in two (53%) unemployed respondents mention “limited knowledge of the local language” as the most important reason for their unemployment, while 20% cite “caring responsibilities”. Other commonly mentioned barriers to entering the labour market include “issues in the recognition of their qualifications by the host countries” (16%) and “mismatches between the available jobs, and qualifications and work experiences” (14%).<sup>12</sup>



## The role companies can play

Leading companies in Europe have already committed to hiring Ukrainian refugees, playing a vital role in helping them to restart their lives, while at the same time benefiting from their talent, resilience, and ingenuity. Refugees are known to have lower turnover rates,<sup>13</sup> and consumers indicate not only that they are more likely to buy from companies hiring refugees, but also that they are more likely to work for them.<sup>14</sup>



### How to use this resource

This resource provides companies in Europe with information about the rights Ukrainian refugees have to work in the following countries: France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the UK, and more. It includes:

- A general overview of the TPD, including the rights it offers, to whom, and for how long.
- Information about how individual EU Member States have applied the directive, as well as how the UK’s alternative national protection schemes work.
- What employers need to know about the legalities of hiring Ukrainian refugees.

<sup>10</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101747>

<sup>11</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/99072>

<sup>12</sup> <https://euaa.europa.eu/news-events/available-work-facing-challenges-latest-survey-results-highlight-barriers-employment-displaced-ukrainians-eu>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.tent.org/resources/good-retention-strong-recruitment/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.tent.org/resources/how-hiring-refugees-helps-brands-europe-2023/>



## Essential information about the TPD

The TPD was developed by the European Commission (EC) in 2001 in the aftermath of the conflicts in former Yugoslavia. It is a measure that enables EU Member States to move rapidly to offer protection and rights in the event of a mass influx of displaced people, and to avoid overwhelming national asylum systems.

The TPD remained unused for more than 20 years until it was activated for the first time on 4 March 2022 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Due to a "clear risk that the asylum systems of EU countries would be unable to process applications within the deadlines set", the European Council unanimously adopted the EC's proposal to activate the directive, granting people fleeing Ukraine immediate protection.<sup>15</sup>

By implementing the TPD, the EU, which was in deadlock for years over common action over asylum, has shown remarkable and resolute support for Ukraine, as well as its citizens and residents displaced by Russia's invasion.

<sup>15</sup> [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en)

### What rights does the directive offer?

The TPD defines the decision-making procedure needed to initiate, extend, or end temporary protection. It also lists the rights for beneficiaries, which are:

- A residence permit for the entire duration of the protection (which can last from one to three years, although the EC has recommended that EU Member States grant residence permits for two years from the outset).
- Appropriate information about temporary protection.
- Guarantees for access to the asylum procedure.
- Access to employment, subject to rules applicable to the profession, national labour market policies, and general conditions of employment.
- Access to suitable accommodation or housing.
- Access to social welfare or means of subsistence if necessary.
- Access to medical care.
- Access to the state education system for people under 18 years old.
- Opportunities for families to reunite in certain circumstances.
- Access to banking services (e.g., opening a basic bank account).
- The ability to move to another EU Member State before the issuance of a residence permit.
- The ability to move freely to other EU countries (other than the Member State of residence) for 90 days within a 180-day period after a residence permit in the host country has been issued.

Being a beneficiary of temporary protection does not preclude the possibility of applying for refugee status at any time.

## ▲ National variations

The purpose of the TPD is to establish minimum standards for giving temporary protection. This means that individual EU Member States can go further than what is set out in the directive – for example, by granting more generous rights or widening the scope of who is eligible.

There are other national variations. The directive does not apply to Denmark, for example, due to its opt-out from EU policies (although it has introduced a similar status via national legislation). Because it is no longer an EU Member State, the UK is also not bound by the TPD. Instead, it has introduced alternative national protection programmes.

### ▲ Who is eligible for temporary protection?

- ▲ Ukrainian nationals residing in Ukraine before 24 February 2022 (the first day of Russia's invasion), and their family members.
- ▲ Stateless people and nationals of other third countries who benefited from international protection or equivalent protection in Ukraine before 24 February 2022, and their family members.
- ▲ Non-Ukrainian nationals of third countries and stateless people who can prove they were legally residing in Ukraine before 24 February 2022 on the basis of a valid permanent residence permit issued in accordance with Ukrainian law, and who cannot return in safe and durable conditions to their country of origin. These people are eligible for either temporary protection or adequate national protection, depending on the EU country they are in.

The following people shall be considered to be part of a family, so long as the family was already present and residing in Ukraine before 24 February 2022:

- ▲ A spouse or unmarried partner in a stable relationship, where the legislation of the EU Member State treats unmarried couples in a way that is comparable to married couples under national immigration laws.
- ▲ The minor unmarried children of an individual or their spouse, without distinction as to whether they were born in or out of wedlock, or adopted.
- ▲ Other close relatives who lived with the family, upon whom they are largely or wholly dependent.

The registration procedure for temporary protection varies between countries, but they all require that applicants submit a form of documentation, whether photographic ID, proof of residence, proof of family relationship, and/or something else.

As of October 2023, Ukrainian refugees in Europe who decide to return home will no longer have to de-register from the temporary protection system (which was previously the case). This is to facilitate refugees' possible return to Europe if necessary.

