



# 2022 EESC CIVIL SOCIETY PRIZE

Rewarding excellence in civil society initiatives



European Economic  
and Social Committee

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# Foreword

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Europe's citizens are facing a difficult and uncertain future. In a world still recovering from the social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, our policies will have a particular impact on future generations. That's why, in the European Year of Youth, the EESC is more convinced than ever of the need for strong, meaningful youth engagement at all stages of the EU decision-making process.

The climate strikes are just one tangible example of the extent to which young people are ready to become active, engaged citizens, agents of change in the economy and society. As the European Parliament and Council pointed out in their [decision on the European Year of Youth](#): 'Europe needs the vision, engagement and participation of all young people to build a better future.'

Additionally, following the unprovoked aggression by Russia against Ukraine, we stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people. This human tragedy has no borders; it concerns us all. In response to the crisis, civil society actors have shown impressive mobilisation and generosity and I am full of admiration for the partnership built between the people of Ukraine and the EU.

This year's EESC Civil Society Prize, then, is a dual award. With it, we celebrate both the civil society response to the war in Ukraine, and the remarkable efforts being made to create a better future for and with young people in Europe. The applications we received highlight outstanding work being carried out in such areas as education, climate, entrepreneurship, social integration and humanitarian aid.

The challenges we face as a society are shared challenges, and we must find solutions together. I thank all those who applied and sincerely congratulate the winners for their inspiring efforts. We are proud to recognise their work.

Cillian Lohan  
*EESC Vice-President*

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Decision on the European Year of Youth: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_21\\_5226](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_5226)

# The EESC Civil Society Prize 2022: Youth and Ukraine

The EESC's Civil Society Prize rewards creative not-for-profit initiatives that promote and have a lasting impact on European identity and integration. Previous editions of the prize have focused on issues such as the COVID-19 response, the climate emergency, migration and gender equality. Exceptionally, this year's prize is being awarded in two categories – empowerment of young people in the context of the European Year of Youth, and actions in support of the Ukrainian people following the invasion by Russia.

This brochure presents outstanding examples of civil society engagement in a range of areas – education, political participation, entrepreneurship, humanitarian support, climate action and more – that clearly demonstrate how Europe's citizens of all ages have the will to bring about change, a wealth of ideas and the expertise to make it a reality.

## A role for young people

The EESC welcomes the proposal to designate 2022 as the European Year of Youth, and of setting this in the context of the post-pandemic recovery narrative. Additionally, the EESC calls for a more ambitious budget, and highlights the need to ensure that harder-to-reach groups are included in the Year. Doing so will require greater involvement by civil society.

Across Europe, young people are faced with economic, social, cultural, political and environmental problems inherited from previous generations. They are disproportionately affected by economic crises and austerity measures, and future generations will suffer under the climate emergency. Paying the debt incurred by financial support announced for the economic recovery after COVID-19, for example, will place a further burden on young people. They will experience the impacts of the pandemic for years to come.

Young people were severely affected by the pandemic in other ways, too. The closure of educational institutions and the prohibition of social, cultural and sporting activities weakened their social connections, while they were vulnerable on the labour market and often lacked social protection. In October 2022, the [unemployment rate for young people under 25](#) was more than 15 % in the EU, with particularly high rates in Spain, Greece, Italy and Sweden.

While youth unemployment has long-term consequences for individuals, it also represents a significant loss for our economies and a potential risk for the stability of democratic societies. A [European Parliament Youth Survey](#) shows that 85 % of respondents discuss politics with friends or relatives, but most feel they do not have much say over the important decisions, laws and policies that affect them. Those not in education, work or training are also at risk of marginalisation, poverty and permanent exclusion from the labour market.

Conversely, the green and digital transitions offer renewed prospects. More and more young people, for example, are launching start-ups, creating social enterprises to fill gaps in services, particularly after the pandemic, or implementing forward-looking sustainable business models, delivering profits while driving social and environmental impact.



The unemployment rate for young people under 25: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/15497496/3-01122022-AP-EN.pdf/eaaa1272-82e4-2456-ed30-e6f29f801bd8>

European Parliament Youth Survey: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/be-heard/eurobarometer/youth-survey-2021>

Be it climate change, sustainable development or new technologies, young people's experiences and expertise should clearly be taken into account by policymakers. As stated in its [opinion on the EU Youth Test](#), the EESC emphasises that there is an explicit need to include young people in policymaking through meaningful, appropriate participation, followed by monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment to ensure their views have been properly considered when policy decisions are made.

