



POLICY PAPER

PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST – PRIORITIES FOR THE EU’S RESPONSE TO THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

September 2022



Save the Children

Save the Children believes that every child deserves a future.

In Europe and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and be protected from harm. When crisis strikes and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children's unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach.

We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.

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Pavel Teterevko / Save the Children

Eda*, 2, lived near Kyiv with her parents. When the bombing started, Eda's mother Maria*, 28, immediately left home because Eda* was very afraid of the explosions. She took her daughter and her thirteen-year-old sister Anastasia* to Lithuania. The journey took over two days.

In Lithuania, they are living with Maria's Aunt and Uncle in a two-room apartment. Maria* was referred to the Save the Children in the area where she is now living. The manager of the children's day centre helped Maria* register so that she would be given extra support and essential items. She also received clothes because they hadn't managed to bring many items with them. Save the Children delivers food to the family home every week.

All names have been changed to protect the identities of the children and families featured in this paper.

SUMMARY

The escalation of conflict in Ukraine since 24 February has created a massive humanitarian and refugee crisis, and is having a devastating impact on children. Save the Children estimates that at least 7.5 million under 18-year-olds are in grave danger of physical harm, severe emotional distress, and displacement.¹ The conflict has led to over 7 million people fleeing Ukraine, and four million refugees have registered in European countries, half of them children.

The European Union and its Member States should be rightfully proud of many of the actions they have taken in response to the escalating conflict in Ukraine. The generous humanitarian assistance and the authorization of the EU's Temporary Protection Directive for those fleeing the country has meant that millions of children have access to safety and the services they desperately need. But the situation remains dire, and could worsen, requiring a sustained commitment from the EU.

Beyond the immediate humanitarian and refugee response the EU can also play a significant role in strengthening child rights and protections in Ukraine as it has recently been granted status as an EU membership candidate.² This is an unprecedented opportunity for the EU to work with the government of Ukraine to improve and strengthen the country's inadequate childcare and protection systems.

It is clear, however, that the conflict is not only a crisis for children from Ukraine. The economic shocks resulting from the conflict, in particular fuel and food price rises, are causing an acute cost-of-living crisis across the EU. The arrival of millions of refugees has also added additional strain to stretched and unprepared national school systems, and increased demand for accommodation in many countries which have limited social housing capacity.

In recent years, the European Union has taken several landmark steps forwards in the protection of children's rights within the EU. These include the adoption of the European Child Guarantee, the establishment of a target to lift at least 5 million children out of poverty by 2030, the provision of unprecedented funds to fight child poverty under the framework of the European Social Fund Plus, and the launch of the first EU comprehensive strategy on the rights of the child.

As with its commitment to assist and protect children from Ukraine, the EU must act swiftly and decisively to ensure that these instruments are strengthened and equipped to respond to the new challenges that have resulted from the conflict.

There is a risk that the response to the challenges in Europe caused by the conflict in Ukraine, in particular the energy shock, will lead the EU and its Member States to backslide on climate commitments, at a time when the impact of the climate crisis on children is becoming all too apparent. Children in Europe face heatwaves, droughts and wildfires, while storms and flooding in Pakistan have left one third of the country submerged and led to the death of 416 children. It is the burning of coal, oil and natural gas that is causing the climate crisis, and it makes no difference where it is sourced from. Simply substituting one source of fossil fuels for another, rather than redoubling investment in renewable energy, will not address this growing crisis for children.

1 Escalation of hostilities across Ukraine putting 7.5 million children at risk, Save the Children, 24 February 2022 <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/escalation-hostilities-across-ukraine-putting-75-million-children-risk>

2 European Council conclusions on Ukraine, the membership applications of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, Western Balkans and external relations, European Council, 23 June 2022 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/06/23/european-council-conclusions-on-ukraine-the-membership-applications-of-ukraine-the-republic-of-moldova-and-georgia-western-balkans-and-external-relations-23-june-2022/>

Climate change is also one of the key drivers of the global food crisis which is also being exacerbated by the impact of the conflict in Ukraine. This year, across the world, over 205 million people face acute food insecurity, and 60 million children are acutely malnourished. Food and fuel price rises in Somalia and the countries of the Sahel are tipping more children deeper into hunger, and turning a crisis into a catastrophe.

Countries such as Lebanon, where 1.4 million children are in need of humanitarian assistance, have historically relied on imported wheat from the Black Sea region and the disruption to exports has contributed to increases in the price of bread, disproportionately affecting poor families. In the face of this growing crisis, European governments are diverting aid budgets to deal with the Ukraine humanitarian and refugee response.

The conflict in Ukraine is a disaster for children, first and foremost for those in the country and those forced to flee, but increasingly so for children in poverty in Europe and around the globe.



Ukrainian children crossing border into Romania.
Photo: Camelia Iordache / Save the Children

The EU and its Member States must rise to the moment and meet the challenge of these interlinked crises. Children are agents of change and the EU and its Member States must create mechanisms that will ensure the meaningful engagement of children in addressing them. In particular, they should:

1. Commit to protect children in Ukraine and those that have fled the country

- Prioritise the protection of children from the six grave violations against children, in particular the killing and maiming of children, child recruitment and attacks on schools or hospitals.
- Take steps to ensure that those responsible for violations against children are held to account.
- Announce that the protections in the Temporary Protection Directive will be extended automatically.
- Ensure that all refugee children from Ukraine are accounted for, and can enroll and attend school in national systems.
- Ensure equitable access to protection and essential services for all migrant and refugee children.

2. Commit to alleviate the impact of the war in Ukraine on children in the EU

- Ensure that the Child Guarantee national action plans support all children in need and that funding already allocated to the fight against child poverty before the war in Ukraine is not diverted or impacted.
- Deliver on promises reform the EU energy market to reduce prices.
- Adopt both short- and long-term reforms to dampen the effects of the cost-of-living crisis and inflation.

