



**CONTRIBUTION OF THE OFFICE
OF THE COMMISSIONER
FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS
OF HUNGARY TO THE ENNHRI
PAGE ON NHRIS' RESPONSE
TO UKRAINE CONFLICT**

“The war raging in Ukraine right now is traumatic and deeply shocking for everyone in Europe and all over the world. All this, however, should not paralyse us: we should be committed to the protection of human rights in this situation as well. We should show active solidarity: we should help and support all the victims of the war, the persons fleeing their country, both individually and as a community.”

As the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of Hungary, I find it a high priority to personally follow the events even in these extraordinary times. At the same time, my staff and I are continuously working on finding ways to provide direct legal and humanitarian aid to as many people as possible. With a view to that, the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, which is the UN’s National Human Rights Institution, is opening a temporary regional office near the affected border section, where my staff members will be there to offer personal help to refugees, for instance, in administrative matters and legal counselling. Furthermore, we will help persons fleeing the war by providing regularly updated information on the Office’s website and social media site.”

DR. ÁKOS KOZMA
Commissioner for Fundamental Rights

1 SUMMARY OF THE ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF HUNGARY AND HIS OFFICE TO SUPPORT UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

The Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of Hungary finds it a high priority to personally follow the events in the extraordinary times of the war raging in Ukraine since February. The Commissioner and his staff have been showing active solidarity with the victims of the war and those fleeing their country: they have been providing direct legal and humanitarian aid to as many people as possible both by being present personally on the border and by sharing regularly updated information on the Office’s website and social media site.

With a view to providing direct support to people fleeing the war in Ukraine, the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights opened a temporary regional office at the Záhony railway station on 3 March 2022. The staff members of the OCFR provide administrative assistance and legal counselling to the persons turning to them, and they also contribute to the humanitarian relief efforts. The staff of the OCFR are working in 12-hour shifts, and there are two staff members providing help in administrative matters, as well as legal counselling to people fleeing from the war in Ukraine to Hungary through Záhony. The Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights set up Ombudsman information points at Beregsurány and also at the humanitarian transit point established by the Hungarian government in the BOK Sports Hall in Budapest.

Numerous refugees have requested help in connection with their travel documents. In addition to that, the most frequent reasons for which people seek help at the temporary regional office in Záhony are questions related to finding employment in Hungary. Many ask for non-legal type assistance as well. The staff members of the OCFR have also helped volunteers to organize transport to Budapest and find accommodation for refugees, and they have been providing direct legal and humanitarian aid to as many people as possible.

The Commissioner for Fundamental Rights has ordered an inquiry pertaining to the institutions forming part of the services system available for those refugees/persons enjoying temporary protection who cross the Hungarian border due to the Russian–Ukrainian military conflict. The inquiry focuses on all the vulnerable groups, especially children, persons with disabilities and elderly persons fleeing from the war. The continuous, comprehensive inquiry examines the following areas in particular: healthcare, children’s homes, the elderly and the disabled, schools, and higher education. In addition to the above inquiry, the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) has also committed itself to paying visits to places of detention located on the Hungarian–Ukrainian border. Places have been made available for families fleeing the Russian–Ukrainian war in residential social care homes and child protection institutions near the border. The visits have a dual objective: on the one hand, the NPM inspects the circumstances of accommodation provided to refugee families, and on the other, it also examines in what ways the admission of refugee families has influenced the everyday life of those living in these institutions, what measures have become necessary to ensure the smooth admission of the refugees, and what changes have been brought about by all of the above for the residents of these places. Through these visits, the NPM also seeks to gather information about the impact of the Russian–Ukrainian conflict on the social care institutions (e.g. additional tasks generated by the situation, the institutions’ possibilities to accommodate those fleeing from the war), as well as to investigate—in its competence as NPM—the circumstances of accommodation of persons receiving care in residential institutions, and their treatment with a view to preventing torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. During the visits, the staff members of the Office inspect the rooms of the given institutions,

take pictures, request certain documents from the heads of the institutions, and conduct interviews with the residents and the employees.

