

Restart Ukraine: Labour market participation through effective skills assessment, job matching and entrepreneurship

Support hubs for beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine

Background and justification

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has so far displaced more than 5 million people. The vast majority are hosted by EU MS, with the largest numbers arriving in Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia. Meanwhile, Poland, Italy, the Czech Republic, Spain, and Germany are home to the largest Ukrainian communities in the EU, meaning that many new arrivals will likely move there to join their networks. Across the EU, a massive effort is underway to provide reception and other support that will be needed in the coming days, weeks and months.

The activation of the Temporary Protection Directive for people fleeing the war in Ukraine guarantees millions of beneficiaries a number of rights such as access to the labour markets of EU hosting countries. As highlighted in the Commission's communication on 23 March, early labour market entry can have a significant impact on the lives of those newly arrived, supporting their self-sufficiency and independence while reducing the economic strain on host communities. Employment also enables their active participation and ensures that their skills, often developed through significant investment, will not atrophy. Swift access to entrepreneurship and the labour markets of all EU Member States (i.e. through onward mobility) can contribute to reducing pressures in frontline states. Through Restart Ukraine, those forced to flee the war in Ukraine will receive tailor-made support to quickly access Member States' labour markets so they can support themselves while also benefitting their host countries – and build a foundation for their successful return and participation in rebuilding Ukraine's economy and society once conditions permit.

As people continue to flee the war, not all arrive with the skills and resources needed to immediately and seamlessly enter local labour markets. Even those with high levels of education and language skills might not be able to identify gaps and needs in these local markets – and may not have the particular skills needed to fill available job vacancies in their place of destination. Additionally, skills that new arrivals possess may be in higher and lower demand in different localities. At the same time, the majority of those fleeing the war are women and children, as well as seniors, not all of whom were active in Ukraine's labour market. There is thus an immediate need to identify existing skills, areas for skills building, entrepreneurship potential and barriers and local labour market demands. This can facilitate skills development and skills matching – where new arrivals already are and where else they might go in the EU to find employment and meet employer needs. Strengthening skills-based matching across EU Member States can help to incentivise onward mobility and thus support a more even distribution of TP beneficiaries. All of these activities must be done in a way that takes the employment experiences and potential labour market barriers of new arrivals into consideration (for instance looking at childcare, home-based work and part-time work). The right combination of interventions is essential not only for supporting the self-sufficiency of temporary protection (TP) beneficiaries – such an approach also directly benefits local labour markets via new employees and job creation.

The actual job placement process includes a number of steps requiring the active engagement of the private sector – but also the robust support of relevant public authorities. Particularly in the front-line states, as well as other traditional destination countries for Ukrainian citizens, the unprecedented number of arrivals is putting enormous pressure on public administrations and budgets, which are overwhelmed and strained under the need to provide sustained support to TP beneficiaries. The

provision of structured support can help the authorities to deal with high caseloads and avoid delays in access to jobs for TP beneficiaries that respond to their skills and qualifications. To realise the potential of intra-EU mobility, networks need to be set up in sending and receiving countries and among employers.

Accordingly, ICMPD proposes to pool its long-standing expertise working with Member States and refugee, TP and migrant populations, its analytical capacity related to integration and skills-based mobility and its networks in the public and private sector to launch Restart Ukraine. This initiative is aimed at boosting the labour market participation of TP beneficiaries while supporting national and local stakeholders in participating EU Member States. The proposed framework takes an integrated and comprehensive approach to supporting labour market participation and facilitating onward mobility, while remaining flexible and adaptable to circumstances on the ground. The goal is to bring practical and solution-oriented approaches to economic inclusion that can address the most pressing challenges faced by both TP beneficiaries and host countries. Restart Ukraine will be a 360-degree approach to inclusion, establishing **dedicated Support hubs** that are able to provide labour market counselling and job placement services, training and entrepreneurship initiatives, technical assistance and the filling of key knowledge gaps, among other support needed for successful labour market inclusion. All of these activities aim to contribute to the successful labour market participation of TP beneficiaries.

This project is part of ICMPD's overall response to the Ukrainian crisis.

Overall and specific objectives

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen national and local capacity in EU Member States to facilitate the labour market participation of TP beneficiaries through effective skills assessment, job matching, entrepreneurship support and skills-based onward mobility to ensure their self-sufficiency and prepare them for skilled contributions towards Ukraine's long-term economic restart.

