



## Ukraine Civil Society Forum

12<sup>th</sup> December 2023

### **Statement regarding the significant diminution of support to People from Ukraine now arriving**

The Government has decided to introduce substantial changes to the support for refugees from Ukraine, specifically a 90 day limit on state provided accommodation and a change in social welfare entitlement from Job-Seekers allowance of €220 to Direct Provision payment of €38.80.

The Irish State's emergency response to the war in Ukraine, and the welcoming of thousands of people, has been commendable. But it must be matched by developing and scaling longer term accommodation options. These policies seem to be putting short term deterrence over long term planning with substantial detrimental consequences for real people who have already lost so much and face a very uncertain future.

There are just a few points to be made.

1. Movements of people out of Ukraine are determined by war conditions – it is push rather than pull. Parents are seeking to keep their children safe. The vast majority of people from Ukraine would prefer to be at home with their loved ones.
2. The €38.80 per week Direct Provision payment has been criticised for years for putting people in poverty and does not meet the minimum essential standard of living (MESL)<sup>1</sup>. The total MESL expenditure needed for a one parent family with two children (one in primary school; one in secondary school) is €228.29 a week where accommodation, food and laundry are provided.
3. The 90 day limit to accommodation is impractical. The evidence to support this is the 6,000 people stuck in Direct Provision who have refugee status but cannot leave. There is no functioning or affordable rental market in Ireland. The impact of this additional insecurity on children in particular is not to be underestimated. Realistically, are we going to make hundreds of children street-homeless every month.
4. The logical conclusion of the implementation of these policies will be to encourage people to apply for International protection, which defeats the original purpose of temporary protection: to reduce pressure on the protection process.

**These proposals deflect from the real issue – The failure to plan** for the medium term and the failure of the Department of Housing to step up. This is the elephant in the room and it is not going away. Twenty months into this war having forecast that we would be supporting over 100,000, just 5,800 beds have been commissioned.

**The country is wealthy and at full employment**, we need the skills of all those who have arrived. Stable accommodation is critical to unlock this workforce. The Ukrainian community are already contributing to the Irish economy to the tune of over 32,000 employments (CSO). Bringing all into employment meets Ireland's economic needs and allows the people who have fled the war in Ukraine to begin to build a temporary life here.

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<sup>1</sup> Vincentian MESL Research Centre, *Estimating the MESL costs for families in Direct Provision* (Vincentian MESL Research Centre 2023).



**40% of people from Ukraine now living here came from areas utterly destroyed or occupied.** They will be in Ireland for a number of years. The Government must commit to accelerating the development of a pipeline of medium term accommodation. More than 20,000 families are inappropriately being long-term accommodated in hotels and B&Bs, we know how negative this is for children. We must do better.

**We need compassionate solutions, clearly communicated.** These changes create huge stress and anxiety within the Ukrainian community here, adding to the awful uncertainty. Their right to be here is temporary and they have no idea what the future holds. Is Ireland withdrawing its welcome? Where can my child have a future? When will we be safe? This war is an enormous humanitarian disaster, **our government policy should strive to not add to the trauma of those who have fled.**

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### Editors Notes

1. Ukraine Civil Society Forum (UCSF) connects 92 organisations. This initiative was convened by civil society in March 2022 acting collectively to support the emergency response and welcome of refugees from Ukraine to Ireland. Providing a space for the national coordination of civil society and community responses, connecting into the State's response structures supporting reception and integration. The UCSF shares information, avoids duplication, identifies trends and patterns, including gaps in service provision and works together to share solutions, escalate issues where necessary to the Government.
2. The Forum is hosted by the Immigrant Council of Ireland and funded by the Community Foundation of Ireland and the Red Cross.
3. 83,000 Ukrainian Refugees living in Ireland
  - a. 46% are women, 32% children.
  - b. 101,211 people have been granted temporary protection. 18% have left Ireland.
  - c. 19,500 are living with hosts or in pledged accommodation, 54,200 in hotels and B&Bs
  - d. Over 30% of adults are working and a further 30% are learning English in order to be able to work.
4. The evidence from the ESRI<sup>2</sup> (2022) research states "factors such as policies and conditions were significantly less influential than social networks and conflict factors".
5. In April 2022 the responsibility for medium term accommodation was assigned to the Department of Housing and Local Government. Answer to [PQ 33084/22](#)
6. The State's overall response to current demand pressures on accommodation has included: refurbished buildings programme (2,800 beds), rapid-build homes (750 units, 3,000 beds) and incentivising the public to pledge accommodation and host (19,600 currently). This latter is not a medium term solution either. All of the medium-term measures, once completed amount to accommodation for 8% of current need.
7. The €38.80 DP payment has not been increased since 2015 McMahon Report to Government.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.esri.ie/news/key-drivers-behind-increase-in-international-protection-applications-identified-in-new-esri> p.39



**Ukraine Civil Society Forum (UCSF)** is an initiative convened by civil society acting collectively to support the emergency response and welcome of refugees from Ukraine to Ireland. 92 organisations are involved. The UCSF shares information, avoids duplication, identifies trends and patterns, including gaps in service provision, works together to share solutions, and escalates issues where necessary to the Government.

### **Members**

1. AkiDwA
2. ALONE
3. Business in the Community Ireland
4. Cairde
5. ChangeX
6. Children's Rights Alliance
7. Community Work Ireland
8. Doras
9. Dublin City Co-op
10. Educate Together
11. Effective Aid Ukraine
12. ELSTA –English Language Teachers
13. Family Resource Centre National Forum
14. Foróige
15. Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation
16. Helping Irish Hosts
17. Immigrant Council of Ireland
18. Irish Refugee Council
19. Jesuit Refugee Service
20. LGBT Ireland
21. Louth Local Development Company
22. Mental Health Reform
23. MRCI
24. MyMind
25. Nasc
26. NEWKD
27. Northside Family Resource Centre CLG
28. National Youth Council of Ireland
29. One Foundation
30. Open Doors Initiative
31. SERP (UCD)
32. Society of the St.Vincent de Paul
33. Together Razem
34. UACT Ukrainian Action in Ireland
35. West Clare Family Resource Centre
36. WLD Wexford Local Development
37. Women's Collective

There are an additional 40 participating organisations and 15 with Observer status.