To achieve this, the EESC will continue to amplify the voices of young people and youth organisations through better inclusion in opinions and through its flagship [Your Europe, Your Say](#) event and round table discussions. The EESC also selected a representative of the next generation to be part of its delegation to the COP27 climate summit. As the projects showcased in this brochure attest, young people are proactively working to improve society, and their voices should be listened to.

## A time for solidarity

The EESC has strongly condemned the invasion of Ukraine by Russian military forces. It has repeatedly stressed that the invasion violates international rules and agreements, threatens European and global security and runs counter to the EU's primary aim 'to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples'. In its [resolution of 6 June 2022](#), the Committee highlights how civil society has reacted promptly and efficiently, triggering a unique grassroots mobilisation of citizens, and pays tribute to the contribution of civil society organisations from EU Member States in providing support for refugees.

At the same time, protecting people in Ukraine is one of the EESC's priorities. Millions of people have fled, and the EU has shown solidarity by granting temporary protection to all refugees fleeing their homeland. The EESC insists that all refugees from Ukraine, regardless of their nationality, must receive protection and access to adequate infrastructure and that the needs of vulnerable groups, especially women, children, elderly people and people with disabilities, must be addressed adequately.

The role of organised civil society is key in this context. In many countries, civil society has mobilised at incredibly short notice, and is working with the authorities to provide help to Ukrainians. These organisations are active on the ground, providing daily humanitarian assistance for refugees on arrival and as they integrate into European society.

The EESC expresses its grief for all victims of the aggression, for the destruction of cities and infrastructure, and for the incalculable human suffering and environmental damage. At the same time, it welcomes the solidarity shown by European civil society organisations and their actions since the first day of the Russian invasion.

From social integration to urgent food supplies and medical support, civil society across the EU continues to rise to the challenge, providing practical and psychosocial help to those in need. In recognition of this remarkable mobilisation, the EESC has dedicated the second category of this year's Civil Society Prize to organisations, companies or individuals carrying out effective, innovative projects to help civilians suffering because of the war.



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**Opinion on the EU Youth Test:** <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/eu-youth-test>

**Your Europe, Your Say:** <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/initiatives/your-europe-your-say>

**Resolution of 6 June 2022:** <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/documents/resolution/eesc-resolution-ukraine-relief-reconstruction-proposals-european-civil-society>



## A snapshot of shared values

Since it was established more than 60 years ago, the EESC's objective has been to foster consultation, dialogue and consensus between the sectors that make up European society. Its members represent a wide range of interests: social partners, community and youth organisations, consumer and professional associations, environmental campaigners, associations of persons with disabilities and many more.

Organised civil society is an essential part of a healthy democracy. However, much of the work done by Europe's civil society organisations and individual citizens is not given the recognition it deserves. The European Economic and Social Committee launched its Civil Society Prize in 2006 to address this gap and to raise awareness of the contribution that civil society can make to creating a European identity and citizenship in a way that underpins the common values that are the foundation of European integration.

The prize is open to not-for-profit initiatives carried out by natural persons, civil society organisations and private companies registered within the EU. It has a total value of EUR 60 000, which can be shared among up to three winners in each category.

For the 2022 edition, the EESC received a total of 106 applications from 21 Member States: 60 for category 1 (Youth) and 46 for category 2 (Ukraine). After evaluation by a panel of experts, the winners will be presented with their awards at a ceremony during the EESC plenary session on 15 December 2022.

Over the following pages, this brochure details the winning projects in the two categories described above, as well as giving a snapshot of some of the outstanding work being done across the EU by a wide variety of civil society organisations.



# CATEGORY 1: Empowering young people

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## General overview

Youth empowerment is broadly understood as an effort to give young people the resources, means, space, opportunity and support they need to realise their potential. This covers all areas of social and economic activity – employment, education and skills, as well as democratic and political questions around citizenship and knowledge of the EU.

Diversity and inclusion actions are also necessary to ensure participation for all young people regardless of their circumstances. The 60 applications received for this category of the EESC Civil Society Prize reflect these concerns in a variety of creative, cross-border and multidisciplinary ways. These pages celebrate the three winning projects and present some other outstanding examples of civil society working to empower the next generation.