3. Commit to speed up the clean energy transition to tackle climate change

- Take additional, ambitious and urgent action to increase the speed of the transition to renewable and green energy in response to shortages resulting from the conflict in Ukraine.
- Ensure this is a just transition that prioritizes green jobs, and support families to ensure they can afford to meet their basic energy needs and/or improve energy efficiency at home.
- Increase climate financing and help lower- and middle- income countries transition to clean development and manage unavoidable impacts.

4. Commit to address the growing global hunger crisis

- Prioritise diplomatic efforts to reach agreements to restart or ease disruptions to food and fertilizer exports resulting from the conflict in Ukraine.
- Act quickly to provide additional, flexible funding to support the scale-up of urgent lifesaving services, with priority given to a localized humanitarian response.
- Keep their commitment to 0.7% GDP funding for official development assistance (ODA), and exclude in-country refugee costs in this calculation.
- Cancel unpayable debts, including all debt payments in 2022 and 2023, for all low- and lower-middle-income countries.

1. THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE – A CRISIS FOR CHILDREN

The situation in Ukraine remains dire for children. Almost two-thirds of all children in Ukraine were forced to flee their homes in the first 100 days of war,³ cities, towns and villages have become war zones and subjected to airstrikes, artillery fire and ground combat. At a minimum, 1,000 children have been killed or injured in the course of the fighting so far, with the real number likely far higher.⁴

In areas of active hostilities, in particular in the East and along the Southern coast, heavy fighting and explosions have damaged civilian infrastructure including residential areas, schools, and hospitals, making it hard for children to access vital services. The scale of destruction, with some cities besieged or totally devastated, is utterly shocking.

2,461 education institutions have been damaged by bombing and shelling – including 284 that have been destroyed completely, according to the Ministry of Education and Science.⁵ Many education institutions are also being used for purposes other than education, and teachers who have been displaced are working in different services like volunteering or have fled the country. With schools closed, learning has continued online, although many children lack access to internet and devices resulting in disruptions to their education. During the last months, there have been 531 attacks on health facilities and infrastructure, resulting to 100 deaths, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).⁶ By one estimate, Ukraine suffers 4.5 billion USD worth of damage to civilian infrastructure every week.⁷

The EU has been a generous donor in response to the crisis in Ukraine, the second biggest institutional donor to the humanitarian response⁸. In 2022 so far, 348 million Euros in humanitarian aid has been allocated and 425 million of in-kind assistance. EU Member States have mobilized 953 million EUR more.⁹

The European Commission has consistently condemned violations of international humanitarian law in Ukraine, called for respect of the laws of war and supported calls for accountability. In May, recognising the scale of violations occurring in Ukraine and the need for international cooperation, the European Union, along with the United States of America and the United Kingdom, announced the establishment of the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group for Ukraine.

The conflict in Ukraine has also created a child rights crisis inside the EU, where over 2 million children have sought refuge from the violence. These children need legal protection, access to education and health care, and child-friendly and specialist emergency support. This is particularly the case for children who are unaccompanied or separated.

The EU's activation of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) in March 2022 was a critical and important step towards building a response to the refugee crisis which puts children's rights first. The TPD is for a maximum of three years and can be renewed after the first year, then in two six-month periods for the final year. It can come to end prior to that on the basis of a qualified majority opinion of the Council based on a proposal by the European Commission.

3 One hundred days of war in Ukraine have left 5.2 million children in need of humanitarian assistance, UNICEF, 31 May 2022 <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/one-hundred-days-war-ukraine-have-left-52-million-children-need-humanitarian>

4 Grim milestone reached in Ukraine: 1,000 children confirmed killed or injured, Save the Children, September 2022 <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/grim-milestone-reached-ukraine-1000-children-confirmed-killed-or-injured>

5 <https://saveschools.in.ua/en/> (as of 9 September 2022)

6 Surveillance system for attacks on healthcare, World Health Organisation <https://extranet.who.int/ssa/LeftMenu/Index.aspx> (as of 9 September 2022)

7 Kiev School of Economics, September 2022 <https://kse.ua/russia-will-pay/https://kse.ua/russia-will-pay/>

8 UN OCHA Financial Tracking Service, Ukraine <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/234/summary/2022> (as of 9 September)

9 Ukraine Factsheet, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, 26 August 2022 https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/europe/ukraine_en#facts--figures-as-of-2608



Halyna*, 12, (right) with Alice* at the child friendly space in the shelter where she now lives with her family.
Photo: Save the Children

Halyna*, 12, Ukrainian child living in shelter

Halyna*, 12, lived in Kyiv with her parents and younger brother. On the 24th of February she woke to find her parents watching TV and her mother was crying. This is how she discovered the war had begun. *'I understood that the war has started,'* says Halyna*. *'And my first words were 'will I live till 12 years old?'.* Halyna's* mother had to get supplies from the shops. Soon, Halyna* heard missiles overhead and explosions. She was worried about her mother. When her mother returned from the shops, another explosion shook the glass in their windows. The family packed up their cats and hid in a bomb shelter for six days, only going outside to use a toilet.

Will I live till 12 years old?

The family boarded a train and evacuated to Chernivtsi; the journey took a long time as the train had to take detours to avoid danger. When they arrived in Chernivtsi, they saw some information pointing to the shelter, where they are now living. Save the Children is supporting the shelter and has set up a child friendly space. In this space, children like Halyna* can do activities and relax away from the stress of their current situation.

