Information for people fleeing from Ukraine (EN)

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The government recognised the vast majority of people fleeing Ukraine as eligible for temporary protection by a decree on the night of 24 February. This is a temporary form of protection that can be granted quickly, and the main facts about it are summarised below.

What does it mean to have temporary protection?

When a large number of people are forced to leave their country because of war, the government can decide that they do not need to be examined individually and in detail to see what threat they face, but are - almost automatically - granted protection in Hungary. This form of protection is not the same as refugee status, which is granted to applicants on an individual basis.

Who does it apply to?

This protection applies to Ukrainian citizens who are fleeing from Ukraine to Hungary, and are unable or unwilling to return to Ukraine because of the war.

While the government decree on temporary protection does not explicitly mention Ukrainian citizens who enter Hungary from another country (e.g. Serbia) or have been staying in Hungary for a while, in our view they are also entitled to protection.

It also applies to those who, although not Ukrainian citizens, were legally staying in Ukraine (e.g. with a Ukrainian residence permit or visa). They will now also benefit from Hungary's protection.

How can somebody prove that they are eligible for protection?

First, they should apply for protection in Hungary. The application must be submitted in person, at any of the designated assembly points, at any time of day, or at any of the customer service offices of the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing, during business hours. Click here for the addresses and customer service offices of the Directorate-General (bmbah.hu). A procedure is then started and must be completed by the asylum authority in 45 days. Applicants for protection have to show that they are a Ukrainian citizen or a non-Ukrainian citizen who has been legally staying in Ukraine. The easiest way to do this is to show documents. However, those who come without documents can also have this protection - but they will probably face a longer interview where the authorities will ask them in more detail about where they come from.

During the process, the applicant’s passport (if they have one) is taken away, and a humanitarian residence permit is issued to them instead. This can be used to verify their identity while in Hungary. If the applicant’s request for temporary protection is approved, the authorities issue temporary protection documents (personal identification cards) to them. Note that this document is different from the identity card issued for Hungarian citizens. At the end of the process, the applicant’s passport is returned to them.

It is important to note that those with a Ukrainian passport are entitled to a 90-day stay in Hungary, visa-free, even without requesting temporary protection. In such a case, however, they are not entitled to the support provided to those in temporary protection. It should also be mentioned that it is possible to apply for temporary protection during the visa-free period as well if the applicant needs the support provided with this status.

We recommend that people who have entered Hungary without a biometric passport or as citizens of a third country who were lawfully staying in Ukraine should apply for temporary protection, as it is necessary for their stay in Hungary to be lawful.

In our experience, certificates of temporary residence are also issued by the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing to citizens of third countries coming to Hungary from Ukraine if the person concerned intends to stay in Hungary only temporarily. Such certificates are valid for up to 3 months.

Can someone enter Hungary without a passport?

In the current situation, this should be possible from Ukraine.

If an individual subject to temporary protection has no valid passport, the authorities issue them a document allowing them to leave and re-enter the country on a single occasion.
Are people allowed to move freely within the EU if they are in possession of a temporary protection document?

We do not believe so. A temporary protection document only allows them to remain and move freely within the territory of Hungary. To travel to another country, they must follow the entry (visa) requirements of the particular country.

If, however, the individual holds a biometric passport issued by Ukraine, the 90-day visa-free rule applies in any country of the EU, which means they are free to move around within the EU during this period.

How long does temporary protection last?

As long as the government considers that there is a reason for this special protection. The government's decree recognising people from Ukraine as in need of protection will, at this stage, remain in force until 1 June. However, this could easily change in the coming weeks.

What about Hungarian citizens?

Hungarian citizens (either dual Ukrainian-Hungarian citizens or just Hungarian citizens) can enter Hungary at any time and stay for as long as they wish. They do not need to - and cannot - apply for special protection. This means that under the law, Hungarian citizens are not eligible for support offered to those receiving temporary protection.

What support can somebody with temporary protection get?

As long as the procedure lasts, people fleeing from Ukraine can be accommodated in a reception centre (refugee camp), where they are provided with food and medical care. Those who can provide accommodation for themselves (e.g. with relatives or friends) do not have to go to a reception centre, although they will receive less support.

At the end of the procedure, when the temporary protection status is formally granted, people are entitled to housing in a reception centre (refugee camp), health care, education for children and a monthly cash allowance for the whole duration of their protection. To be able to work, people with a temporary protection status must apply for a special work permit.

Holders of a temporary protection status are also issued with a Hungarian identity card, which is different from the identity card of Hungarian citizens.

Where are the reception centres?

Unfortunately, the capacity of the Hungarian asylum system has been severely reduced in recent years, so the opening of temporary or previously closed camps is likely to be expected in the coming period.

The shelter for refugees in Vámosszabadi and the community shelter in Balassagyarmat, where Afghan families were housed a few months ago, will certainly provide shelter for many people from Ukraine in the coming period.

The Hungarian Helsinki Committee will help people fleeing from Ukraine. As before, asylum seekers can count on us to provide them with professional and free legal assistance, from counselling to representation.

You can contact us here:

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