# The three winning projects

## 1<sup>st</sup> prize: Learning by Doing – Fundación Secretariado Gitano (Spain)

High unemployment among under-25s is one of the biggest societal problems in Spain. As elsewhere, young Roma people are at a particular disadvantage: two-thirds are neither in work or education, and they are three times more likely to be unemployed than the rest of the population.

**Fundación Secretariado Gitano** (FSG) aims to address this issue with its **Learning by Doing** project. FSG dates back to the 1960s, when an organisation was launched to provide social support to Roma people. It works to achieve equal opportunities in areas such as education, housing, health, youth and gender.

Learning by Doing is one of the hundreds of programmes FSG operates, offering in-company training to unemployed Roma aged 16 to 30. Combining theoretical and practical training through public-private partnerships, it aims to remove the barriers faced by the most vulnerable young Roma in access to training and paid employment, thereby tackling wider social exclusion.

The programme has contributed to breaking down stereotypes and prejudices towards the Roma population in the companies involved with the initiative, among both employees and clients. At the start of the project in 2013, when companies were asked to collaborate, they expressed reluctance about taking on 16 young Roma people for six months. Today, companies more willingly approach FSG with the aim of collaborating with the project.

‘Working directly with Roma people on a daily basis has allowed companies to get to know them and overcome stereotypes and prejudices,’ FSG says. ‘The challenge now is to extend this experience to a larger number of Roma people: adapting the model to work in territories where a significant number of Roma people live but the programme has not yet been able to reach due to limited resources. It would also require involving companies from sectors other than the traditional ones already working on the project – commerce, hotel and catering.’

For FSG, the EESC prize is confirmation at the international level of the importance of investing in innovative training initiatives with a long-term perspective aimed at the labour inclusion of Roma youngsters as a way to promote equal opportunities for one of the most socially excluded groups in the EU.

[www.gitanos.org](http://www.gitanos.org)





## 2<sup>nd</sup> prize: Superpower School – Movimento Transformers (Portugal)

A **Superpower School** is a volunteer programme where mentors give weekly classes to apprentices, mainly children and young people at risk of social exclusion. It aims to address low levels of civic and social activity, encouraging the involvement of participants in their community by empowering them and developing skills such as adaptability, communication, creative thinking, resilience and problem solving through fun activities.

Created by the non-profit **Movimento Transformers**, Superpower Schools increase civic, social and political engagement, while raising awareness of and taking responsibility for local environmental, social and economic problems. They allow young people to discover their talent – in areas such as cooking, martial arts, photography and creative writing – to become agents of change and give back what they have learned to positively transform their community.

Almost 500 volunteers have given lessons to more than 5 000 apprentices in dozens of cities in Portugal. Most apprentices say they now have a better idea of what they want to do in life as a result of taking part in the programme, while many volunteers have since begun careers in social entrepreneurship and the non-profit sector. Additionally, 77 % of apprentices go on to become volunteers within two years of participating.

‘Our initiative actively involves our participants and beneficiaries since the apprentices are an active part of the whole process,’ the organisers say. ‘They are the ones who choose the activities they will do during the school year, choosing the superpower they want to learn. They also choose the social problems that we will focus on throughout the year. Our mission is to increase people’s involvement in their communities through what they love to do.’

Each Superpower School has an implementation cost, which is often financed by local authorities. However, there are institutions and neighbourhoods that would benefit from the project but are unable to fund it, and these can now be supported by the prize money, spreading the impact and the opportunities for disadvantaged young people.

‘We want to generate more impact, we want to ensure equal opportunities in education for all, we want to enhance the talent of young people while increasing their civic and social involvement.’

[www.movimentotransformers.org](http://www.movimentotransformers.org)



## 3<sup>rd</sup> prize: Care Leavers Network Italia – Associazione Agevolando (Italy)

The **Care Leavers Network Italia** is an informal nation-wide organisation of young people with experience of the care system, aged from 16 to 26. Its main aims are to encourage opportunities for exchange, learning and reflection and to make recommendations to guide policies and interventions for the reception and foster care system.

