

**CONSTITUTION, EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE  
COMMITTEE**

**8<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2022, Session 6**

**10 March 2022**

**The Crisis in Ukraine**

1. The Committee has agreed to undertake a piece of work on the unfolding crisis in Ukraine.
2. It was agreed that the primary focus of that work would be on the humanitarian response to events, particularly how the Scottish Government and others in Scotland – e.g. aid agencies/NGOs, the third sector and civic society – can respond.
3. Following a private briefing with the Consul General of Ukraine in Scotland, the Committee will hear in public first from the Disasters Emergency Committee and then the Scottish Government.
4. There is a SPICe briefing paper at **Annexe A**.

**CEEAC Committee Clerks  
March 2022**

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## **Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee**

**8<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 2022 (Session 6),  
Thursday, 10 March**

### **The Crisis in Ukraine and the Scottish Government response**

#### **Context**

Today's meeting provides an opportunity for the Committee to discuss the crisis in Ukraine with representatives of the Disasters Emergency Committee and the Scottish Government's response. Issues that Members may wish to explore include:

- the scale of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and neighbouring countries
- the type of support that international organisations in the region are providing to assist refugees
- the nature of the international response to the crisis
- The role of the Disasters Emergency Committee and its response to humanitarian crises
- the response of the Scottish Government
- the response of the UK Government
- how Scottish civil society can best support the humanitarian response.

## Introduction

On 24 February 2022, Russian forces launched an invasion of Ukraine. Information on the background to the conflict can be found in a [previous SPICe blog](#).

As a result of the invasion and ongoing fighting, the [United Nations said that 1 million refugees have fled Ukraine in a week](#). This figure had risen to over 1.5 million refugees by Sunday 6 March and is likely to continue to rise over the coming days and weeks. SPICe has also published a [blog on Supporting Ukrainians to come to the UK](#).

More than half of the people fleeing Ukraine have gone to Poland, others have sought safety in other nearby countries such as Hungary, Moldova, Romania and Slovakia. This briefing sets out the response, both internationally and domestically to providing humanitarian support to refugees.

## The response from international organisations

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has sought to mobilise resources and set up support measures for refugees both in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries. [According to the UNHCR](#):

“All neighbouring countries have to date commendably kept their borders open for refugees fleeing Ukraine. Most have fled to Poland, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, while others have moved towards various other European countries. We are also aware that a sizeable number has moved to the Russian Federation. National authorities are assuming responsibility for the registration, reception, accommodation and protection of these refugees.

We have seen tremendous solidarity and hospitality from the countries receiving refugees, including from the authorities and local communities.”

The UNHCR has a long-standing presence in eastern Europe, including in Poland, Hungary, Moldova, Slovakia and Romania, and is [coordinating the refugee response with other UN agencies and NGO partners, in support of national authorities](#).

To support its work supporting refugees and meet the growing demand in Ukraine and neighbouring countries, [UNHCR has announced it is seeking US\\$1.7 billion](#) to provide support for an estimated 12 million people inside Ukraine who will need relief and protection, along with more than 4 million Ukrainian refugees who may need protection and assistance in neighbouring countries in the coming months.

The money is for two funds –

- Flash Appeal asks for \$1.1 billion to assist 6 million people inside Ukraine for an initial three months.
- An inter-agency Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) for the Ukraine situation asks for a preliminary \$550.6 million to help refugees in Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, as well as in other countries in the region in order to help host countries provide shelter, emergency relief items, cash assistance, and mental health and psychosocial support to those who fled Ukraine

## The Disasters Emergency Committee appeal

The Disasters Emergency Committee brings together 15 leading UK aid charities, raising funds to quickly and effectively respond to overseas disasters.

On 2 March, the [Disasters Emergency Committee launched the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal](#) seeking to raise money to support the work of Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) charities and their local partners in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries providing food, water, shelter and medical assistance.

The [DEC have estimated](#) that around 18 million people may become affected by the conflict with 4 million of those expected to be displaced due to the conflict in Ukraine. The UK Government has pledged to match pound-for-pound up to £20 million donated by the public to the DEC appeal.

The DEC's Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal is the second appeal that it is currently seeking support for. It has also appealed for funding support for its [Afghanistan Crisis Appeal](#) with the DEC warning that "the people of Afghanistan are facing catastrophic hunger this winter". The DEC's website added that:

"Families in Afghanistan cannot afford to buy food and children are dying. Health services are struggling to treat malnourished mothers and children as they lack medicines and supplies..."

...Even before the recent conflict, change of government and collapse of the economy, people were struggling to survive the worst drought in 27 years, the effects of years of conflict and the disruption caused by the pandemic. Now, chronic poverty and hunger have deepened and those who fled their homes in recent months are facing temperatures as low as -12 Celsius without suitable shelter."

## The UK Government's response

The UK Government has [so far announced a total of £120 million in humanitarian aid](#) to help address the crisis caused by Russia's invasion of

Ukraine. This is in addition to a £100 million economic package which has also been announced.

According to the UK Government the funding will “help aid agencies respond to the deteriorating situation, creating a lifeline for Ukrainians with access to basic necessities and medical supplies”.

In addition, the [UK Government has sent humanitarian experts](#) have also deployed to the region to support those fleeing the violence in Ukraine.

