



Introduction

The Ukraine Response Fund at The Community Foundation for Ireland will address the needs of individuals and families seeking safety, shelter and security in our communities from the war in Ukraine.

The Fund will draw strongly on the knowledge, research and real-world experience gathered by The Community Foundation and its 5,000 voluntary, community and charitable partners over the past 22-years.

During that period we have worked together to welcome and support those forced to flee their homelands, including refugees from the wars in Afghanistan, Syria and other conflicts in the Middle East as well as those from further afield.

In addition to the experience of responding to emergency situations the fund will also draw on experiences learned from people who came to Ireland from Eastern Europe in search of a new life in the years following the ending of the Cold War, the community groups they established and the advocacy groups which support them.

Each of these experiences have shown that in addition to basic needs new communities establishing in Ireland may have other more complex challenges to overcome such as integration, family reunification, the right to remain and the right to education, training and work as well as access to citizenship for those who chose to make Ireland their new home.

The Solidarity Fund will provide the supports necessary for existing human rights and community advocates as well as leaders within the Ukrainian community to ensure the policies being adapted meet these wider needs.

The model developed for the Ukraine Response Fund draws on our experience in setting up the Covid Response Fund which successfully raised and distributed over €3m to communities and those most impacted by the pandemic over the past 2 years.



Need

The speed at which the refugee crisis has unfolded following the outbreak of war is unprecedented. Although Ireland is one of the furthest-most points of Europe from the conflict, the scale of arrivals into our communities is also at a rate which has not been experienced before.

It seems clear that predictions that 200,000 will arrive here are likely to become reality. To put in context this will increase our population by 3%.

Long established partners of The Community Foundation have been responding to immediate need.

These include leading organisations on the rights of migrants, those focussed on community responses as well as those involved in frontline supports for those who arrived here without any previous connections to Ireland.

Key areas of focus that have been surfaced to date include:

- Immediate need – information provision, accommodation
- Integration -language skills, social security, education, access to training and employment, recognition of qualifications
- Access to education and schools
- Trauma supports - providing physical and mental wellbeing supports for refugees
- Community - maintaining a sense of community and identity during a traumatic experience
- Supporting members of Ukraine and other Eastern European leaders to be part of the response

While Ireland is responding with huge levels of generosity, past experiences do show that if a crisis is prolonged, this spirit of generosity can itself come under pressure. In particular when set against the backdrop of inflation which is increasing the overall cost of living and our housing crisis.

The Community Foundation for Ireland not only partners with leaders on integration within migrant organisations but also amongst key partners in civil society – including national organisations such as the Children’s Rights Alliance, the National Women’s Council as well as business organisations and trade unions. This approach helps ensure that policies and a narrative of integration can be carried through in every part of Irish life.

There are other complex issues which can emerge when people are in crisis. Already UNICEF, other international organisations and media reports are warning that human traffickers are using social media to entrap refugees into exploitation. In this particular crisis the danger has been heightened because many families are being split up because of the rules on exiting Ukraine.

The Community Foundation model which has its core connectivity to partners on the ground in Irish communities gives us the ability to identify and respond to these and other emerging challenges during this crisis.



Grants

The Community Foundation for Ireland is a grant-making organisation with 22-years of experience and will in the coming months pass the milestone of having delivered €100 million into communities.

Our team of grant executives are highly experienced and successfully deliver a full range of grant rounds, to those focussed on small communities such as the Meenadreen Fund in a small part of South Donegal, to wider based rounds such as the Cork Arts Fund to high profile national grant rounds for the RTÉ Toy Show Appeal, RTÉ Does Comic Relief, Bank of Ireland and many others.

Drawing on this expertise and our connectivity within the community and voluntary sector, criteria for the distribution of grants which can address both the local and community needs as well as those which require a national response will be drawn up.

The development of the grant rounds will ensure that support will be available to a full range of groups, including those within the Ukrainian community, local community or regional support groups as well as national organisations.

How You Can Help

Please let our Director of Philanthropy Jackie Harrison (jharrison@foundation.ie or 0872940842) know if you would like to join The Community Foundation for Ireland in supporting our Ukraine Community Response Fund or to find out more about what is intended.