



Situation of Older Persons in Ukraine and in the European Union and Key Considerations

AGE Platform Europe Policy Statement

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Situation of Older Persons in Ukraine and Older Refugees in the EU

Ukraine is among the [fastest ageing countries](#) in the world with more than 7 million people aged 65+, representing 16.7% of the total population. With older persons making up a [third of all people](#) in need of assistance in Ukraine, this conflict can be considered the ‘oldest’ humanitarian crisis in the world.

While the invasion of Ukraine is affecting all age groups, older persons are particularly exposed for those remaining in Ukraine and those crossing borders. To a large majority, older persons are staying in Ukraine with an estimated [99%](#) of them preferring not to be evacuated from their homes. While this may be a choice for some – because they want to protect their family’s property or do not want to be a burden on their families – some others do not have the possibility to flee, left alone without family or their wider community, and cut off from support, including access to food, clean drinking water, medicine, care, and hygiene products.

The war in Ukraine has exacerbated the impacts of the [Covid-19 pandemic](#), notably because older persons suffer from a lack of access to long-term care services. It has also exacerbated the pre-existed divide between eastern and western Ukraine, where there are more home residential facilities than in the west. This has direct repercussions on older persons moving within Ukraine.



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Older refugees arrive in EU countries disoriented, exhausted and experience conflict-related mental health issues. In addition, they face language barriers and administrative burdens. Older refugees are not able to access information, communicate with local authorities and populations. It also poses challenges in terms of access to healthcare as older refugees do not know whom to contact if they need a doctor or medicine. Finally, older persons, both in Ukraine and in the EU, face difficulties in accessing their pensions which constitute their main source of incomes. Despite these dramatic circumstances, the situation of older persons has not gained the same level of attention and visibility as other groups in vulnerable situations.

Key Considerations for the EU to Fulfil Ukrainian Older Persons' Urgent Needs

- Collecting accurate age and sex-disaggregated data to get a clear understanding of older persons remaining in Ukraine, crossing the borders, and relocating in EU countries. Older persons are not a homogeneous group but are very diverse and have specific needs. Their experiences are at the intersection between age, gender, sex, race, disability, and other forms of discrimination. As such, the emergency response needs to be adapted, adequate, and oriented to assistance as well as prevention.
- Using an intersectional perspective. This is particularly relevant for older people with disabilities and older women who are exposed to gender-based sexual violence and are at risk of exploitation and human trafficking.
- Providing older persons in Ukraine and the EU material such as food, medicine, care, hygiene products (notably incontinence pads), and assistive devices.
- Keeping humanitarian corridors open and ensuring that health and care facilities are protected from attacks.
- Making services in and outside Ukraine accessible. Accessibility to healthcare, especially primary healthcare, access to home and day care, nutrition services, and services for informal care givers is essential. If not, this lack of targeted assistance might lead to malnutrition, isolation, and the very rapid decline of older persons' health status. Older persons need housing and shelters as well as access to accessible and inclusive transportations and digital tools.
- Legislating, and regulating on older persons' refugee status and housing access.
- Establishing a longer-term view on how to shape older people's lives in the future. Before the war, care services were under-funded and not very accessible. Since the war started, care facilities are being bombed. This might be the opportunity to provide better quality care with technological improvements.

- Training professionals on the ground to raise awareness on older persons' specific needs and on how to support older people with long-term care needs.
- Establishing a special international trust fund that would allow the international community to provide necessary supplies. Funding needs to be sufficient and adequately managed to avoid corruption. Direct financial assistance to older persons such as an unconditional income could also be put in place.
- Respecting and fulfilling older persons' human rights, notably the right to information. Because of the digital divide, many older persons do not have access to information in and outside Ukraine. We need to ensure that evacuation of older persons is dignified, notably in care homes.
- Using a human-based approach as we are talking about the right to adequate standards of living. Older persons' human rights are currently covered under Article 11 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in situations of risks and humanitarian emergencies. We need a UN Convention on the rights of older persons that would allow us to recognize older persons' human rights.

Read more on:

- AGE position on the [war in Ukraine](#)
- [AGE statement](#)
- [AGE Special Briefing](#)
- [AGE members' response](#)
- The [impact of ageism in migratory contexts](#)
- The [impact of war on older people](#) (HelpAge International)

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