It is run by [Associazione Agevolando](#), an organisation that works towards a world in which children who leave the care system have the right and the opportunity to choose their own path towards autonomy and self-realisation. It promotes the rights and well-being of minors and young adults who have lived some or all of their childhood in foster or residential care and who, upon reaching the legal age, must leave the system and become autonomous.



The network promotes and creates processes of agency, advocacy and active citizenship that improve the lives of care leavers in Italy and beyond. 'We strongly believe in a European approach and we want to work with all the European care leavers and their associations,' the organisers say. 'The prize will offer high visibility and facilitate contacts and recognition, including in countries where there are not yet care leavers associations.'

Ensuring the active participation and empowerment of care leavers is central, acknowledging them as key players in shaping a care system that meets their needs. By considering them 'experts by experience,' they become agents of change in their communities and for the young people who will follow, ultimately removing the barriers that create social and economic inequality.

Care leavers participating in regional networks have the opportunity to discuss, in a welcoming, protected and non-judgmental space, their experiences in the care system, the transition towards self-sufficiency after reaching adulthood, and the extent to which they were involved in defining their life plans.

The EESC prize money is very welcome: 'As volunteers, the care leavers actively participating in the network need to cover costs for meeting, producing materials and organising activities, while the Association needs to offer a coordinator and regional representatives,' the organisers explain. 'Furthermore, the network aims to work in more and more regions in Italy: the prize will help the Association to support all these relevant aspects.'

[www.facebook.com/associazioneagevolando](https://www.facebook.com/associazioneagevolando)



# A voice for the next generation

By taking youth empowerment as one of its themes, the 2022 prize highlights civil society initiatives working in a range of creative and innovative ways. The applications described below come from across the EU and can be broadly categorised into four thematic areas: education, training and employment; citizenship and participation; environment and climate change; and inclusion and diversity. Each project is an example of the hard work being done today to create a brighter future for the next generation.

## Education, training and employment

The largest cohort of applications for this category concerned employment and broader empowerment through skills and education. The projects are evenly spread out across EU Member States, covering all parts of Europe. Most initiatives relating to economic empowerment come from small, remote and rural environments, addressing economic inequalities at local and regional level.

**Fundacja TechSoup's Meet and Code** programme introduces young people to technology. It provides grants of up to EUR 500 for non-profits to organise educational events for children and young people in digital skills, coding and programming. Formats include hackathons, coding workshops, lectures, film events, competitions, coding nights and robotics classes. Launched in Poland, it is now active in 35 countries.

The **FUTURE - Build your career with passion** project created by **Eduspace Association** in Romania has had a high impact on employment, helping hundreds of young graduates to find a first job. Participants undertake training sessions based on experiential learning and receive individual career orientation sessions, CV reviews and interview simulations with HR employees.

Malta's **Youth4Entrepreneurship Gozo** project invites young people living on the island to present innovative business ideas, with a view to tackling reliance on tourism, construction and real estate. Following a series of workshops, participants draft a business plan, identify financing and pitch it to business experts.

**ReGeneration DiGiYouth** initiative in Greece offers young people the opportunity to increase their knowledge of cutting-edge technologies. Additionally, it responds to the growing demand to support women in tech and addresses the mismatch between demands and skills. Its global aim is to create a flexible, adaptive and dynamic strategy to enable young people to remain relevant and thrive in an increasingly global environment.

In Spain, the **Tomillo Foundation's Itinerario PLUS** project seeks to integrate into society young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who have dropped out of school without qualifications. The **YES Forum** in Germany promotes visual storytelling as a creative tool for youth workers to increase social inclusion and engagement. And in Slovakia, the **Career Pathways for Youth** project by Budúca Generácia Európy (Future Generation Europe) provides workshops, training and long-term mentoring to give young people the best chance in the labour market.

## Citizenship and participation

The second largest group of proposals focuses on the citizenship and participatory dimension of empowerment, including raising awareness of EU institutions and democratic mechanisms. Enhancing young people's knowledge of citizenship, overcoming systemic barriers to democratic participation and equipping young people with the tools to address issues that affect them are essential elements in youth empowerment.

Although the projects in this cluster are evenly spread across EU Member States, a number of Brussels-based umbrella and network organisations focus on this aspect of empowerment, including the European Youth Forum and OBESU.

