

## EMN Finland Conference 2024

### *Between integration and return:*

### *The future of Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection in Europe and Finland*

Ukrainian mobility in the EU has always been active, but the war of aggression launched by Russia on 26 February 2022 changed the relationship of many Ukrainians with their home country and the rest of Europe. At the beginning of September 2024, there were around 4.4 million beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine in the EU. In Finland, Ukrainians have submitted a total of around 75 000 applications for temporary protection. There are currently around 46 000 beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine in Finland, the rest are estimated to have either returned to Ukraine or moved elsewhere in the EU. As the war drags on, some Ukrainians are beginning to find new homes in EU countries, including Finland. It is possible that Ukrainians will become one of the largest minorities in Finland and many other EU countries in the near future. EU countries should therefore already start to consider the transition of those granted temporary protection to other longer-term legal statuses and to look at integration in a broader context. On the other hand, at the same time, Member States must consider, that some may still return to Ukraine even after integrating to a member state.

According to a survey commissioned by the Finnish Ministry of the Interior, Ukrainians who arrived in Finland as refugees after February 2022 are generally satisfied with their life in Finland and increasingly interested in staying. However, some of the open responses to the survey revealed that uncertainty about the future of their stay causes concern among respondents and affects their willingness to apply for a municipality and integrate into Finland. Elsewhere in Europe, the willingness to integrate has also been affected by the general belief of beneficiaries of temporary protection that their situation is only temporary and their wish to return to Ukraine when conditions allow.

Many Ukrainians find themselves in a limbo of sorts, with integration efforts in the host country aimed at integrating them to the host society. For example, according to the Finnish Government Action Plan 2024, Finland actively supports the integration of Ukrainians into Finnish society and their transition to residents of

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EUROOPAN MUUTTOLIIKEVERKOSTO

Maahanmuuttovirasto  
PL 10, 00086 MAAHANMUUTTOVIRASTO  
puh. 0295 430 431  
faksi 0295 411 720  
www.emn.fi

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EUROPEISKA MIGRATIONSÄTVERKET

Migrationsverket  
PB 10, 00086 MIGRATIONSVERKET  
tfn 0295 430 431  
fax 0295 411 720  
www.emn.fi

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EUROPEAN MIGRATION NETWORK

Finnish Immigration Service  
P.O.Box 10, 00086  
FINNISH IMMIGRATION SERVICE  
tel. +358 295 430 431  
fax +358 295 411 720  
EMN <http://ec.europa.eu/emn>

Finnish municipalities. At the same time, however, Ukraine itself expects its citizens to participate in the activities of its own society and hopes that its citizens will return eventually. For example, many children in different EU countries have had to attend school both in the host country and in Ukraine at a distance. In addition, the motivation of Ukrainian pupils to learn Finnish has been undermined by the expectation of a quick return home.

Challenges in integration are intrinsically linked to the experience of temporary protection: In the European Migration Network study "*The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: challenges and good practices in 2023*", EMN member states reported that it has been difficult to find longer-term solutions for beneficiaries of temporary protection, such as housing, labour market opportunities or education. In addition, linguistic and cultural differences were the most frequently cited barriers to the provision of services to Ukrainians by EMN member states.

Labour market integration challenges are also an integral part of the feeling of temporariness: According to the European Migration Network's report *Labour market integration of beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine*, beneficiaries of temporary protection have worked in the host countries mainly in the following sectors: accommodation and food service activities, administrative and support service activities, industry, wholesale and retail trade and construction. However, these sectors do not necessarily correspond to the previous expertise or educational profile of beneficiaries of temporary protection.

Skills mismatches are therefore a major challenge for integration in the Member States. According to the EMN-report, a high proportion of beneficiaries of temporary protection are highly educated (some host countries report that more than 60% have completed tertiary education). However, in many cases, the jobs in the host countries do not match their level of education and previous experience.

The 2024 National Conference of the European Migration Network Finland Contact Point shall examine the state of play as well as the future prospects of the situation of Ukrainians in Finland and in EU countries. The conference aims to address the challenges of integration in a situation where a refugee finds himself between two countries. The conference seeks to promote dialogue between different actors and to find new perspectives on how to support refugees in the limbo between integration and return.

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The conference will feature presentations based on the publications *Labour market integration of beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine* and *The application of the Temporary Protection Directive: challenges and good practices in 2023* by the European Migration Network, as well as comments on the reports by national and international experts and Ukrainians themselves.

The second half of the conference will consist of a panel discussion on how Finland (and Europe) should in the near future organise the transition of Ukrainians into permanent residents of European countries, and on the other hand, assist those willing to return to Ukraine for the reconstruction process.

### About EMN

The European Migration Network (EMN) was established by a Council of the European Union decision on 14 May 2008. EMN is funded by the European Union. The purpose of EMN is to provide up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum issues in its member countries to support policy-making in the European Union. The EMN disseminates the comparative data it collects and analyses not only to policy makers and public authorities, but also to the general public.

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