The project will contribute to the achievement of the below specific objectives:

- **SO1:** Strengthen participating countries' capacity to increase labour market participation through services related to counselling and skills assessment/profiling
- **SO2:** Streamline the job matching process and boost job placement through strong employer networks at the national and EU levels (intra-EU mobility)
- **SO4:** Strengthen participating countries' capacity, through grant schemes, to provide targeted training measures for those who cannot quickly enter the labour market
- **SO5:** Enhance the capacities of SMEs to create jobs by matching the skills of TP beneficiaries with newly established job opportunities through grant support
- **SO6:** Increase entrepreneurship through mentoring, training and seed funding
- **SO7:** Support national stakeholders in enhancing their capacity to formulate, develop and implement labour market inclusion policies by taking into account existing evidence, good practices and lessons learned by other countries addressing similar situations
- **SO8:** Mobilise the Ukrainian community to support the labour market inclusion of those recently arrived

Target groups and beneficiaries

The main target groups are TP beneficiaries fleeing the war in Ukraine, as well as key actors in Member States that are hosting large numbers of these beneficiaries:

- National and local authorities responsible for migrant and refugee integration as well as labour market policies (e.g. Ministries of Labour, Public Employment Services)
- Social partners and civil society organisations involved in reception and integration
- Ukrainian community and diaspora organisations in the EU
- Private sector and institutions supporting entrepreneurship (business agencies, financial institutions, chambers of commerce, companies and SMEs, cooperatives)
- Public and private Ukrainian institutions that might be potentially involved in return and reintegration (if/when the situation allows), including Ukrainian labour authorities, centres of commerce and their representations in EU Member States

Description of the action

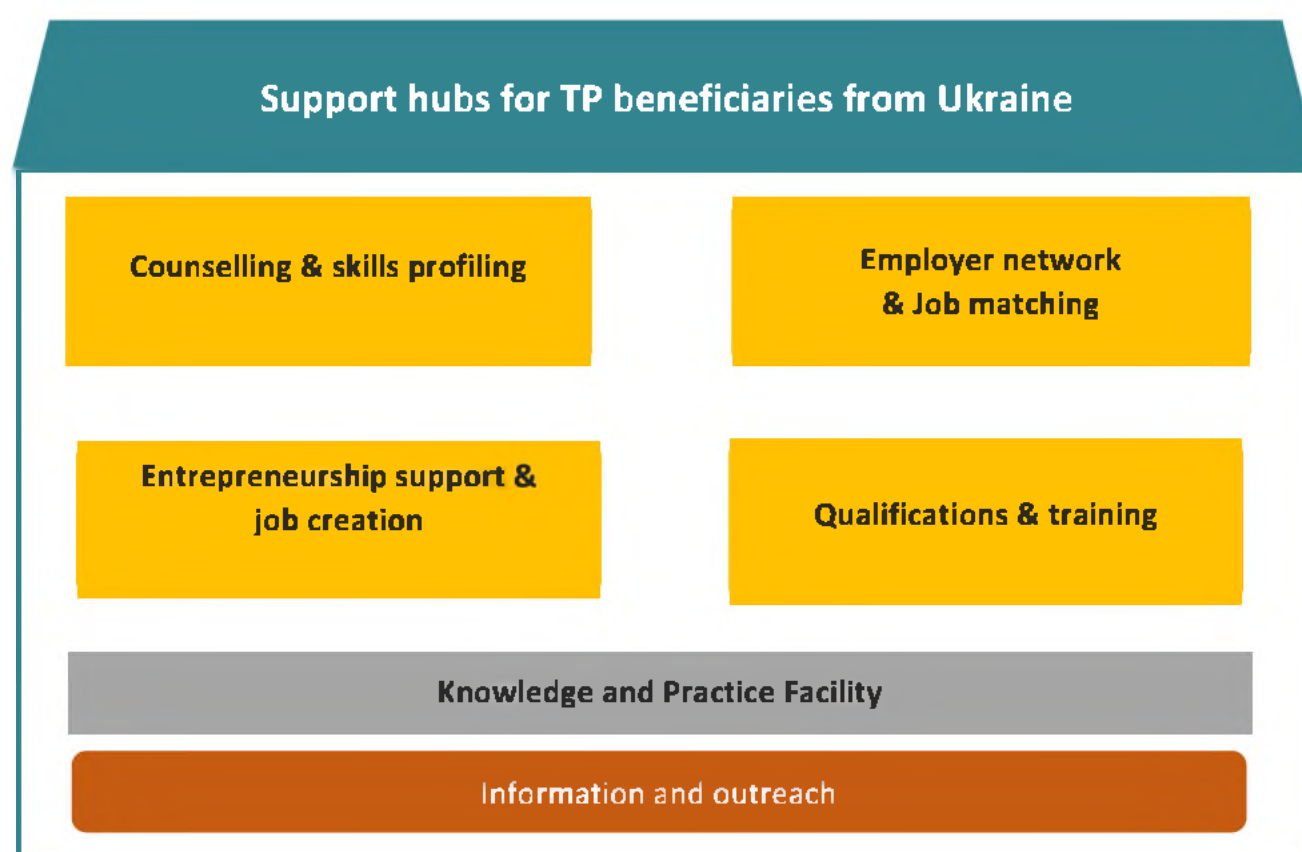
Restart Ukraine's focus on the **establishment of dedicated Support hubs** for labour market inclusion will complement and expand existing support structures in participating countries. The focus of each separate hub will be determined according to local labour market conditions and short- to long-term requirements on the ground, as well as the available skills of potential workers able to meet these needs. These dedicated hubs will provide a 'one-stop-shop' or holistic strategy for the provision of labour market inclusion services under one physical and/or virtual roof, encompassing key state and non-state stakeholders able to support labour market inclusion (e.g. skills assessment, placement, job creation and entrepreneurship support). Bringing these services together under one roof will facilitate cooperation among the most relevant local and international institutions and stakeholders in the host community, while simultaneously rendering them more accessible to those in need. This partnering approach to service provision in support of local labour markets removes barriers to quick, efficient employment to support self-sufficiency and ensures short, simple, coherent and transparent activities that are able to deliver key results to the benefit of potential workers and host communities alike.