### ▲ How long is temporary protection valid for?

An individual's temporary protection granted by the TPD currently lasts until 4 March 2025. This follows an agreement by the European Council to extend the directive by one year from 4 March 2024.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/eu-member-states-agree-to-extend-temporary-protection-for-ukrainian-refugees-until-march-2025/>



Since its departure from the EU on 31 January 2020, the UK has had no formal way of adhering to the TPD. Even if it had the means, the country is unlikely to want to apply the directive as is given the current government's focus on having a "different system" to the EU – one that has "checks to make sure we know who is coming in", as then-Prime Minister Boris Johnson said in the weeks following Russia's invasion.<sup>27</sup>

The country has instead introduced three schemes (the "Schemes") to provide protection to Ukrainians:

- ▲ **The Ukraine Family Scheme:**<sup>28</sup> Ukrainians with family in the UK can apply for a visa to join them if the family member is a UK citizen, has permission to settle (i.e., not a temporary visa), or has refugee status.
- ▲ **The Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme ("Homes for Ukraine"):**<sup>29</sup> Ukrainians not currently in the UK can apply for a sponsor, through which they and their families may come to the country to live with the sponsor.
- ▲ **The Ukraine Extension Scheme:**<sup>30</sup> Ukrainians currently in the UK (whose permission did not expire before 1 January 2022) are able to extend their current visa or switch to a different visa.

The main differences between the UK and EU response are that: (i) the UK requires that the scheme application be completed before entering the country; (ii) the applicant must have lived

in Ukraine immediately before 1 January 2022 (including those who have now left Ukraine); and (iii) the applicant must have either a sponsor or a family member in the UK, meaning that, unlike the TPD, not all Ukrainians are automatically eligible for protection.

To enter the UK, Ukrainian refugees must receive a letter from the UK Home Office confirming they can travel to the country under one of the Schemes. If the application has been successful, the letter will say when and where to collect a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP), which must be collected within 10 days of arrival or by the visa expiry date – whichever is later. The period of residency lasts for three years.

If the application has not yet been decided but the letter has been received, applicants are able to use their passport stamp as evidence of their right to stay in the UK for the first six months. After this point, they must apply for the BRP, which will extend the right of residence to three years. The BRP cannot be used as a right to work.

### ▲ Who is eligible to work?

For Ukrainian nationals who have a valid passport, the right to work is acquired automatically if a visa has been obtained under one of the Schemes.

For Ukrainian nationals who do not have a valid passport, proof of biometric information can be attained at a visa application centre, where an entry clearance vignette attached to a "Form for Affixing the Visa" (FAV) should be provided. Individuals can rely on their FAV as proof of their right to work alongside a Positive Verification Notice.

<sup>27</sup> <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2022-03-02/debates/336C5C10-5368-4D2E-ACA3-6F639788A6E3/PrimeMinister>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-ukraine-family-scheme-visa>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-visa-under-the-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-to-stay-in-the-uk-under-the-ukraine-extension-scheme>



There are other avenues to obtain a work permit in the UK. There is an automatic right to work in the UK if the prospective employee:

- ▲ Is a British or Irish citizen with a British or Irish passport (even if expired).
- ▲ Has a different passport with a stamp to indicate a “right of abode” in the UK.
- ▲ Has indefinite leave to remain in the UK and can evidence the relevant indefinite leave stamp, an online share code, or an immigration status document.
- ▲ Has limited leave to remain in the UK and can evidence the relevant limited leave to remain stamp, or an online share code.

Ukrainian nationals may also apply for work visas that are specific to the type of work or profession – for example, the Skilled Worker Visa<sup>31</sup> (eligible jobs include police officers, teaching assistants, dental nurses, and chefs), and the Health and Care Worker Visa<sup>32</sup> (eligible jobs include pharmacists, social workers, and midwives).

Employers can offer full-time, part-time, and voluntary roles to Ukrainian nationals who are eligible to work in the UK. However, the employer must first carry out a “right to work” check before the individual’s employment begins. Employers can check an individual’s right to work by using the Home Office’s online [right to work check service](#)<sup>33</sup> (employers will need the individual’s date of birth and “right to work share code”, which is obtainable [here](#)),<sup>34</sup> or by checking their original documents. Because Ukrainian nationals have a time-limited

right to work in the UK, employers will also need to check their documents again before their visa expires. Failure to conduct these checks, or doing so incorrectly, can result in a fine or criminal prosecution.



*For more information about right to work checks and the necessary documents, read the UK government’s [detailed guidance](#).<sup>35</sup>*

People who hold professional qualifications may need them to be recognised in the UK if they work in a regulated profession. The UK Centre for Professional Qualifications provides a [free service](#)<sup>36</sup> that explains whether a profession is regulated, as well as any entry requirements.

Individuals arriving from Ukraine are entitled to the same employee rights as everyone else in the UK.

If they choose to, employers can also get help from the British government to share any jobs they are offering to Ukrainian refugees. To do so, they can download, fill out, and email a form about the positions to the Home Office. Someone [from](#)<sup>37</sup> the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will then contact the employer to discuss the job offerings. DWP will also share the positions with Jobcentre Plus and the Refugee Employment Network.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/skilled-worker-visa>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/health-care-worker-visa>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/view-right-to-work>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/prove-right-to-work>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/right-to-work-checks-employers-guide/ukrainian-nationals-and-right-to-work-checks-accessible-version>

<sup>36</sup> <https://cpq.ecctis.com/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/offer-work-to-people-who-have-come-to-the-uk-from-afghanistan-or-ukraine>





### ▲ Who to contact

Information about employment in the UK can be found through these government and non-governmental bodies:

#### 1. UK Visas and Immigration

URL: <https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration>

Tel: (+44) 808 164 8810

#### 2. The Department for Work and Pensions

URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions>

Email: [offerwork@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:offerwork@homeoffice.gov.uk)

#### 3. The Tent Partnership for Refugees

URL: <https://www.tent.org/>

Email: [info@tent.org](mailto:info@tent.org)

#### 4. Refugee Council

URL: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

Email: [info@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@refugeecouncil.org.uk)

