

Statement of the ETUC Women's Committee on Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Adopted at the Extraordinary Women's Committee meeting of 9 March 2022

On 9 March 2022, the ETUC Women's Committee met with representatives of the Ukrainian trade union's Women's Committee.

The ETUC Women's Committee stands in solidarity with all the people of Ukraine in general and our sisters, in particular who are affected by the attacks on Ukraine. We stand with Ukrainian women who participate in their country's fight against the brutal and unlawful invasion inflicted on them by Russia. We stand in solidarity with all women and their children fleeing their home-country - seeking refuge in neighbouring countries.

We firmly condemn the military aggression and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Today and every day, we call for an end of the attacks, we call for peace, dialogue and justice.

In response to the devastating images and stories that reach us from Ukraine, the ETUC Women's Committee stresses that armed conflict and humanitarian crisis bear particular threats and consequences for women and girls in all their diversity. It is well documented and unanimously agreed by the international community that sexual violence against women and girls in all their diversity is used as a common tactic in armed conflict and as a war weapon. Domestic violence and trafficking is also exacerbated during war and humanitarian crisis. In addition, reproductive health care services for women are functioning under high risk and are deliberately chosen as targets for military strikes. Ukrainian women are currently giving birth in bomb shelters, subway stations and basements. This is the dramatic and painful reality for pregnant women, in Ukraine or fleeing the country, that must be put under the spotlight.

An overwhelming majority of Ukrainian refugees that seek safety in European neighboring states and beyond are women and children. Among refugees and people otherwise displaced from their homes, women and girls are particularly exposed to sexual violence, including rape, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual exploitation and/or unwanted pregnancies. Women and girls refugees, including pregnant refugees, also face severe infringements of their sexual and reproductive health and rights, such as a lack of available and responsive reproductive health care services, facilities or health products.

It is of outmost importance to secure a gender-sensitive response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine that safeguards fundamental human rights of Ukrainian women and children in all their diversity.

To this end, the ETUC Women's Committee

- emphasizes the need for adequate resources to cater for the needs of women and child refugees in all their diversity, including LGBTQI+ persons, e.g. to be provided with proper accommodation, access to health care, access to child care, access to specialized services, including gender-responsive psycho-social care;

- calls on Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Council President Charles Michel to work as a matter of urgency to finalize the ratification of the EU to the Istanbul Convention;
- calls on EU Member states and neighboring countries to ensure that Ukrainian women in all their diversity fleeing from the war are granted work permits and are enabled to fully participate in the labour market of their hosting country, that would guarantee their economic independence and safeguard their well-being, in line with Temporary Protection Directive;
- stresses that no person fleeing from Ukraine can be refused safe passage and entry at the borders on the basis of their gender, their ethnicity, their sexual orientation, their residence status or because they are a person of colour;
- calls on the EU and its institutions to ensure respect for EU and International laws that protect dignity and humanity for those seeking refuge and protection for war;
- expects the EU institutions and all EU leaders to adopt a gender-responsive perspective in any forms of crisis response to the war in Ukraine.
