

21 July 2022

## 5 TAKEAWAYS ON NON-EU PATHWAYS TO PROTECTION AMID CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

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*Takeaways from the ICMPD-MPC webinar 'Far(ther) from home: Pathways to protection beyond the EU for those fleeing Ukraine,' held on 6 July 2022.*

[Six million people](#) have fled Ukraine since Russia's invasion on 24 February 2022. Amid the fastest and largest displacement in Europe since World War II, the European Union has mostly been united in its support of Ukrainians – as evidenced by the first-ever activation of the two-decade-old Temporary Protection Directive. But the groundswell of solidarity reaches beyond the EU+: Several countries farther afield, including Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, have made [new or existing migration channels](#) available for those fleeing Ukraine. The global response to displacement from the country is remarkable in several ways, not least in its speed and scope, but also in its advancing of community/private sponsorship and other complementary pathways – approaches to expanding protection that were already building momentum before the conflict.

On 6 July 2022, ICMPD and the Migration Policy Centre held a [webinar](#) on the political and technical aspects of these pathways, with a focus on those in Brazil, Canada, and the US, entitled 'Far(ther) from home: Pathways to protection beyond the EU for those fleeing Ukraine.' In addition to zooming in on these national initiatives, speakers discussed the role of cooperation with the European Union and its Member States and how complementary pathways could play a role in boosting access to protection for displaced persons.

The main takeaways from this discussion are laid out below.

### **1. There is typically a trade-off between flexibility and longevity.**

In response to staggering levels of displacement, Brazil, Canada, and the US have mainly focused on providing speedy access to their territory. These initiatives (such as Brazil's [humanitarian visa](#), the [Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel](#) (CUAET), and the US [Uniting for Ukraine](#) initiative) provide temporary residence visas that allow displaced persons from Ukraine to live, work, and study for a certain, limited, period of time.

They have proven to be faster, more flexible, and more easily scalable than refugee resettlement, the traditional third-country solution for refugees. In some cases, they have had the added benefit of avoiding a backlog for other migration systems and for other displaced populations (for instance, Afghans arriving through Canada's resettlement programme).

But despite their benefits, these pathways can come with an important drawback: They do not necessarily ensure long-term prospects. In the case of Brazil, humanitarian visa holders can apply for permanent residence after 2 years. Meanwhile, those who wish to stay in Canada and the US may be able to use various migration channels to stay for a longer period of time, including channels that open up the possibility for permanent residence. The initiatives launched in Brazil, Canada, and the US have been created as emergency responses to rapid and large-scale displacement. While they tend to lack some characteristics fundamental for sustainable solutions, such as pathways to long-term residency, through their agility they have been more efficient and responsive in emergency contexts. Just as with temporary protection in the EU, the question is what comes next, especially if conflict continues and those whom have been displaced are unable to return. Thinking long term is key, starting from day one.

## **2. Support infrastructure is critical but often lacking.**

The quality of protection is also strongly linked with the support provided – to new arrivals, sponsors, and local actors. While temporary migrants typically do not receive settlement support in Canada, the Government has moved to expand the scope of its settlement programme, as well as to provide some additional financial, accommodation, and transportation assistance, so that those arriving from Ukraine can settle in more easily.

However, despite support being paramount for new arrivals, some initiatives rely mainly on individual/group sponsorship or on organised civil society action. In Brazil, religious groups and other civil society organisations have played an increasingly active role in welcoming newcomers from Afghanistan and now from Ukraine. Here, a particular challenge is to provide support for local actors, who are ultimately the ones welcoming newcomers, but whom are not always prepared or lacking experience in this area. Meanwhile, the US programme relies on sponsors to assist newcomers; while they are indeed providing an important source of support, there is no formal system to support sponsors in helping new arrivals.

### **3. Diaspora and other civil society actors have been key drivers.**

Following the Russian invasion, the large (and global) Ukrainian diaspora has become a key player in driving forward these mobility pathways. The Canadian Government developed its CUAET programme in consultation with the Ukrainian community in the country. Many Ukrainians have chosen their country of destination based on where their personal ties are, whether this means joining family members or using an existing tourist visa.

Personal networks are perhaps of most importance in the case of the US, where Uniting for Ukraine requires that arrivals are sponsored and that sponsors are willing and able to cover certain costs. A practical network has been set up to facilitate the matching of Ukrainians with sponsors so that more people are able to use this channel. In Brazil, the support of civil society has been crucial in helping arrivals settle in. These schemes have highlighted the importance of diaspora and wider public support – and the utility of leveraging these assets by giving people a tangible role to play, not necessarily just in community sponsorship schemes but also via creative approaches for engaging volunteers more broadly.

### **4. These responses constitute another instance of innovation.**

The responses of Brazil, Canada, and the US to displacement from Ukraine are innovative – and indicative of a shift towards more creative solutions in light of growing and long-term displacement. This is not the first time that Brazil has issued humanitarian visas: It has also done so for those fleeing environmental disasters, conflict, and upheaval in Haiti, Syria, and Afghanistan. However, in contrast with the earlier arrival of Haitians and Syrians, civil society is now playing a more active and organised role in supporting people arriving from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

Meanwhile, the 2021 Taliban takeover of Afghanistan not only prompted the evacuation of Afghans to Canada, the US, and several other countries, it also sped up the implementation of community sponsorship in the US. Today, again, crisis is spurring creativity, with new programmes launched and existing ones adapted.

### **5. Now is a good time to start thinking about lessons learned.**

Recent innovations and the mushrooming of initiatives for those fleeing Ukraine means that the time is ripe for identifying lessons learned – for this and other displacement contexts. Amid efforts to find the most effective approaches for different contexts, and in recognition of the pros and cons of the different approaches exemplified above, reflecting on these developments will provide important lessons for these three receiving countries and beyond.

For instance, with the US currently in the process of rolling out its community sponsorship programme, Uniting for Ukraine can provide critical insights to strengthen this new initiative. Meanwhile, Brazil and other countries not currently engaged in community sponsorship or resettlement might find inspiration and insights from the experiences of the US and Canada. This reflection process should include a rethinking of both refugee resettlement and pathways which are complementary. Many of the pathways announced amid the conflict in Ukraine have an emergency element and are thus not fully in line with the concept of complementary pathways, which should provide sustainable futures. Nonetheless, we see in many cases that these can constitute a step towards longer-term opportunities for displaced persons.

Watch the video recording of the webinar ['Far\(ther\) from home: Pathways to protection beyond the EU for those fleeing Ukraine.'](#)

Read the blog article ['Non-EU Pathways to Protection for Ukrainians: Complementary Pathways Gain Significant Momentum.'](#)

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