

One Year of the War in Ukraine: Expanding KIND's Work Helping Unaccompanied and Separated Children from Ukraine

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In the year since the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine, two out of three children from Ukraine have been displaced from their homes. More than eight million people were forced to flee Ukraine, more than two million of whom are children. Many of those children are unaccompanied or separated from their families. They face great risk of human trafficking, exploitation, and long-term family separation, among other harms.

Because many of these unaccompanied children in Europe are not registered with governmental authorities, we cannot know their exact numbers. As the conflict rages on, the needs of fleeing Ukrainians, including children, will likely remain high. KIND is responding to that growing need, working with our partners to protect—including establishing new partnerships in Poland, Slovakia, and Italy—the rights of children as they seek safety throughout Europe.

Sharing vital legal information

In the latter part of 2022, KIND, along with our partner European Lawyers in Lesvos (ELIL), launched an initiative in Warsaw, Poland, to provide legal information to children and families from Ukraine. We provide that information at reception centers and Blue Dot resource and information hubs established by UNHCR and UNICEF along border crossings and anticipated routes of major migration flows.

Pro bono attorneys from six law firms respond to a range of inquiries regarding registration, temporary protection, guardianship, access to education and benefits, missing families, and more. The attorneys refer complex cases requiring sustained legal representation to the Polish Bar Association or local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for assistance. To date, more than 2,052 people have received legal information and assistance through the partnership.

Responding to human trafficking

Through our partnership with Human Rights League in Slovakia, KIND is working with Johns Hopkins University's Center for Advanced Study's Human Trafficking Initiative in Italy to train law enforcement, child welfare, and NGOs in Slovakia to respond to cases involving human trafficking, build relationships and trust among these actors, and share expertise. As trafficking risks persist, creating a network and facilitating communication among responders is critical for coordinating, training, and sharing information, challenges, and best practices. These cross-sector relationships will benefit children beyond the Ukraine war. KIND aims to replicate this work in neighboring countries and will continue to support capacity-strengthening activities in Slovakia.



Helping children from Ukraine in Italy and the UK

In Italy, KIND launched a new partnership with the Italian Coalition for Civil Liberties and Rights (CILD), and two of their member organizations: Progetto Diritti (Rights Project) and the Association of Ukrainian Women in Italy (ADULI). Through this project, children and their caregivers arriving in Italy receive legal information and assistance on issues ranging from immigration, guardianships, and family reunification to access to benefits (such as housing, schools, education at reception centers, and accessing community centers). CILD and KIND also produced a “know your rights” flier for those arriving from Ukraine available in Ukrainian, Russian, and Italian, and is being distributed by the Ukrainian women’s association is distributing. The partnership has helped some 800 people.

In the UK, KIND is developing and providing training for pro bono attorneys to work on cases of children fleeing Ukraine and seeking entry to the UK, as well as those already in the UK and needing assistance.

Addressing mental health needs

With our advocacy partner in Europe, Child Circle, KIND is sharing recommendations on how EU Member States should respond to the arrival of unaccompanied children fleeing Ukraine and strengthen protection for all unaccompanied and separated children in Europe. This partnership is also sharing recommendations on the need to create an integrated child protection system in the EU.

KIND is also partnering with Child Helpline International and UNICEF to provide training to child helplines and frontline workers responding to children and young people affected by the war in Ukraine in Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, and the Czech Republic. The training seeks to improve and maintain the capacity of child helplines, which, in turn, will help ensure quality services and protection for children and young people affected by the Ukrainian conflict. The training will cover human trafficking; sexual and gender-based violence in conflict; and increasing the capacity of frontline workers to respond in a trauma-informed and child-sensitive manner.

Protecting children from Ukraine who flee to the United States

KIND advised the Biden Administration on protection concerns for unaccompanied children relocating to the United States through a new parole program and other avenues. We are also advocating for placing staff from the United States Department of Health and Human Service’s Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) at the U.S.- Mexico border to process Ukrainian children and prevent family separations as more Ukrainians are expected to seek safety in the United States. ORR staff, unlike typical border enforcement personnel, are specifically trained to support the unique needs of migrant children. KIND is also providing legal representation to Ukrainian children in ORR’s custody.

KIND continues to seek additional partners in the region and plans to hire more staff to increase our response to Ukraine, as well as address legal needs of unaccompanied and separated children in Europe more broadly.

For more information or to make a donation to KIND’s Ukrainian Child Refugee Fund, please [click here](#).