**Name has been changed to protect identity*

Of the 7 million refugees recorded in European countries, over 4 million have registered under the TPD or similar schemes.¹⁰ EU Member States have faced challenges in implementing the Directive and ensuring all children enjoy the protections it confers, however. For instance, registration under the TPD is largely voluntary and relies on the initiative of refugees themselves, which poses particular challenges to unaccompanied and separated children who may not be able to access child-friendly information on how to register. This increases the risk of children travelling alone falling out of the broader protection system, putting them at increased risk of harm. This, and the fact that there is no common EU-wide definition, means there is an unknown number of unaccompanied and separated children in the EU.¹¹

Scaling-up of education capacity and child-focused services to ensure that over 2 million children in Europe who have fled the conflict in Ukraine receive a quality education is also a massive challenge. The countries with the highest number of refugees face the most acute challenges. In Poland, for example, there are few Polish language teachers to support children from Ukraine to learn Polish. Municipalities do not have the funding to hire additional education staff even if they were to be identified. But capacity for successful integration of children into national education systems is an increasing issue across European states, with countries as far from Ukraine as Spain now hosting over 140,000 refugees, approximately half of which are children. In Italy, the enrolment of 27,506 children from Ukraine into schools has highlighted a lack of sufficient and adequately distributed resources and lack of preparedness of teachers to ensure their inclusion.¹² Many of these children, who have fled a devastating conflict, must be offered mental health and psychosocial support to enable them to fully enjoy their right to go to school.

Notwithstanding these significant challenges, the protections offered to children who have fled the conflict in Ukraine shows that Europe can ensure the rights of even large numbers of refugees are protected in the EU. Unfortunately, this remains the exception, rather than the rule. Children migrating through the Balkans route, for example, are systematically exposed to violence by police at the border or by smugglers they have to rely on to attempt to enter countries to access safety.¹³ In Poland, which hosts the largest number of refugees in the EU, child refugees who are not fleeing Ukraine are pushed back and denied access to the country.¹⁴ Member States are creating a two-tier migration system in the EU, with Ukrainian children offered protection and access to services, while children from other countries face detention, stigmatization, and unsafe return.

10 The 7 million recorded refugees include non-EU countries, with largest number recorded in Russia. See UNHCR Operational Data Portal, Ukraine Refugee Situation, data from 9 September 2022 <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

11 The European Commission estimates, based on partial data collected in 23 Member States, that there are around 23,000 unaccompanied and separated children in the EU, with the real number likely to be higher. See *Supporting the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education*, European Commission, 30 June 2022 [SWD-2022-185-inclusion-displaced-children-Ukraine-in-education.pdf \(schoolsgateway.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/schools/education-gateway/en/ukraine)

12 *Rilevazione accoglienza scolastica studenti ucraini*, Ministero dell'Istruzione <https://www.istruzione.it/emergenza-educativa-ucraina/allegati/ReportAlunniUcrainiTemplate2.pdf>

13 "Wherever we go someone does us harm" *Violence against refugee and migrant children arriving in Europe through the Balkans*, Save the Children and the University of Sarajevo, September 2022 <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/Wherever-we-go-someone-does-us-harm-WEB.pdf/>

14 *Violence and Pushbacks at Poland-Belarus Border*, Human Rights Watch, June 2022 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/07/violence-and-pushbacks-poland-belarus-border>



Portrait of Vira* 26, Marta*, 3, Alona*, 6 months, in temporary accommodation, school converted into dorms, Maramures, Romania. Photo: Lewis Khan / Save The Children

Vira*(26), Marta*(3) and Alona*(6 months), Ukraine (now in Romania)

"I remember the emotions. It was hard to leave Ukraine. No one wanted to go," recalls Vira, a mother of two. "It was tearing me apart. You want to stay, but you also have kids to protect. My mother asked me if I wanted to go, and I replied that 'I can't, I'm torn apart, I have to stay and I have to go.'"

Vira* had a good life in Ukraine, working as a nurse and raising two young children – Marta*, 3, and Alona*, 6 months. Then the war took that life away. The enormity of that loss is hard for us to imagine.

“You want to stay, but you also have kids to protect.”

The hardest part was saying goodbye to her parents. *"They won't leave, even in a critical situation. My mother [who works as a paramedic] will go to help. [Leaving is] out of the question."*

She decided not to tell Marta* why they were going, treating it like a big adventure instead. But for Vira*, who had never been abroad before, crossing the border into Romania was traumatic. *"I had a sort of panic attack. I was afraid of the border, and I didn't want to leave Ukraine."*

Save The Children have helped Vira* by providing cash voucher assistance to meet basic needs like food and medicines, vital mental health support for Vira* and her children, delivering basic non-food items, outreach services, shelter and daily hot meals, as well as information and legal advice.

**Names have been changed to protect identity*

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Affirm the EU's commitment to protect children in Ukraine and those that have fled the country:

- Prioritise the protection of children from the six grave violations against children, in particular the killing and maiming of children, child recruitment and attacks on schools or hospitals.
- Take steps to ensure that those responsible for violations against children are held to account. This should include ensuring that the Atrocity Crimes Advisory (ACA) Group includes dedicated expertise in the investigation of crimes against children, and prioritizes crimes and violations affecting children.
- Increase immediate, flexible funding to child protection programming, including as a priority family-focused mental health and psychosocial support interventions for the humanitarian response in Ukraine and in countries of displacement.
- Continue efforts to prevent child institutionalisation, including for children with disabilities, by both supporting the Ukrainian government to implement reforms and with regard to children who have arrived in the EU from Ukraine.
- Announce that the protections in the TPD will be extended automatically, and commit to provide these or similar protections to all refugees from Ukraine for as long as hostilities are ongoing in the country.
- Increase capacity for identification and immediate registration under the TPD at both the borders of Ukraine and non-Schengen borders to ensure all children in Europe are accounted for, and adopt a common EU-wide definition for unaccompanied and separated children.
- Ensure that all refugee children from Ukraine can enroll and attend school in national systems as soon as possible, including by urgently expanding both reception classes and school capacity in national systems.
- Abandon the containment, deterrence and outsourcing of its responsibilities that has characterised its approach to refugee and migrant children in recent years, and ensure equitable access to protection and essential services for all migrant and refugee children.