The **#Elect21 project of the Lithuanian Youth Council** aims to increase youth empowerment and participation in political processes by campaigning to lower the legal age at which people can run for parliament from 25 to 21. It believes this move would change the landscape of politics by including more topics that are pertinent for young people but are largely under-represented today.

Also noteworthy is the **European Youth Forum's The 25 Percent**, a Brussels-based project for young people, by young people, to make sure their ideas are listened to where decisions are made, and to give them the resources to challenge the status quo and take action on issues they care about. It increases their skills and knowledge of civic and political participation and creates dialogue opportunities with policymakers at local, national and European level. It involves young people from a variety of marginalised and under-represented backgrounds.

The **European Universities Community (EUC)** created the European Student Assembly, a gathering of 275 participants from 28 countries in Strasbourg in March 2022. They worked on 10 areas identified as particularly relevant to young people and decisive for the future of their generation and produced 89 policy recommendations for EU decision-makers. The initiative fostered their sense of belonging to a European community of action and contributes to the empowerment of young leaders motivated to act as change-makers.

The **Ostrov Belene** (Belene Island) project in Bulgaria wants to create a memorial site to the victims of the Belene forced labour camp. Such an initiative would provide employment for local young people who wish to stay in their home town and contribute to the local community. The **Meridiano d'Europa** project in Italy connects two tragedies in the north and south of Europe – Utoya and Lampedusa. It organises visits for young people to symbolic sites in the EU, to encourage participation in building a democratic, solidarity-based and inclusive Europe, to combat intolerance and to promote a European culture of peace and multiculturalism. It aims to strengthen young people's sense of belonging to the European context.

In Germany, **Marcos Moschovidis** created a non-profit edutainment platform that operates across multiple social media. It addresses EU-related topics with a focus on informing young people about what the EU does for them, how they can receive help from it, and how they can shape it through democratic participation. Another example of an individual young person's initiative that would affect many people is that of **Adriaan Hebly** in the Netherlands, who wants to make Europe Day an annual public holiday, with official support for Europe Day street parties organised by young people.

The **Organising Bureau of European School Unions (OBESU)** set up the European Changemakers Academy. This resulted in six local projects that engaged minorities and disadvantaged young people such as refugees, Russian-speaking Estonians and unemployed youngsters to promote their employability through EU initiatives. The project has a high level of youth involvement in the designing and evaluation process.

In Denmark, the volunteer-led **European Debate Initiative** organises and broadcasts discussions with policymakers aimed at increasing youth trust and participation in European politics. A similar project in Czechia, **Decide on Europe**, aims to empower young people by engaging them in discussion with decision-makers. And in Cyprus, **Özer Şahoğlu** – part of the first generation of Cypriots to be born as EU citizens – campaigned for human rights education in schools.



## Environment and climate change

Two notable projects focused on the environment, with the aim of ensuring a viable future for coming generations. In Croatia, the **PromoNatura** project of the **Ecological Association 'Krka' Knin** focuses on skills and employment for young people living in rural areas with a focus on ecology. Its goals are to educate young people about self-employment and employment in agriculture, teach them about medicinal plants, fund a driving licence for a young person living in a remote area, improve the quality of life and entrepreneurial skills of young people, and improve the sustainable development of the community.

With **Youth Voices for the EU Just Transition, Generation Climate Europe** focuses on empowering young people so they can meaningfully participate in EU political processes on climate and environmental issues as well as building their capacity to further advocate for a fair transition that consider the rights of young people and future generations. It also aims to raise awareness of the generational impacts of the Just Transition Mechanism on regions affected by the transition, as well as promoting an inclusive and participatory debate on challenges that young people in those regions face in the transition.

## Inclusion and diversity

Finally, a number of interesting proposals focus on empowerment through inclusion and diversity, whether it refers to ethnic and national groups or refugees, disability and additional needs, or gender and sexual orientation.

In Romania, the **SanThé Fitoceainărie** social project run by **Asociația Down Plus București** established a tea house where volunteers with Down's syndrome and other disabilities can work. It allows them to develop their confidence and skills, demonstrates how they can contribute to the labour market and provides a chance for wider social inclusion.

**Inês Peixoto**, an individual in Portugal, promoted intergenerational dialogue in the LGBTQIA+ community.

A casting call was held to find participants and two discussion events were organised in Lisbon with people of different ages, which were filmed, edited and released in video and podcast format.