Each dedicated Support hub will be made up of a set of modules that deliver needed supports and services (Figure 1). Depending on local needs, all or some of the modules described below might be implemented simultaneously or sequentially.

- **Module 0** will establish **Support hubs** to promote the labour market participation of TP beneficiaries in selected Member States, co-locating various services in one physical or digital hub (minimum length of the project: 3 years). Information and outreach activities will be ongoing to ensure awareness of this resource and uptake of services.
- **Module 1** will provide **counselling, skills assessment and profiling** services. It will also develop, test and pilot a universally applicable skills profiling and matching tool. The skills/competence checks will identify current needs for additional Support hub training and inform the creation of individual blueprints for corresponding support measures.
- **Module 2** will improve the **job matching process** and **job placement** through strong employer networks on the national and EU level and addressing barriers in the refugee recruitment process. As skills shortage sectors vary significantly across cities and countries, this module will strengthen a skills-based matching process that cuts across Member States by looking at how intra-EU mobility can make better use of skills and better address skills shortages – a win-win.
- **Module 3** will strengthen participating countries' capacity to provide **targeted qualification and training measures** for those who cannot immediately enter the labour market through training grants. The focus will be on language acquisition, bridging courses to fill gaps in formal education, internships and traineeships, and upskilling and reskilling programmes.

- **Module 4** will facilitate economic inclusion through **entrepreneurship** by supporting prospective and displaced entrepreneurs and **job creation** by supporting existing SMEs and cooperatives. The objective will be to address special needs of women with children through tailored measures, including, for example, mentorship or home-based entrepreneurship. The grant scheme will be designed to support local businesses run by the local population and the Ukrainian community.
- **Module 5, the Knowledge and Practice Facility**, will constitute an integral element of each Support hub and will generate research and analysis to inform all activities, as well as facilitate the exchange of information among key stakeholders and network building among relevant local and international actors. The Facility will also allow for the monitoring, evaluation and learning from – as well as dissemination of – results.

Figure 1. Labour market inclusion Support hubs



The project builds on the assumption that a large share of TP beneficiaries will remain in the EU in the mid-term, as it will not be safe or feasible for all to return, and that arrivals will continue to be composed primarily of women and children. The short-term perspective of the temporary status itself can be assumed to reduce the appetite to invest in their employability, where needed, unless employers are encouraged by policies or exit strategies that open up a possibility of long-term residency, for example by allowing those who are employed to change from 'temporary protection status' to a 'skilled worker status', as applicable. At the same time, if the situation allows, some TP beneficiaries will want to return, and thus will require information and counselling on how to do so. The Support hubs can provide this information, with a focus on how those returning can utilize the experience gained while under TPS to help rebuild the Ukrainian economy upon their return.

Budget

To be defined with potential partners

Contact

[Redacted contact information]

@icmpd.org

[Redacted contact information]

@icmpd.org