2. THE IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON CHILDREN IN THE EU

Even before the war in Ukraine, the EU was facing the long-term effects of the financial crisis, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. These multifaceted crises continue to be felt most acutely by the most vulnerable members of society, including children. Eurostat's latest data¹⁵ shows that one in four children in the EU grows up at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Millions of children do not have adequate and equal access to education, do not eat a healthy meal each day, have unequal access to healthcare, and many others are either homeless or deprived of decent housing.¹⁶

The conflict in Ukraine is exacerbating these vulnerabilities. Ukraine and Russia are critical suppliers of energy and agricultural products for the whole EU. Following the disruption of production, trade and supply in these areas, the prices of many core products - such as wheat and gas - have risen substantially in 2022.¹⁷ Inflation across Europe hit a new 9.1% record high in August 2022.¹⁸

A number of EU Member States have taken steps to tackle this crisis in the short term, including one-time energy bonuses, one-off payments, and electronic vouchers for essential food items.

Despite this short-term support, however, energy and food price rises are causing a cost-of-living crisis, which is negatively affecting all EU countries, even the wealthiest. In the Netherlands, the cost of groceries has risen by an average of 18.5% in the last 11 months,¹⁹ with inflation expected to lead to a 9.5% increase in the number of children growing up in a low-income household.²⁰

In August 2022, energy prices in Germany were 35.6% higher than in August 2021, and the increase in spending on food was 15.6%.²¹ In Finland the increase in fuel prices in the country is preventing families living in smaller villages and rural areas from driving into work or taking children to school.

Rising energy prices mean there is a risk that many households will not be able to adequately heat their home, or risk disconnection of water, energy, and digital services. Even before the impact of the conflict in Ukraine, 17.1% of children in Spain lived in families unable to pay their utility bills, mortgage or rent on time due to financial difficulties²². This percentage is likely to increase due to the impact of the conflict in Ukraine. Cold homes can have a detrimental effect on children's education and health, causing and worsening respiratory conditions, cardiovascular diseases, poor mental health, dementia, hypothermia, and problems with childhood development.²³

15 1 in 4 children in the EU at risk of poverty or social exclusion, Eurostat, October 2021 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20211028-1>

16 *Guaranteeing Children's Future: How to end child poverty and social exclusion in Europe*, Save the Children, 2021 <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/guaranteeing-childrens-future-how-to-end-child-poverty-and-social-exclusion-in-european/>

17 *Ukraine conflict threatens Europe's recovery and mass poverty*, European Investment Bank, 14 June 2022 <https://www.eib.org/en/stories/ukraine-trade-inflation#:~:text=The%20Russian%20invasion%20caused%20a,levels%20not%20seen%20in%20decades.>

18 *Euro area annual inflation up to 9.1%*, Eurostat, 2022 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/14675409/2-31082022-AP-EN.pdf/e4217618-3f54-4f54-2a3a-21c72be44c53?t=1661863346094>

19 *Supermarktprijzen bijna een vijfde hoger: 'Gezin jaarlijks 1500 euro extra kwijt'*, NOS, 2022 <https://nos.nl/artikel/2439968-supermarktprijzen-bijna-een-vijfde-hoger-gezin-jaarlijks-1500-euro-extra-kwijt>

20 *Inflatie raakt steeds meer mensen, economische groei valt terug*, CBP - Economische beleidsanalyse, 2022

21 *Inflation rate expected to be +7.9% in August 2022*, Destatis Statistisches Bundesamt, 2022 https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2022/08/PD22_366_611.html

22 *Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida 2021*, Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2022.

23 *Fuel Poverty, Cold Homes and Health Inequalities in the UK*, Institute of Health Equity, 2022, p.17 <https://www.instituteoftheequity.org/resources-reports/fuel-poverty-cold-homes-and-health-inequalities-in-the-uk>

Many EU countries are struggling with rising cost of housing, and inadequate social housing. The size of the social housing sector is often too small compared to demand, with often as many households on waiting lists as those living in social housing.²⁴ The situation now looks set to worsen as Member States try to find accommodation for millions of people from Ukraine seeking refuge in Europe.

The number of children from Ukraine seeking protection in Europe is also impacting the capacity of EU Member States' education systems. In the Netherlands, for example, the registration of 12,300 children from Ukraine in primary school and 6,990 in secondary schools²⁵ is further exacerbating the shortage of teachers that the country was experiencing before the war.²⁶ In Romania, the vast majority of children from Ukraine are attending schools in the biggest cities of the country which were already overcrowded²⁷ schools have had to divide pupils in two or even three shifts of classes per day.

The conflict in Ukraine is also impacting the allocation and diversion of EU funds, which remain a key source of financial support for Member States' response to these challenges. The European Union has rapidly mobilised remarkable amounts to urgently assist and support people fleeing from Ukraine and tackle the socio-economic impact of the conflict. These funds were mostly unspent resources from the Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2014-2020 that were on the verge of decommitment. Through this the EU has empowered Member States to rapidly tackle this crisis and flexibly fund a wide range of actions. The European Commission has also encouraged Member States to capitalise on the opportunity offered by the European Child Guarantee and include in their national action plans concrete policies and instruments to protect children fleeing from Ukraine. There is however a risk that EU funds initially dedicated to fight poverty and social exclusion in the EU, at least to some extent, will be diluted and thinned to respond to the consequences of the war.

All of the initiatives taken to date will bring welcome relief to children and families in the short term, but the cost-of-living crisis is continuing to deepen, and essential and urgent reforms are still under discussion or planned to start only in 2023. Confronted with a social crisis of this scale, structural and comprehensive national reforms should be developed as soon as possible, and a dedicated new injection of funds in what is now taking the shape of a long-term phenomenon. The answer can no longer uniquely rely on redirected leftover budgets.