## CATEGORY 2: European civil society for Ukraine

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### General overview

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022 was the catalyst for a tremendous outpouring of support for the Ukrainian people – those remaining in their homeland and those seeking refuge elsewhere in Europe. The 46 projects submitted for this category of the EESC Civil Society Prize called on a vast pool of local expertise and created networks of local resources to provide assistance beyond that provided by the relevant public authorities.

Many of the initiatives described here took place in communities within the EU, but others were carried out in Ukraine itself. From social integration and administrative guidance to urgent food supplies and medical support, civil society across the EU is continuing to provide humanitarian aid in Ukraine and practical help to refugees. Together, these projects demonstrate the strength of civil society in the EU, and the desire to make a difference in a crisis.



# The three winning projects

## 1<sup>st</sup> prize: Smooth Integration of Ukrainian Refugees in Romanian Societal Fabric – Focus Point Sibiu County – SUS INIMA (Romania)

The NGO [SUS INIMA](https://susinima.eu) pivoted from its usual work supporting cancer patients and their families to address the urgent needs of refugees from Ukraine. Its multidisciplinary team and organisational capacity allowed it to promptly respond to the crisis by providing necessities, such as food and hygiene products, accommodation, youth activities and access to therapy, education and employment. These initiatives in turn have enabled smooth integration for families, turning them from refugees into community members.

‘The purpose of our efforts was to be able to offer protection to the vulnerable groups entering Romania, especially women, children, elderly persons, including chronic patients, and slowly include them within the community we live in, without causing any damage in its fabric,’ the organisers say.

Since the beginning of the invasion it has helped more than 50 000 Ukrainian refugees, directly or indirectly. ‘The short-term impact is a very clear one: helping and assisting the vulnerable refugee community who are suffering from depression and PTSD to find solace through compassionate, humane initiatives aimed at helping them cope with their loss. When pillars of stability are removed from any society, the short- and long-term effects on the community are destructive. We try to bridge this by addressing specific needs as they come up within the Ukrainian community.’

The long-term goal is to provide refugees with a sense of belonging and the means to be able to live without worrying, giving them the mental space to plan for the future.

‘Receiving a prize and recognition for our work by the EESC is not only one of the greatest tributes that our organisation can receive, but it’s also a great propeller for increasing the aid we try to deploy to vulnerable groups as well as increasing the responsibility of consistently improving our social impact,’ the organisers say.

There were many obstacles – linguistic, logistic and economic – the organisers add: ‘However, on the flip side of all the challenges, I see how they have helped increase organisational capacity both at authority level and community-based organisational level.’





## 2<sup>nd</sup> prize: You are in a Safe Place – Villavecchia Foundation (Spain)

The **You are in a Safe Place** emergency fund provided care for 16 young cancer patients from Ukraine and their parents who arrived in Barcelona in March 2022. From the outset, the [Villavecchia Foundation](https://www.fevillavecchia.es/en) gave its support to the families, providing comprehensive care at the humanitarian, medical, social and emotional level, while offering the best possible quality of life for the young patients.

When the invasion of Ukraine began, a screening centre was established in Warsaw. International organisations worked together to remove seriously ill children from under the bombs and take them to a safe place, where they could resume medical treatment. When the families arrived in Spain, the foundation provided emergency accommodation, interpreters, transport and basic supplies such as food and clothing. Gradually, more stable accommodation was found and external specialist support was provided.



‘The prize is a wonderful way of making our work known in other European countries and, above all, of showing the importance of networking with other entities, as we have done in this case with the José Carreras International Leukaemia Foundation and the Spanish Society of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology,’ a foundation spokesperson says. ‘We have worked with other entities and in coordination with participating hospitals, sharing values and a common purpose: to welcome evacuated children with cancer and their families and to make it possible for them to resume their treatment.’

The award will allow the foundation to continue its work in line with its ethos: putting the needs of children and families at the centre of its activities and providing comprehensive care with a commitment to respect their dignity and rights.

For the foundation, managing an unplanned humanitarian emergency with all its implications was a huge challenge. ‘We know how to work with seriously ill children and their families, but the context of war amplifies the vulnerability and complexity of care,’ the spokesperson says. ‘It has been a challenge and a great learning experience. More than a challenge, getting to know these families and the volunteer interpreters who have helped us has been an immense gift.’

