

Date: 12 March 2022

Ms Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Commission

Ms Hellena Dalli

Commissioner for Equality

Ms Elisa Ferreira

Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms

Ms Ylva Johansson

Commissioner for Home Affairs

Mr Janez Lenarčič

Commissioner for Crisis Management

Mr Nicolas Schmit

Commissioner for Jobs, Social Rights

Subject: Request to guarantee the role of the Polish NGOs in accessing EU funds to combat Ukrainian refugees' crisis.

Honourable Commissioners,

The war in Ukraine has triggered a humanitarian crisis. An estimated Two million Ukrainian refugees have already arrived in the EU amid the illegal Russian invasion, the vast majority of them in Poland. In response to that, in their official accounts, the representatives of the Polish government stress that aid is coordinated, financed and managed in Poland from the national level and that public national authorities are at the forefront of the health crisis management.

This is simply not true!

Many Polish NGOs, looking from the perspective of helping at Polish border crossings, railway stations and night shelters for the past two weeks; can say only one thing: it is the people of Poland and the Ukrainian community that live here, supported by NGOs, who all rushed to help those fleeing the illegal war in Ukraine. Polish NGOs mobilized all possible resources and are the ones providing direct humanitarian aid at the border, in the warzone and inside Polish cities and villages and NOT the Polish Government!

The Polish NGOs were the ones who created the first reception and information points, provide medical care, psychological support, legal assistance, interpretation service, as well as arranging accommodation, childcare services, organised logistics to bring help in the warzone and bring the refugees from the eastern UE border to housing inside Poland, providing basic material assistance like food and clothing. Thousands of volunteers assist, non-stop, 24 hours a day, making the most of their private resources.

This cannot go on for long, especially in the absence of sufficient (truthfully zero) help from the Polish national authorities. The resources of private people and NGOs will soon be exhausted. This will not only be disastrous for the refugees affected by the tragedy of war but could also threaten the existence of NGOs and private people who open their hearts to help.

We are grateful for the EU introducing a robust package of legislative and operational changes to mitigate the humanitarian emergency that currently impacts the Ukrainian crisis in the EU countries receiving refugees^[1]. We noticed, however, that the above-mentioned mechanisms fall mostly under shared management. In addition, we observe that the Polish Managing Authorities (regional and national public authorities) aim now at constructing projects (national or regional crisis 'shields') where solely the public authorities would become beneficiaries. In the light of the recently attempted to vote legislation (losing by one vote), which would guarantee impunity to the officials for their actions during Ukraine's war^[2], we are concerned about possible frauds in money management, caused by the Polish states' national authorities.

This is why we see a serious need to increase the channelling of EU funds to the Polish NGOs directly^[3], following the example of mechanisms of direct access to funds provided for in the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV). A straightforward procedure is necessary for the Polish NGOs to obtain access to financing to develop tailor-made solutions for the short and long-term integration of refugees through projects in education, employment, social inclusion and care.

Last but not least, we have not found any adequate call for proposals for direct grants^[4]. Please advise whether we can expect any call for proposals dedicated to NGOs concerning refugees' integration shortly.

Polish NGOs are willing to work hand in hand with the Polish municipalities and local authorities of the ground level to flexibly respond to the rapidly emerging needs during this crisis and thereby to help the most affected. For this to happen the NGOs need to be allowed to co-manage the whole process, become guaranteed beneficiaries or be integrated into an umbrella project.

Looking forward to your assistance and quick reply.

Yours sincerely,

1. Akcja Demokracja
2. Association Défense de la Démocratie en Pologne (ADDP)
3. Centrum Praw Kobiet (Women's Rights Centre)
4. Democracy is OK DOK
5. Dziewuchy Berlin
6. DziewuChy Szwajcaria
7. Edukacja w Działaniu (Education in Action)
8. Forum Darczyńców w Polsce
9. Fundacja Autonomia (Autonomy Foundation)
10. Fundacja Cicha Tęcza
11. Fundacja Instytut Spraw Społecznych (Institute for Social Affairs Foundation)
12. Fundacja Nowej Kultury Bęc Zmiana

13. Fundacja Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet (Polish Women's Strike Foundation)
14. Fundacja Otwarty Dialog (Open Dialogue Foundation)
15. Kongres Świeckości
16. Fundacja Znak
17. Inicjatywa #WolneSądy
18. Instytut Spraw Publicznych ((Institute of Public Affairs)
19. Kampania Przeciw Homofobii (Campaign Against Homophobia)
20. Komitet Obrony Demokracji
21. Love Does Not Exclude Association (Stowarzyszenie Miłość Nie Wyklucza)
22. Manifest Wolnej Polki
23. Matki na granice
24. Obywatele RP
25. Otwarta Rzeczpospolita - Stowarzyszenie przeciw Antysemityzmowi i Ksenofobii (Open Republic - Association against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia)
26. Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH)
27. Polonijna Rada Kobiet+ (International Council of Polish Women+)
28. Pro Femina Association
29. Regionalny Kongres Kobiet w Szczecinie
30. Rok Kobiet
31. Równik Praw
32. Różowa Skrzyneczka
33. Stowarzyszenie Dolnośląski Kongres Kobiet
34. Stowarzyszenie Klucz
35. Stowarzyszenie Kongres Świeckości
36. Stowarzyszenie Sędziów Polskich "IUSTITIA"
37. Strajk Kobiet Berlin (FeminiBerlin Polska)
38. The Federation for Women and Family Planning (Federa)
39. Wioska Kobiet (Szwajcaria)
40. Women of Film Association

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CC.

Ms Manuela Geleng, Director, Directorate for *Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion*

Ms Emma Toledano Laredo, Director, Directorate for Regional and Urban Policy

Ms Chiara Gariazzo, Director Migration and Home Affairs

Mr Hans Das, Director, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

[1] Such as numerous flexibility mechanisms for the European Structural and Investment Funds under the legislative proposal of the "Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe" (CARE), changing priorities in the Cross Border Cooperation programs: Poland - Russia and Poland-Ukraine-Belarus or mobilizing emergency crisis instruments, namely Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, Emergency Support Instrument and the emergency mechanism under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund; [Ukraine: EU steps up solidarity with those fleeing war \(europa.eu\)](#).

[2] Art. 82 of the draft law concerning assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict in the territory of that country [https://orka.sejm.gov.pl/opinie9.nsf/nazwa/2069_u/\\$file/2069_u.pdf](https://orka.sejm.gov.pl/opinie9.nsf/nazwa/2069_u/$file/2069_u.pdf).

[3] Considering the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds, which requires that the Member States ensure that all partners, including NGOs are actively involved in all stages of the implementation of EU-financed projects process, from planning through implementation to evaluation. We underline also that strengthening the civil society was explicitly mentioned in the Council 2020 Country Specific Recommendations for Poland (EUR-Lex - 52020DC0521 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)).

[4] [Search Funding & Tenders \(europa.eu\)](#)