24 The State of Housing in Europe, Housing Europe, 2022 <https://www.housingeurope.eu/resource-1705/the-state-of-housing-in-europe-2022>

25 Rijksoverheid, [Opvangcapaciteit vluchtelingen uit Oekraïne onder druk](#), 2022

26 Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, July 2022 <https://open.overheid.nl/repository/ronl-cd95152e635acd8c535b6669d8757d54179ad9c9/1/pdf/lerarenstrategie.pdf>

27 How to end child poverty and social exclusion in Europe: Country Report: Romania, Save the Children, 2021 https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/Guaranteeing_Childrens_Future-Romania_compressed.pdf/, and Analytical report on the unaccompanied asylum seeker and refugee children in Romania, European Commission, June 2021 https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/analytical-report-unaccompanied-asylum-seeker-and-refugee-children-romania_en

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Affirm the EU's commitment to alleviate the impact of the war in Ukraine on children in the EU:

- Ensure that the Child Guarantee national action plans support all children in need and that funding already allocated to the fight against child poverty before the war in Ukraine is not diverted or impacted.
- Allocate new additional and ad-hoc funds to tackle the multi-level consequences of the conflict in Ukraine. This could be borrowed as was done in support of the post-pandemic recovery or could be set up through national contributions.
- Deliver on promises to reform the EU energy market to reduce prices and deliver the longer-term reforms aimed at ensuring electricity prices reflect cheaper renewable energy.
- Adopt both short- and long-term reforms to dampen the effects of the cost-of-living crisis and inflation, including child allowance systems, social security benefits, price caps, tax breaks, and social tariffs.
- Increase the provision of quality social services to support the children and families hit by this crisis, with specific targeted support for the most affected and vulnerable.
- Provide financial assistance to families having difficulties with utilities, rent or mortgage payments.
- Invest in education and training while considering the unprecedented costs faced by schools.

3. EUROPE, UKRAINE, THE ENERGY CRISIS AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS

With the growing social crisis driven by rising costs, particularly of fuel, European governments and the EU are facing difficult choices on how to support their citizens as winter approaches and lower income families face horrific dilemmas between eating or heating. However, a top priority must be to transition in a just way from fossil fuel dependency to renewable sources of energy, recognising that it is the burning of coal, oil and natural gas that are the main drivers of the climate crisis.

The effects of the climate crisis are becoming ever more apparent in Europe. Droughts, heatwaves, wildfires and flooding cause significant damage and distress to ever more European citizens, and are having increasingly devastating economic impacts. Research released by Save the Children in partnership with Vrije Universiteit Brussel found that on average a child born in 2020 in Europe faces 2.8 times the risk of wildfires as a child born in 1960, and 4.8 the risk from heatwaves, based on the original Paris Agreement pledges.²⁸

The impact of climate change is often so much more devastating in low- and middle-income countries on the front lines of the climate crisis. In Pakistan, more than two months of storms and flooding have left one third of the country submerged and have led to the deaths of more than 1,200 people, including nearly 416 children. Nearly 50% of the 16 million people affected by the devastating floods are children, and nearly two thirds of them were already poor before the flooding - living in rickety homes, with packed-mud floors, or in informal settlements.²⁹

Across the world, nearly 1 billion children live in countries at “extremely high risk” of climate change.³⁰ But these children, their perspectives and discussion of their rights have been “conspicuously absent from national and international climate discussions, commitments, and policies”.³¹

European countries, like other high-income countries and historic emitters, have a unique and urgent responsibility to lead the way in tackling the climate crisis. The EU must lead the way towards a just transition from fossil fuels towards renewable energy, and ensure that low- and middle-income countries are supported financially, and with technical assistance, to transition to sustainable economies and adapt to the now-unavoidable impacts of climate change.

The European Green Deal was an important step in the effort to combat climate change and ensure a better, cleaner and healthier future for all. In response to the Ukraine conflict, the European Commission presented the REPower EU plan, with additional investments to phase out Russian fossil fuel imports.³² The Council subsequently agreed to a proposal by the Commission to reduce demand for gas ahead of the winter.³³ The REPower EU plan includes investments in clean energy, it is also emphasizing that “in the short-term, we need alternative supplies of gas, oil and coal as quickly as possible”.

28 *Born into the Climate Crisis: Why we must act now to secure children's rights*, Save the Children, September 2021 <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/born-into-the-climate-crisis.pdf/>

29 *Pakistan went from heatwaves to floodwaves in three months. What's going on?*, Save the Children, 5 September <https://www.savethechildren.net/blog/pakistan-went-heatwaves-flood-waves-three-months-what-s-going>

30 *One billion children at 'extremely high risk' of the impacts of the climate crisis*, UNICEF, 19 August 2021 <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/one-billion-children-extremely-high-risk-impacts-climate-crisis-unicef>

31 *A COP Fit For Children: How to support children's participation*, Save the Children et al. 2021 <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/cop-fit-children-how-support-childrens-participation/>

32 *REPowerEU: affordable, secure and sustainable energy for Europe*, European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/repowereu-affordable-secure-and-sustainable-energy-europe_en#timeline

33 *Statement by the President of the European Commission following the political agreement on the Council Regulation on coordinated demand reduction measures for gas*, European Commission, 26 July 2022 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_22_4725



Bashir*, 15, from Puntland, Somalia

"The climate has changed since I was six years old. The scorching sun and the drought bothers me a lot," explains 15-year-old Bashir.*

Many families in drought-hit communities in Somalia already faced a daily struggle to get by. Now, after the rains failed for the fourth time in a row, crops and animals' grazing land have turned to dust. This is particularly worrying for families like Bashir's*, who keep animals for a living.

"We were herding 200 goats and due to the drought, only 30 have survived. It hurts me a lot to lose those goats," he says.

“When I feel hungry, I can't graze the goats.

On top of the harsh weather conditions; a global shortage of grain, because of the war in Ukraine sent food prices in Somalia soaring. Families have less to eat. Children are at risk of hunger and malnutrition. *"When I feel hungry, I can't graze the goats. Sometimes I can't even fetch water because I lack the energy to walk," describes Bashir*.*

A large well was built by Save the Children. Bashir* and his family use the well to get clean drinking water for themselves and their animals.