[www.fevillavecchia.es/en](https://www.fevillavecchia.es/en)





## 3<sup>rd</sup> prize: ZHP for Ukraine – Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (Poland)

When the invasion of Ukraine began, [Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego \(Polish Scouting and Guiding Association\)](#) mobilised immediately. As the biggest non-formal youth education organisation in Poland, it was well-placed to act. With its ZHP for Ukraine programme, volunteers in areas bordering Ukraine provided direct support to people in need through transport, distributing essential supplies, guiding people to safe areas and providing information. ZHP volunteers staffed reception points and were present at border crossings.

The emergency response varied depending on location and specific need. Initiatives include collecting, sorting and transporting donations, a 'border patrol' of volunteers with experience in security and first aid, and collections of toys for refugee children.

ZHP prepared guidance on how to talk to children of different ages about the war, as well as arranging psychological support. Existing projects that deal with fake news and hate speech have been promoted and updated with specific resources relating to Ukraine, and a social media space provides a platform to exchange experiences.

Additionally, the ZHP National Council urged group leaders to welcome children from Ukraine to scouting and guiding activities and waived membership fees to encourage participation.

'Winning the prize is a way of thanking ZHP volunteers for their service and a signal to them that their actions are noticed and appreciated not only in their local communities but also internationally,' the organisation says. 'The award will reaffirm their belief that selfless help and dedication to others is needed and that even small actions are important because they add up to big things, to something meaningful.'

The prize money will enable ZHP to develop its educational programme, to shape the next generation of committed citizens who respond to the challenges of the modern world.

'It was a natural reaction for us to respond to the crisis: performing duty to others is an extremely important part of our approach. The response of ZHP members has shown that our educational work and the ideals we pass on to young people make a real difference to their lives and encourage them to change the world for the better. We are proud of our members for taking up their service to Ukraine spontaneously and with full engagement.'

[zhp.pl/zhpforukraine](http://zhp.pl/zhpforukraine)



# Solidarity in action

As in category 1, support in this category took many forms and covered a diverse range of needs at various stages in the aftermath of the invasion. They can again be divided into four broad thematic areas: mass and rapid mobilisation; medical and psychosocial support; language; and specialist professional help. Actors from across civil society and across the EU immediately set to work helping those fleeing the war to access immediate care, integrate into their new society and begin to plan for their futures.

## Mass and rapid mobilisation

The most prominent trend under category 2 applications is the story of mass and rapid mobilisation of civil society groups at local and community level across Europe, primarily through bottom-up initiatives. This includes large numbers of volunteers coordinating en masse via social media, in a remarkable show of solidarity.

A wide range of resources – time, money, expertise, material donations and volunteers – coordinated by informal groups and small organisations with no prior experience of large-scale operations of this type are apparent in many of the proposals.

One project in a small Swedish city, **Skellefteå Med Ukraina (Skellefteå With Ukraine)**, is an example of bottom-up mobilisation in a small community. A group of volunteers provide help to both Ukrainians in Ukraine and those who had fled the war and found themselves in Sweden. They offer starter packages of hygiene and care products, baby food, nappies and pet food, and have collected bicycles to allow refugees to travel freely. They also arrange support with CVs and job interviews to facilitate employment locally.

Similarly, in Italy, the **#StopTheWarNow: a journey of solidarity** initiative has created pathways of social and labour inclusion for 60 refugees who had been living at a hotel in Rome. There is particular attention for vulnerable individuals such as elderly people and those with disabilities, while education for children is another priority.

**Barcelona's humanitarian aid logistics hub for Ukraine** quickly and efficiently manages the essential products and other aid collected from locals and delivers it to the Ukrainian civilian population. The project was launched two weeks after the outbreak of the war and has made dozens of shipments to Ukraine.

**Comitato Razom** (Razom means 'together' in Ukrainian) has brought together citizens, associations, companies and institutions in Alba (Italy) and surroundings to raise funds and give practical help in Ukraine's recovery. Its complementary aims include condemnation of the invasion, spreading European values of peace and brotherhood, developing European identity and integration, and establishing friendly relations between Alba and the Ukrainian city of Bucha.

The **For Our Children Foundation** in Bulgaria launched the **Mission Ukraine** initiative in March 2022 to support children and families fleeing the war. It provides two types of services: practical support and advice on administrative procedures in Bulgaria and assistance for accessing healthcare, education and public services; and specialised social and health services for children, psychological counselling and socialising activities for children and parents.

