

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001766/24
to the Commission
Mathilde Androuët (Pfe)
(19 September 2024)**

Subject: Alleged sharp rise in Ukrainian refugee women falling victim to prostitution rings

The Council of the EU has accepted the Commission's proposal to extend the temporary protection for Ukrainian refugees until March 2026, including access to the labour market and to housing ⁽¹⁾. As of May 2024, Eurostat ⁽²⁾ reported 4.2 million displaced Ukrainians, mainly in Germany and Poland. According to data provided by the Federal Statistical Office in Germany, 70% of refugees are women, and only 14% of them are in employment. German media and NGOs have recently warned about a high number of 'very young Ukrainian women' falling victim to human traffickers and ending up in prostitution rings ⁽³⁾, either on the Internet or in brothels, owing to a lack of accommodation and employment. There can be little doubt that this prostitution is not voluntary.

Alarm about the increase in sexual exploitation networks involving Ukrainian refugees, including 'via online platforms', had already been raised in November 2022, when Valiant Richey of the OSCE ⁽⁵⁾, said that the DSA ⁽⁴⁾ was 'silent on trafficking in human beings' ⁽⁶⁾.

What measures has the Commission taken in the meantime, or what measures does it recommend, specifically to address this serious problem?

Submitted: 19.9.2024

**Answer given by Ms Johansson on behalf of the European Commission
(5 November 2024)**

The risks of trafficking in human beings were considered very high from the beginning of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which increased opportunities for traffickers to exploit the vulnerable situation of Ukrainian nationals, mainly women and children.

To address these risks and support potential victims, the EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator developed and coordinated the implementation of an anti-trafficking plan to protect people fleeing the Russian military aggression, in close cooperation with the national rapporteurs and coordinators, the EU Agencies, civil society organisations and the Ukrainian authorities.

The plan set out concrete actions at EU level and recommendations for the Member States to prevent the crime, increase law enforcement and judicial cooperation and protect potential victims.

All the actions of the plan have either been completed or are ongoing. The Commission also launched a dedicated webpage including a section with practical advice to refugees on how to avoid falling into the hands of traffickers ⁽¹⁾. EMPACT ⁽²⁾ operational actions set up to tackle trafficking in human beings in relation to Ukraine are taking place ⁽³⁾ ⁽⁴⁾.

The immediate actions taken at the EU and national level as well as the protection provided through the activation of the temporary protection Directive ⁽⁵⁾ contributed to the rather limited number of confirmed cases among Ukrainians fleeing the Russian military aggression.

The Commission will remain vigilant and continue the implementation of the anti-trafficking plan. The amended Anti-trafficking Directive ⁽⁶⁾ will further strengthen the judicial and law enforcement response and reinforce the assistance to the victims of trafficking.

¹ 'Ukrainian refugees: Council extends temporary protection until March 2026' — Council of the European Union — 25 June 2024.

² 'Temporary protection for persons fleeing Ukraine — monthly statistics — Eurostat Statistics Explained -10 October 2024.

³ 'In den Bordellen sind es mittlerweile etwa 50 Prozent Ukrainerinnen', Uma Sostmann, Die Welt, 17 September 2024.

⁵ Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

⁴ Digital Services Act.

⁶ 'Trafficking and sexual exploitation of Ukrainian refugees on the rise', Clara Bauer-Babef, 30 November 2022 (updated 25 August 2023).

⁽¹⁾ <https://eu-solidarity-ukraine.ec.europa.eu/select-language?destination=/node/30>

⁽²⁾ European Multi-disciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT)

⁽³⁾ Human traffickers luring Ukrainian refugees on the web targeted in EU-wide hackathon | Europol (europa.eu).

⁽⁴⁾ The detailed measures are included in the Fourth report on progress fight against trafficking human beings — https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/fourth-report-progress-fight-against-trafficking-human-beings_en

⁽⁵⁾ Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing 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 (OJ L 71, 4.3.2022, p. 1).

⁽⁶⁾ Directive (EU) 2024/1712 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 amending Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims (OJ L, 2024/1712, 24.6.2024).