**Name has been changed to protect identity*

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Affirm the EU's commitment to speed up the clean energy transition to tackle climate change:

- Recognise that real energy security cannot be achieved by relying on fossil fuels and prioritize ending the EU's reliance on fossil fuels per se, not only imported fossil fuel from Russia.
- Take additional, ambitious and urgent action to increase the speed of the transition to renewable and green energy in response to shortages resulting from the conflict in Ukraine.
- Ensure this is a just transition that prioritizes green jobs, providing incentives to ensure that families most affected by inequality and discrimination are supported to access new economic opportunities, and supported to ensure they can afford to meet their basic energy needs and/or improve energy efficiency at home.
- Increase climate financing to go beyond the unmet pledge to mobilise at least \$100 billion annually by 2020, and help lower- and middle- income countries transition to clean development and manage unavoidable impacts, using specified metrics to ensure child-sensitive investment.
- Recognise children as equal stakeholders and key agents of change in addressing the climate and environmental crisis, including protecting children's right to expression and by supporting child-friendly mechanisms for children's formal engagement in climate policymaking at all levels, particularly for children most impacted by inequality and discrimination.

4. A GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS: CONFLICT IN UKRAINE PROVIDES A FURTHER SHOCK

The economic shocks resulting from the conflict in Ukraine are felt not only in Europe. Over 205 million people across 45 countries face acute food insecurity³⁴, in part as a result of the conflict in Ukraine, and 60 million children are acutely malnourished.³⁵

While global prices for food have since stabilised and there have been some successful diplomatic efforts to ensure the continued export of grain from Ukraine³⁶, much of the impact has already been felt by children in food insecure and least developed countries.

In Lebanon, close to 70% of Lebanon's total population, equating to 1.4 million children are in need of humanitarian assistance, over 200,000 of whom suffer from a form of malnutrition. The country has historically and overwhelmingly imported wheat from the Black Sea region, and disruptions to supply chains as a result of the closure or damage of strategic ports in Ukraine and restrictions on exports from Russia means it is running low on wheat reserves. The Central Bank (BDL) may be unable to fully subsidize wheat imports (and bread more generally) owing to limited remaining foreign reserves and suggesting devastating increases in bread prices moving forward. Bread prices have already increased by more than 30% this year, while the weights of bread bundles have decreased, disproportionately affecting poorer households. Fuel prices in Lebanon have increased by more than 28-fold between August 2020 and June 2022.

In East Africa, climate-related shocks, the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 and a slow and inadequate aid response to growing warnings of a food and nutrition crisis formed the backdrop to the new impacts resulting from the conflict in Ukraine. Russia and Ukraine account for 90% of wheat exports to East Africa and nearly three-quarters of the global export of sunflower oil – a key cooking ingredient in the region. Disruption caused by the conflict saw the price of a 20-litre jerry can of cooking oil increased from \$25 to about \$50 in Somalia.³⁷ By June, three times as many children had already died from severe acute malnutrition with medical complications in in-patient treatment centres compared to the whole of the previous year.³⁸

More than 40 million people, or 11% of the population, in West and Central Africa are food insecure.³⁹ The food crisis situation in the Sahel was already critical before the Ukraine conflict – due to the combined effects of climate crisis, macroeconomic shocks and armed conflicts – but it has worsened a dire situation, in some cases dramatically. In Central Sahel the number of food insecure people projected was 9.7 million,⁴⁰ with estimates that 7 to 10 million additional people⁴¹ will be affected by food insecurity as a result of the crisis in Ukraine. In addition, the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine is not only exacerbating these food crises and creating new barriers to development but drawing in funds that are required to address them.

34 Global Report on Food Crises 2022 Mid-Year Update, Food Security Information Network, 12 September 2022 <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-report-food-crises-2022-mid-year-update>. The mid-year report also notes that “due to the timing of some 2022 analyses, many peak estimates do not capture the compounding impacts of the war in Ukraine.” p.6

35 War in Ukraine drives global food crisis, World Food Programme, June 2022 https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000140700/download/?_ga=2.50067878.1819727844.1662727140-1531938785.1662727140

36 See Against expectations, global food prices have tumbled, The Economist, 22 August 2022 <https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2022/08/22/against-expectations-global-food-prices-have-tumbled> and Who are the winners in the Black Sea grain deal, International Crisis Group, 3 August 2022 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/eastern-europe/ukraine/who-are-winners-black-sea-grain-deal>

37 Dangerous Delay 2: The Cost of Inaction, Oxfam and Save the Children, p.12 https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/Dangerous-Delay-2-the-Cost-of-Inaction_2022.pdf.pdf/

38 Explosion of child deaths' imminent in Horn of Africa if world does not act immediately, UNICEF, 7 June 2022 <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/explosion-child-deaths-imminent-horn-africa-if-world-does-not-act-immediately-unicef>

39 See Global Report on Food Crises 2022 Mid-Year Update, p. 24 <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-report-food-crises-2022-mid-year-update> and West Africa faces its worst food crisis in ten years, with over 27 million people already suffering from hunger, Save the Children et al, 5 April 2022 <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/west-africa-faces-its-worst-food-crisis-ten-years-over-27-million-people-already>

40 Central Sahel Crisis Emergency Response, Plan International, 13 June 2022 <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/central-sahel-crisis-emergency-response-plan-international-west-and-central-africa-wacayemc-apr-may-2022-issue-7#:~:text=9.7%20million%20people%20are%20projected,heavy%20dependency%20on%20food%20imports>.

41 The war in Ukraine - amplifying an already prevailing food crisis in West Africa and the Sahel region, World Bank, 13 April 2022 <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/war-ukraine-amplifying-already-prevailing-food-crisis-west-africa-and-sahel-region>

Several Member States are reprogramming aid away from developing countries and regions, redirecting this towards in-country refugee costs. In Sweden, ODA diversion is already having an impact on the development budget of NGOs who were informed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency that they would have their development budgets cut by 39%.⁴² Denmark, Estonia and the Netherlands have also announced a diversion of ODA for the management of refugees from Ukraine.

