

Ukraine Crisis: Wider Europe Response – Italy

ACTIVITY REPORT

6th month of activities (September 2022)

Brief description of the context

Overall contexts and arrivals: Official data from the Minister of Internal Affairs estimates the arrival of approximately 170,000 people as of 21st September 2022 - most of them are women and children. It is estimated that an average of 900 people is entering the country every day, mainly reaching family and/or friends already residing in Italy (the Ukrainian diaspora in Italy amounts to approx. 250,000 people). The expected numbers of arrivals for the upcoming weeks have been gradually reducing, but it is difficult to obtain accurate estimates for the near future.

Reception centers and other services: In response to the emergency, the Italian Government has strengthened its official reception facilities (CAS and SAI Systems) to accommodate the increasing Ukrainian population coming to Italy. Access to these facilities is also allowed to Ukrainian refugees who do not hold international protection. Furthermore, in May 2022, the Legislative Decree 21/2022 has provided for the introduction of further forms of widespread reception with the collaboration of the Third Sector and economic contributions for supporting the people who have independently found accommodation. Currently, refugees from Ukraine are either accommodated in reception structures or, most likely, hosted by family, friends and Italian citizens who have applied for becoming hosts on regional databases.

Documents: When it comes to documentation, two types of residence permits have been rendered available: (1) temporary residence permit as per Temporary Protection Directive (valid for one year, with possible extension of six months + another six months for a total of 2 years); (2) temporary residence permit for application for international protection (for those who have entered Italy before 24 February 2022). Both are valid on the Schengen territory so the people who obtain them can travel within the EU territory. All people fleeing Ukraine are granted free health care from the Italian Public System.

Implemented activities

With the overall objective of protecting and assisting refugees fleeing Ukraine and arriving in the Piedmont Region, and in particular vulnerable groups such as women and unaccompanied minors, DRC Italy has established a **hotline** to provide support from social (health, accommodation, basic needs) and legal perspective.

Following some **adjustments** to the activities, the hotline is now active **5/7** days a week (from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.) and sees the presence of **6** Ukrainian, Russian, Italian, and English-speaking staff that responds to the queries of refugees fleeing Ukraine and entering the Piedmont Region, as well as of the host community in need of information.

2 DRC Italy Legal Aid Officers have conducted, and continuously conduct, training activities to the hotline staff related to the protection and social and legal orientation of the refugees, while the cases that need an in-depth legal analysis and legal support are followed by the Legal Aid Officers who draft legal documents, direct to the competent institutions, public social services and organizations, and assess protection needs and community assets to identify risks and vulnerabilities.

DRC Italy liaises and communicates with the competent state bodies, as well as local bodies, National Health Care Service and all the other relevant domestic institutions to carry out the activity, which sees the close collaboration between DRC Italy, the Regional Civil Protection and the Honorary Ukrainian Consulate of Piedmont.

Quantitative and qualitative data relating to the beneficiaries

In the 6th month of project activities (1st September-30th September), DRC Staff has reached a total of **431 direct** beneficiaries. **Indirect** beneficiaries are at least **1293**. From March to 2022 September (6 months of project activity), DRC staff has reached **7,918 direct beneficiaries**. Indirect beneficiaries are **at least 2,3754**. Out of the total, 5687 were women, 1215 were minors and 1016 were men.

Country of origin of direct beneficiaries

- 87% Ukraine
- 12% Italy
- 1 % Other (Romania, Moldavia, Russia; other Nationalities)

Activity type

A. **Information provision:** 384 people reached.

The main requests that come from Ukrainian citizens concern general information on:

- Accommodation
- Access to documentation, including where and how to translate any documents and / or certificates, how to prove entry into Italy in the absence of stamps. Some requests are also aimed at probing the actual possibility of moving within the European borders once temporary protection has been obtained.
- Health: how to register for cases with complex pathologies.
- Economic support provided by the State and the Region to refugees
- Basic needs: places where to find food and clothing parcels
- Requests for getting access to work and related documentation

With respect to the previous month, there have been significant **changes** in the type of services/information requested, more specifically:

- Increase in the number of requests for **economic contribution** and for access to work
- Information on availability and organisation of **summer camps** for kids
- Information regarding the possibility to **return** to Ukraine

Italian citizens, on the other hand, turn to the Call Center mainly to offer hospitality (slightly decreased over the past 2 months), to obtain information on hospitality, to understand how to support the people they host regarding residence permits and certificates.

