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FINDING NEW HOME: TEMPORARY PROTECTION FOR UKRAINIAN REFUGEES ON THE TERRITORY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Since the very first moment of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, Slovakia has offered large-scale support, supplying items of different means, including humanitarian aid, and, in particular, focusing on Ukrainian refugees having fled to Slovakia seeking a safe place to stay.

The Slovak Republic announced the provision of temporary protection to the refugees from Ukraine as early as 1 March 2022 in the form of a national status. This enabled the granting of status to many incoming persons. Beneficiaries of temporary protection have access to employment, health care, social system, and education in the case of children. After the activation of the EU Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55/EC), Government Resolution No. 185/2022 aligned the conditions for providing temporary protection with the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022, which acknowledged ‘the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection’. Five large-capacity centres (VKC) were established for the rapid processing of applications for temporary protection in Michalovce, Humenné, Nitra, Bratislava, and Žilina, with the only VKC in Bratislava currently operating. The VKC also aids in gaining access to social and employment services, as well as other important information. The ua.gov.sk website was also created to provide information in Ukrainian.

Since the outbreak of the conflict, as of March 2024, 2,257,396 persons entered the Slovak Republic from the territory of Ukraine, 90.8% of whom were Ukrainians (2,049,444). From the beginning of the conflict until 24 March 2024, 141,344 people applied for temporary refuge. The majority (99.4%) are citizens of Ukraine (140,509). Regarding the demographic distribution of the persons who applied for temporary protection, 32% are minors (44,662), while women make up 71.4% (68,480) of the group of adults. As of the end of February 2024, 117,457 nationals of Ukraine were enjoying temporary refuge on the territory of the Slovak Republic. In connection with the war in Ukraine, 181 Ukrainian nationals, including 80 adults and 101 children, have applied for international

protection (asylum) on the territory of the Slovak Republic, the asylum granted in the case of 1 person and the supplementary protection provided in 36 cases.

As for education, children from Ukraine are allowed to study at schools in their place of residence or another designated place. According to data from the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, as of December 2023, a total of 11,881 children, from pre-primary education to secondary education aged 3–16 years, were involved in face-to-face teaching. In the same age group, an estimated 3,915 outcast children are out of the school system.

Residents of Ukraine who have been granted temporary protection have the same access to the labour market as citizens of the Slovak Republic (except for civil servants). They can be hired on an employment contract or by an agreement. In the case of employing these third-country nationals for a highly qualified position, neither confirmation of the possibility of filling a vacant position nor an employment permit is required. According to information from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Slovak Republic, approximately 35,000 persons with temporary refuge are currently employed.

We are proud to be Ukraine's partner and will keep up standing by Ukraine's side for as long as needed.