## The Scottish Government’s response

On 28 February, the [Scottish Government announced it was to provide financial aid and medical supplies to Ukraine following Russia’s invasion](#). According to the Scottish Government’s news release, an initial £4 million in humanitarian aid will be provided which is intended to help provide basic humanitarian assistance, including in health, water and sanitation, and shelter. The Scottish Government indicated that the money will be allocated following discussions with UN agencies and that “it is likely Scottish Government will use a mix of approaches working with both NGOs and UN agencies”.

The Scottish Government also committed to providing medical supplies to Ukraine which included anaesthetic machines, syringe pumps and bandages. Following further work to identify what further medical supplies were needed, on 2 March, [the Scottish Government announced a further supply of critical medical supplies and equipment would be sent to Ukraine](#). According to the Scottish Government, over 500,000 emergency items valued at about £2.9 million, including hypodermic needles and oxygen masks are being donated by NHS Scotland.

## The response of civil society in Scotland

Whilst the neighbouring countries to Ukraine have welcomed the refugees and sought to provide humanitarian aid, civil societies across Europe and beyond have also looked to find ways to support the humanitarian effort.

This includes civil society in Scotland where businesses, charities and community groups across the country have responded to the crisis by organising collection points for aid and fundraising. In particular, many of these initiatives been organised by the Polish community.

The Polish Government, while expressing its gratitude for the donations, [has advised those who wish to help not to organise further aid collections](#), as the transportation and distribution procedures generate additional work and costs for the Polish authorities during this difficult time.

[Spice has published a blog](#) which sets out the response, both internationally and domestically to providing humanitarian support to refugees. This includes examples of the response from Scottish civic society.

## Supporting Ukrainians to come to the UK

In a series of announcements, the UK Government has said that British nationals and any person settled in the UK would be given the ability to bring to the UK their immediate Ukrainian family members. In addition, the visas for Ukrainian temporary workers in some sectors will be extended until at least December 2022, primarily because people cannot return to Ukraine.

The Home Secretary also confirmed that the UK Government has “removed the usual language requirements and salary thresholds for people to come to the UK and be with their families”. In addition, [she told Parliament](#) that when family members of British nationals do not meet the usual eligibility criteria but do pass all security checks, they will be given permission to enter the UK outside the usual rules for 12 months. As a result of this:

“This means that British nationals, and any person settled in the UK, can bring over immediate Ukrainian family members. Through that policy alone, an additional 100,000 Ukrainians could be eligible to come to the UK and gain access to work and public services. There is no limit on the numbers eligible under this route.”

The UK Government has introduced two new schemes to support refugees from Ukraine who wish to come to the UK:

- **The Ukraine Family Scheme** which allows British nationals and any person settled in the UK the ability to bring to the UK their immediate Ukrainian family members including parents, grandparents, adult offspring, siblings, and their immediate family members. Again, the scheme will be free. Those joining family members in the UK will be granted leave for an initial period of 12 months. They will be able to work and have access to public funds.
- **Local Sponsorship Scheme for Ukraine** which will provide a route to the UK for Ukrainians who may not have family ties with the UK, but who are able to match with individuals, charities, businesses and community groups.

A key element of the UK schemes to note are that all people fleeing the war in Ukraine (except UK nationals) need a visa to enter the UK and that applications for visas need to be made from out with the UK through one of the Visa Application Centres, either in Lviv in Ukraine or in one of the neighbouring countries to Ukraine.

On 1 March, the First Minister called on the UK Government to waive the requirement for visas for Ukrainians. In a [letter to the Prime Minister, published on the Scottish Government website](#), the First Minister wrote:

“In the midst of conflict it is neither reasonable nor morally acceptable to expect individuals to go through bureaucratic processes, abandon their family members and surrender their travel documents whilst awaiting visa application outcomes. The UK Government should follow the example of countries like the Republic of Ireland by waiving all visa requirements for any Ukrainian nationals seeking refuge in the UK, as well as implementing the temporary protection regulations. It is equally vital that rapid, safe and legal routes be established immediately, cooperating with our international partners wherever possible.”

The UK Government has refused to introduce full visa waivers for all Ukrainians with the Home Secretary citing security concerns.

The First Minister also noted the introduction of the Local Sponsorship scheme for Ukraine writing:

“I note the announcement of a community sponsorship route to be led by Michael Gove with further details to be provided in due course. It is important that any proposal is developed at pace but in partnership with the Devolved Governments through meaningful collaboration and I would ask for confirmation that the Department for Levelling Up will work with the Scottish Government in developing this route prior to publishing further detail.

However, I am concerned that this route will take time to establish and be limited in its scope. Scotland stands ready to offer refuge and sanctuary for those who may be displaced, as we did with the Syrian Resettlement Programme, which saw all 32 local authorities in Scotland welcome Syrian families into their communities. There is still a need for such a programme and I should be grateful to know as a matter of urgency whether you intend to offer one. If you do, the Scottish Government will work with local authorities here to support refugees to settle in Scotland. Local authorities in Scotland have made clear their readiness to support such a programme for Ukraine.”

**Iain Mclver, Senior Researcher, SPICe Research**

**7 March 2022**

Note: Committee briefing papers are provided by SPICe for the use of Scottish Parliament committees and clerking staff. They provide focused information or respond to specific questions or areas of interest to committees and are not intended to offer comprehensive coverage of a subject area.

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