In March and April 2022, the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights held online consultations with a number of his international partners, including, among others, with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC) and the President of the International Ombudsman Institute, on the issue of refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. During the online meetings, Dr. Ákos Kozma gave information on the current situation at the Hungarian–Ukrainian border, the conditions under which refugees from Ukraine are being received in Hungary and the measures taken to help them more effectively. In this context, the Commissioner reported, among other things, on the experiences of his visit to the border crossing points of Záhony-Čop and Tiszabecs-Vilok, as well as the Mándok collection point.

On 11 March 2022, the Ombudsman visited the border crossing point between Beregsurány and Астеї. Dr. Ákos Kozma was informed about the current situation at the Hungarian–Ukrainian border, the measures taken to speed up the border crossing, the conditions of reception of refugees from Ukraine via Beregsurány and the experiences of the staff on duty there. He also visited the temporary regional office opened at the Záhony railway station, where the staff of the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of Hungary provides administrative and legal assistance to people fleeing from Ukraine to Hungary, as well as humanitarian aid. The same day, Dr. Ákos Kozma visited the collection point in Fehérgyarmat. The Ombudsman was briefed on the current situation, the conditions of reception of people fleeing from the war in Ukraine to Hungary, the measures taken to help them more effectively and their implementation, as well as the experience of the staff working there, including the medical team. During the visit, Dr. Kozma Ákos handed over to the collection point in Fehérgyarmat the donations—including diapers, toiletries and non-perishable food—offered by the staff of the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights to help refugees. In addition, the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights regularly visits sites affected by the current situation.

In response to the call of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of Hungary, the volunteer university students who will be working in the coming period in the temporary regional office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of Hungary in Záhony started their work that day. Citizens from several universities across the country have responded

to the call, including Eszterházy Károly Catholic University and Pázmány Péter Catholic University, which are actively supporting the Ombudsman’s activities and duties on the Hungarian–Ukrainian border.

In March 2022, the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights received a number of international delegations in his Office. Firstly, on 16 March 2022, the Commissioner had a consultation with UNICEF Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia Ms. Afshan Khan. During the meeting, the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights provided information about the circumstances of the reception of the refugees, especially children, arriving in our country fleeing the war in Ukraine, and the measures taken to provide help to them. On 17 March 2022, the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, the Greek Ombudsman and Regional President of the European Region of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) Mr. Andreas Pottakis and Slovenian Ombudsman Mr. Peter Svetina and his Deputy visited the Hungarian–Ukrainian border to obtain information on the current situation of Ukrainian refugees, the conditions of their reception, and the measures taken to help them. On 28 March 2022, the Commissioner went to Vienna, where he was received by Mr. Werner Amon, Member of the Austrian Ombudsman Board and Secretary General of the International Ombudsman Institute at the headquarter. Dr. Ákos Kozma gave information about the legislation related to the refugee crisis, the current situation at the Hungarian–Ukrainian border, the operation of the temporary regional offices set up at Záhony and Beregsurány and of the information point set up at the BOK Sports Hall in Budapest, as well as about the experience of the OCFR gained on-site so far. On 31 March 2022, in the company of Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, Chief Ombudsman of Turkey Mr. Şeref Malkoç and Ombudsman for the Rights of Women and Children Ms. Celile Özlem Tunçak paid a visit to the Hungarian–Ukrainian border to gain information in person about the current situation of the people fleeing the war in Ukraine, the circumstances of their reception and the measures taken to help them.

On 27 April 2022, the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights gave a talk and took part in a panel discussion at a conference organized by the European Network of Ombudsmen in Strasbourg under the title “The role of Ombudsmen in times of crisis—Sharing best practices for helping refugees fleeing from Ukraine”. At the conference, the participants discussed—among others—the circumstances of the reception of those fleeing to Europe from the war in Ukraine, and the measures taken to assist them more efficiently.

2 NEWSLETTERS ISSUED BY THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF HUNGARY FOLLOWING THE OUTBREAK OF THE UKRAINIAN–RUSSIAN WAR

Please find below the 6 newsletters issued by the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of Hungary following the outbreak of the Ukrainian–Russian war.

- Newsletter 1 from the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of Hungary (English)
- Newsletter 2 from the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of Hungary (English)
- Newsletter 3 from the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of Hungary (English)
- Newsletter 4 from the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of Hungary (English)
- Newsletter 5 from the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of Hungary (English)
- Newsletter 6 from the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of Hungary (English)