On the other hand, other EU Member States have announced increases in their ODA budget to support refugee costs on top of the ODA Budget 2022 (such as Italy, Belgium, France, Germany, Czech Republic). The EU's overall budget itself is earmarked until 2027⁴³ and has vowed to not redirect humanitarian funding from other crises.⁴⁴ Indeed, the EU has mobilised 600 million Euros from the reserves of the European Development Fund to address the secondary impact of the Ukraine crisis on other countries, including 145 million EUR for humanitarian assistance⁴⁵.

While any new commitments are welcome, they are not enough to meet the dramatically escalating needs, both in Europe and around the world.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Affirm the EU's commitment to address the growing global hunger crisis:

- Prioritise diplomatic efforts to reach agreements to restart or ease disruptions to food and fertilizer exports resulting from the conflict in Ukraine.
- Act quickly to provide additional, flexible funding to support the scale-up of urgent lifesaving services to the most at-risk communities.
- Prioritize a localized humanitarian response that can be delivered as close as possible to affected communities to prevent further deterioration of the global food security and nutrition crisis.
- Investment in anticipatory resilience and recovery programs that save livelihoods from the impact of the food security and nutrition crisis must be the focus, so that communities have the ability to sustain themselves.
- Keep their commitment to 0.7% GDP funding for official development assistance (ODA), and exclude in-country refugee costs in this calculation.
- Cancel unpayable debts, including all debt payments in 2022 and 2023, for all low- and lower-middle-income countries that are highly vulnerable to the compound shocks of drought, conflict, climate and rising food prices.

42 Sweden pulls \$1B in foreign aid for Ukrainian refugees at home, Devex, 5 May 2022 <https://www.devex.com/news/sweden-pulls-1b-in-foreign-aid-for-ukrainian-refugees-at-home-103164>

43 Will the Ukraine Crisis Mean EU Aid Is Pulled from the Rest of the World?, Center for Global Development, 29 March 2022 <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/will-ukraine-crisis-mean-eu-aid-pulled-rest-world>

44 EU aid chief vows not to neglect other crises amid Ukraine needs, Devex, 1 March 2022 <https://www.devex.com/news/eu-aid-chief-vows-not-to-neglect-other-crises-amid-ukraine-needs-102767>

45 Food security: EU to step up its support to African, Caribbean and Pacific countries in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, European Commission, 21 June 2022 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_3889

OUR RESPONSE IN UKRAINE

Save the Children in Ukraine has provided support to 281,882 people, including 149,594 children.

Our trained teams in Ukraine are working alongside local partners and the Ukraine government to provide life-saving assistance to make sure children and families impacted by this crisis have the immediate support they need to survive and rebuild their lives.

Save the Children is ensuring children have access to learning programmes to help children make up for lost learning. Save the Children is setting up digital learning spaces to help children access education and distributing education kits, which contain pens, colouring pencils, notepads, and educational materials, so children don't miss out on crucial learning.

WHAT SUPPORT IS BEING PROVIDED?



Food, fuel and cash assistance to meet people's most urgent need.



Blankets, hygiene items, baby kits, trauma kits and bunker kits.



Medical supplies and support to health teams and hospitals.



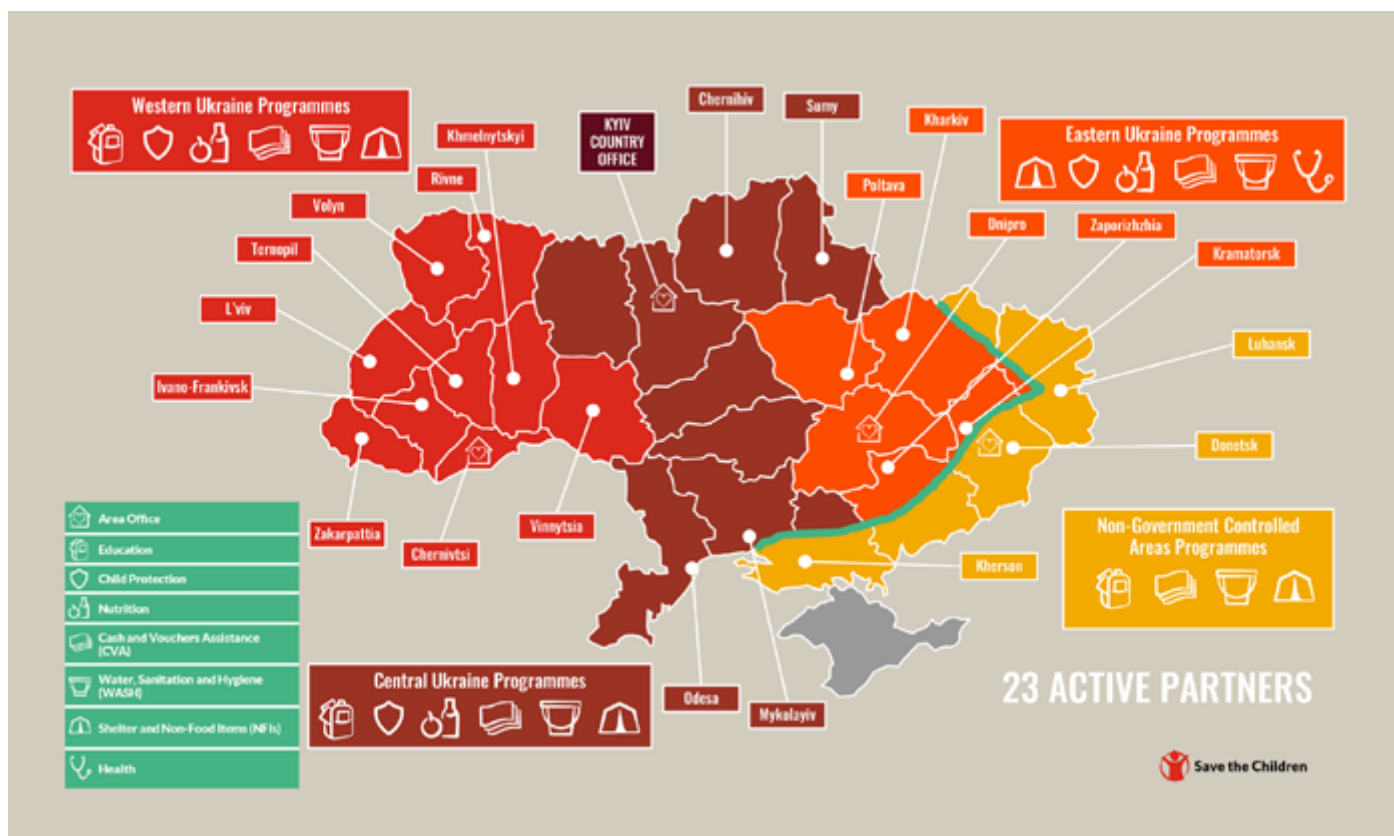
Digital Learning Spaces to help children access education.