B. **Case management / legal assistance:** 47 people reached.

Requests of legal aid mainly concern access to temporary protection for both Ukrainian citizens and third-country nationals who lived in Ukraine with permanent and / or temporary residence permits (e.g., Study or Work Permits).

A conspicuous number of **unaccompanied minors** (a total number of xxx among case management and information provision signalled so far) is reported on daily basis, for which the DRC legal aid officers activate the law-abiding communication procedure with the Prosecutor's Office and the Juvenile Court.

Among all the requests, several came from Ukrainian citizens who arrived in Italy before February 24th, 2022. For these people, the Italian Decree Law does not foresee the release of the temporary residence permit in order to grant them temporary protection.

Several requests also come from Ukrainian citizens who have already obtained temporary protection and want to understand:

- Whether they can come back to Ukraine for a short term, to visit their relatives/families or/and help them leave the Country.
- Whether they can move to another EU Country for short or long periods.
- Whether they can apply again for temporary protection in another EU Country.
- Whether they can study or work in other EU Countries.
- Whether they can renounce temporary protection

Some other requests (xxx) from unaccompanied minors' guardians who want to know if these minors can travel alone.

Case stories

- A Ukrainian citizen, found engaged to an Italian citizen and with a temporary protection permit issued by the Czech Republic, was unable to apply for temporary protection in Italy despite having handed in a certificate of renunciation issued by the Czech authorities. After having the certificate of renunciation translated we send a report to the Police Headquarters explaining the situation and attaching the documentation. As a result of our intervention, the lady was granted Italian temporary protection
- A Russian citizen, who fled to Kyrgyzstan for fear of a call to arms, contacts us for information about asylum options in Italy. He is given information about the asylum procedure: access to the procedure, interview before the Territorial Commission, possibility of appeal before the Civil Court. He is also given information about the reception system for asylum seekers in Italy
- Ukrainian citizen with Italian temporary protection would like to move to Germany and renew her application for protection there: to do so, she needs proof that she has renounced her Italian

protection, the Police Headquarters says it is not competent to certify the renunciation. We send request for clarification to the Police Headquarters and are still waiting for a response. From our point of view it is clear that the Police Headquarters is the competent institution

Need analysis and main key inputs from activities

- Minors, their documentation and potential trafficking:

Out of the (more than) 47,000 minors who arrived from Ukraine, 5,392 are unaccompanied. In fact, most of minors come to Italy with their mothers, but thousands have fled entrusted by their parents to a family member, a neighbor or a friend - relationships that the Italian Law does not consider valid for the appointment of legal guardianship. The presence of minors must in any case be reported to the Juvenile Court which - having ascertained identity, real age, and relationship with the reference adult - appoints a legal guardian. Institutions and CSOs are concerned that in such indefinite situation the risk of child trafficking may go overlooked.

- Third Country nationals fleeing Ukraine:

The national Decree on temporary protection and assistance for refugees fleeing Ukraine grants residence permit to Ukrainian citizens and foreigners (and their families) who already had obtained international protection in Ukraine or had a long-standing residence permit in the country. Foreigners who, at the time of leaving Ukraine, had a temporary residence permit have not only to prove that they cannot return to their country of origin safely, but they also often encountered difficulties in travelling through Europe and entering Italy, as well as moving to another EU country. Episodes of pushbacks of such third country nationals at the Italian/French border are increasing day by day.

Future planning and suggestions

Within this context, the overall lack of information on legal procedures for obtaining documents - especially for unaccompanied foreign minors - and orientation in accessing public services (health and social) could lead to extreme conditions of marginality. Despite the recent evolutions that have seen a gradual decrease in the arrivals' trend and an increase in the number of people that have decided to return to Ukraine, it still persists the necessity to pursue the activities to answer to the needs of the refugees through the provision of both legal information and available services in the Piedmont and Italian territory.

It seems then pivotal to maintain and improve the coordination with institutions to agree on common practices with respect to several areas of interest, such as access to health; Covid19 vaccination procedures; procedures for reporting and assigning legal guardians for unaccompanied minors; access to legal protection

- as practices differs according to the territorial police headquarters and/or other public offices involved. Geographical expansion of activities in other Italian Regions, as well as potential implementation of new activities might be foreseen.