



The EU must support the millions of people fleeing the war in Ukraine.¹

The European adult learning community is ready to help.

EAEA's statement

April 2022

Europe is facing a huge humanitarian crisis. According to the [official data](#) of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, millions of refugees have already been forced to flee the war in Ukraine moving to neighbouring countries, while many people have been displaced internally within Ukraine. In the coming months, several million Ukrainian refugees will need protection and assistance in European countries.²

The EU must welcome refugees from Ukraine, offering safety, protection and support. The European adult learning and education (ALE) community, including adult learners, educators and leaders, are ready to provide any necessary help to everyone fleeing the war. Counting on the [long-standing experience](#) of adult education actors in welcoming and empowering newcomers,³ EAEA reiterates the important role that non-formal ALE can fulfil in supporting refugees, in particular, to:

- Foster solidarity and create bonds between refugees and the local communities;
- Facilitate the integration of refugees in the host countries, also by strengthening their linguistic, cultural and life skills to help them navigate their new environment;
- Allow refugees to continue their learning pathway, also by providing a bridge towards formal education and validating prior learning;
- Enable parents and refugees with caregiving responsibilities to better support children, older adults, persons with disabilities and other people in a condition of vulnerability in the integration process.

With regard to the learning needs of refugees from Ukraine, the following points must be considered: firstly, the majority of refugees at this stage are mainly women of all ages with children and grandchildren, as men between the ages of 18 to 60 are not allowed to leave the country. Many refugees want to return to Ukraine as soon as the situation allows it, but currently it is difficult to predict how the developments will unfold. Secondly, digitalisation may make it easier for many to stay connected with their community, allowing refugees to communicate with family members and friends who remained in Ukraine or fled to other countries, and to continue working for Ukrainian organisations and companies from abroad. For those who need to improve their digital skills, appropriate learning opportunities must be created. Lastly, a relatively high percentage of young

¹ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>.

² <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/91208>.

³ <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/what-role-does-adult-education-play-refugee-crisis>;
https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2015_eaea_statement_refugee_crisis-1.pdf.

people can communicate well in English; however, fluency in the language of the host country will play a key role in social inclusion in local communities.

In host countries, ALE can raise awareness in the local population about the conditions of refugees and their social (and economic) inclusion. It promotes life skills such as critical reflection skills and media literacy, which can help adults to assess the veracity of information online and offline.

Recommendations for European policymakers

For these reasons, EAEA calls the EU to adopt the following measures, in the short term:

- Ukrainian refugees must be given the same rights to integration measures and full access to non-formal and formal ALE, especially language courses, but also other forms of up- and re-skilling, as refugees from other countries. Even if many EU countries (and, at times, refugees themselves) consider the stay in the host country temporary, both refugees and host countries would benefit from positive integration, in particular if the situation is protracted. All refugees should be given, according to their situations, ambitions and skills, the right to learn and to teach.
- Provide guidance, recognise and validate prior learning and simplify and accelerate procedures for the recognition of diplomas and professional qualifications. Refugees may not have the documents that are normally required, so procedures need to be adapted accordingly.
- Establish a new EU emergency fund for non-formal adult education initiatives in the Member States and in third countries that are hosting refugees fleeing Ukraine, in addition to the possibility for Member States to reallocate Cohesion funding as proposed by the European Commission under the [Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe \(CARE\)](#).⁴ Neighbouring countries, such as Moldova and Georgia, are making a major contribution to the reception of refugees and need special financial support to set up appropriate ALE programmes.
- At the same time, the EU should put forward new financing channels that sustain non-formal ALE programmes in Ukraine, in order to strengthen the recovery of the adult education sector which has already been in a very fragile situation given the effects of the pandemic. During the war, ALE can strengthen, among other things, critical media literacy and shared values. Provide support for adult educators and ALE staff in Ukraine: many educators lack psychological support and need professional training to work with traumatised people, online teaching skills for different groups of learners currently dispersed over a large number of countries and limited internet access, as well as skills in adapting to, and communicating in, new communities.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1607



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- Provide funding, and promote training for adult educators and educational leaders in host countries to equip them with the necessary skills to work with refugees and with learners affected by the trauma of war and displacement. In order to reach quickly the highest number of educators, training should also be delivered online.
- Provide funding for psychosocial support services for refugees, their families and contacts in the host country, educators and those involved in the reception. Plus, there should also be additional measures for adult learners with parenting and caregiving responsibilities, enabling access to childcare and caregiving services that can allow adults to attend educational opportunities.
- Provide funding for, as well as promote and facilitate the exchange of, educational resources and toolkits. Curricula and educational programmes developed for refugees from other countries, especially Syria, several years ago need to be adapted to Ukrainian refugees to address their specific learning needs, including knowledge and skills that are important for a temporary stay in the host country. Additionally, targeted inclusion measures for refugees from Ukraine should be complemented by ALE programmes open to refugees from all backgrounds and by parallel initiatives focused on their respective learning needs. Ensure that the measures enacted are inclusive and reach all the refugees from Ukraine, irrespective of their nationality, race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, socio-economic status, religion or belief, sexual orientation and gender identity.

In the medium and long term, the EU should:

- Fund ALE programmes that focus on reconstruction and reconciliation in Ukraine and Eastern Neighbourhood countries, drawing inspiration from successful projects and initiatives after the Yugoslav wars and in other contexts. A strong non-formal ALE sector in Ukraine can play a significant role in the reconstruction after the war, e.g. through citizenship education, learning to deal with trauma, and community building.
- Fund global citizenship and peace education programmes in Erasmus+, for adult learners and non-formal learning settings.
- Support and fund non-formal adult learning programmes that aim to promote critical reflection skills and media literacy.
- Recognise the importance of adult education and lifelong learning in the context of education in emergencies, designing and implementing EU strategies, policies and programmes and funds accordingly.
- Advocate for the mainstreaming of lifelong learning and adult education in international strategies, policies and programmes for refugees, including by international organisations and agencies.
- Support the mainstreaming of global citizenship and peace education in the training and professional development of educators and educational leaders.
- Facilitate the capacity building of lifelong learning providers for education in emergencies.

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The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) is the voice of non-formal adult education in Europe. EAEA is a European NGO with 120 member organisations in 43 countries and represents more than 60 million learners Europe-wide.

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