Mental health support to children and their families.



Child protection services so children and families remain together.



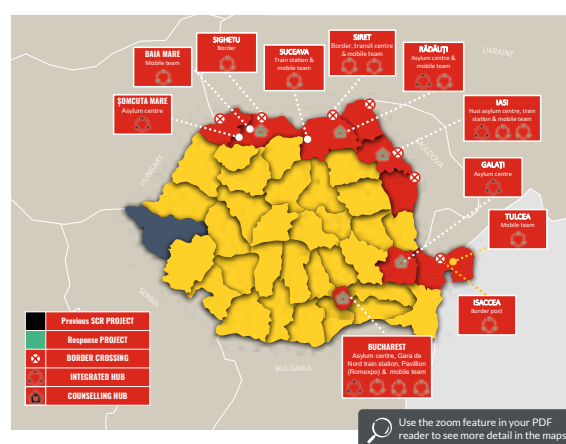
OUR REGIONAL RESPONSE

Our teams are assisting children and families fleeing Ukraine at border crossing points and reception centres in Romania, Poland and Lithuania. Save the Children has reached 178,000 people with life-saving support.

ROMANIA

Save the Children in Romania has reached 157,128 people, including 88,800 children.

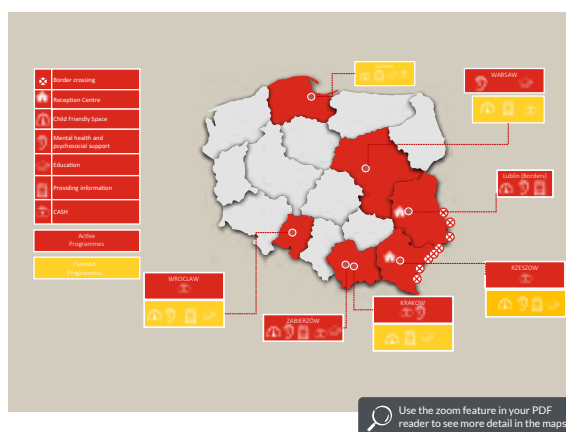
Save the Children teams are at every border crossing with Ukraine and Moldova, providing food, clean water, hygiene items, pre-paid sim cards, information, and translation services. They are also providing social, recreational, and educational services through Child Friendly Spaces and Mother and Baby Areas, delivering Cash and Vouchers Assistance and supporting children to access distance education.



POLAND

Save the Children in Poland has reached 5,888 people, including 5,195 children.

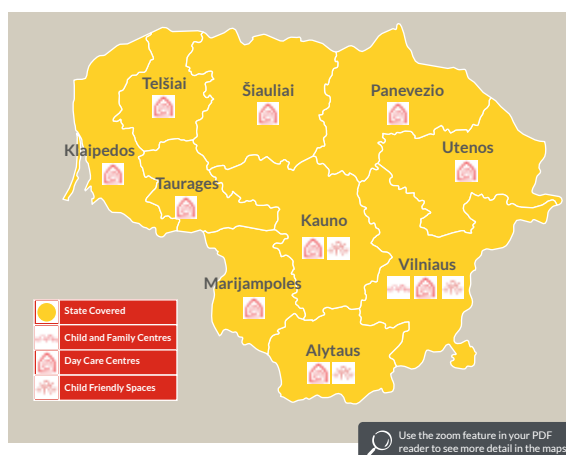
Save the Children teams are providing cash and voucher assistance to families and partnered with libraries to set up Digital Learning Hubs, which will support children from Ukraine to continue their education through self-directed online resources from Ukraine's Ministry of Education and Science.



LITHUANIA

Save the Children in Lithuania has reached 16,735 children through targeted emergency support and its Child Friendly Spaces.

Save the Children are delivering recreational and educational activities, as well as essential items and food. They have also provided emergency support to children and their, including hygiene items, toys, clothes, and medical referrals, as well as Baby Kits for pregnant women.



OUR RESPONSE IN THE REST OF EUROPE

In addition to our major responses in Poland, Romania and Lithuania, our European programs in the Balkans, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK have been supporting refugee children and their families through activities such as Child Friendly Spaces, psychosocial support, and assistance to help children and their families resettle and access the services they need.

This has been a response like no other.

We have been able to amplify our impact by working with several strategic partners such as other NGOs, civil society, local authorities and national governments.



OUR RESPONSE INCLUDES:



Offering emergency shelter and working with local families and businesses to provide temporary safe housing.



Setting up child friendly spaces in key places, like migration offices, so children can relax and play while waiting to be assisted.



Working with local authorities to promote children's wellbeing and avoid harm.



Connecting refugee families to relevant services and local communities.



Providing practical information, legal advice and mental health support to children and their families.



Influencing the European Union and its member states to create safe and legal routes across Europe for people fleeing the conflict.



Myron*, 10, playing with a table tennis racquet at a summer camp in Poland for children who have fled Ukraine.

Photo: Paul Wu / Save the Children



Save the Children