The **Bydgoszcz Helps Ukraine** project was launched by six friends in northern Poland who created a network to coordinate support and aid and converted offices into emergency accommodation for families. They also organise events for refugee children. In Austria, the youth organisation **Landjugend Niederösterreich** collected supplies for refugee women and children and has organised convoys of trucks to deliver the cargo to a camp in Moldova.

## Medical and psychological support

Among the applications are a sizeable number that focus on providing specialist, and often costly, medical aid to Ukrainian refugees in the EU. This is particularly relevant for complex treatments such as oncology and with vulnerable groups, particularly children. Many of these projects also partnered with other organisations to provide basic needs such as food, baby supplies and accommodation.

The **MedCare** project set up a mobile medical column to support civilians in Ukraine: those in need of immediate care, people on the run who have faced exhausting journeys, war wounded fleeing cities under attack and those with chronic conditions unable to access treatment. Operated by the Italian NGO **Mediterranea Saving Humans**, it provides basic healthcare, drugs and medications through a team with vast experience of delivering humanitarian aid.

The **Slovenian Hospice Society** offers a bereavement support programme for refugee women from Ukraine: professional support for female refugees and their children in the face of the losses they have experienced and an opportunity to safely express their emotions and trauma in their native language under the guidance of trained workers. In France, the citizens' collective **Annecy Solidarité Ukraine** works with **Pharmaciens Sans Frontières Rhône-Alpes** to deliver first-aid kits to Ukraine.

Bulgaria's **Karin dom Foundation** provides therapeutic, educational and psychological support for children and families from Ukraine, including children with complex special needs, to overcome the trauma of war.

**Viltis**, the Lithuanian welfare society of persons with intellectual disability, supports people with disabilities and their parents and guardians in Ukraine. They have also transported goods to Ukraine and provided consultancy on employment issues for Ukrainian people in Lithuania.

In Croatia, the **Society for Psychological Assistance** uses its experience of the Balkan conflict to offer support with processing trauma, social integration and creating networks. And Spain's **ONCE Foundation** has brought together public administration, the private sector and NGOs to provide support to refugees with a disability and deliver equipment to Ukraine for organisations of people with disabilities.

## Language

Several applications focus on the language skills of Ukrainian refugees in Europe through professional services and peer-to-peer support. The proposals highlight the importance of language as a factor of integration and an enabler of greater empowerment.

Among the varied support offered by the **Associació Catalana Pro Persones amb Sordceguesa** in Spain are Spanish and Catalan lessons for children and adults to aid their integration socially and economically. In Romania, the **Professional Women's Association** created a Romanian School, offering language classes for women and children from Ukraine. The classes enable participants to converse in Romanian, manage everyday tasks and increase their chances of finding work locally.

Elsewhere, **SPEAK**, a multinational company based in Portugal, aims to solve the social exclusion of migrants and refugees and contribute to their integration in the cities where they live, through a language and culture exchange programme that brings people of different contexts together, creating a local informal support network. It connects them with locals living in the same city and provides people with a platform to share their language and culture and develop meaningful bonds.

## Specialist professional help

A number of projects concern organisations and institutions that have devoted their resources to offering support to their peers still in Ukraine or in the EU as refugees. These include **Bundesverband der Freien Berufe**, running a German job portal that offers Ukrainian refugees administrative support and practical guidance on integration and finding work. Also in Germany, **UPJ** provides free legal support and individual counselling through an online platform to refugees through the **Immigration4Ukraine** project.

In Poland, the **Center for American & European Studies** has offered an LLM degree to Ukrainian law students, enabling them to continue their training, while the **Help Musicians Ukraine** collective raises funds to pay for visas, replacements for lost belongings, safe travel and emergency relief, and organises support to find appropriate professional opportunities in the EU.

Finally, the **Slovene Philanthropy Association for Promotion of Voluntary Work** is noteworthy for its national-level outreach and the number of people its actions have reached. With the engagement of more than 1 200 volunteers across the country, it has provided huge amounts of food, hygiene and clothing supplies, social and psychological support, and information on administrative procedures in Slovenia. Additionally, it helps Ukrainians access housing, healthcare services, education, employment and public services.



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