

AIM CALLS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOLIDARITY MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

Health insurance funds and health mutuals of the international umbrella association of Mutual Benefit Societies (AIM) are dismayed by what is happening in Ukraine and strongly condemn the war. AIM calls on the EU and the world to continue to stand united in solidarity with Ukraine and its people and to reaffirm their strong response to Russia's war against Ukraine. The EU brought nations and people together to live in peace and to oppose any kind of aggression. Russia's attack is a wake-up call to the importance of European values and reminds us why the European Union is based on them.

The attacks on healthcare facilities should be stopped immediately

AIM members fiercely criticize the attacks on the Ukrainian health infrastructure as well as the disruption of the chain of medical supplies. They constitute a violation of international humanitarian law. It deprives already vulnerable people of healthcare, stops essential services and primary care, and hurdles the treatment of chronic conditions. AIM members have always been working with the European and international institutions to promote universal access to healthcare, which is based on solidarity and democracy. It is a human right and should never be the target of a conflict.

Access to health and long-term care benefits for refugees

AIM members welcome the enforcement of the EU Temporary Protection Directive, which foresees harmonised rights for the beneficiaries of temporary protection in all Member States, including the access to Social Welfare. It provides the basis for AIM members to provide refugees with access to health and long-term care benefits.

In Germany, for example, the EU decision enables the simplified application of the Asylum Seekers' Benefits Act ("*Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz*"), which entitles refugees to benefits in case of illness, pregnancy, birth and other benefits.¹ In Belgium, it allows Ukrainian refugees to be temporarily registered in the Register of Foreigners with a residence permit for a stay of more than three months, which entitles them, in turn, to reimbursement of medical expenses and even to a higher reimbursement.² In Lithuania, the directive enables people to receive temporal protection and to have a right to free healthcare services regardless on the possession of a permit for residence. The Lithuanian National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) covers the cost of healthcare services provided to Ukrainians. For this purpose, the NHIF receives special funds from the State budget.

In Poland, the National Health Fund provides free medical care to refugees from Ukraine who have a certificate issued by the Polish Border Guard or an imprint of the Polish Border Guard stamp in a travel

¹ See [vdek press release](#) (in German); [press release IKK](#) (in German).

² Information on the website of the socialist mutuals (Scroll down for EN) Ukrainian refugees are entitled to reimbursement of medical expenses <https://www.devoorzorg-bondmoyson.be/oekraiense-vluchtelingen-hebben-recht-op-terugbetaling-medische-kosten#no-back>.

document, which confirms the legality of their stay in Poland. Refugees are entitled to medical services under the National Health Fund on the same terms as Polish citizens.

AIM members call for support from the European Commission. In some countries like Hungary, for example, many people have applied for the Hungarian citizenship earlier. As a consequence, they cannot be taken into consideration as refugees as they are now Hungarian, and they cannot use their Ukrainian passport for getting healthcare services as they have Hungarian passports. Hungary had to evaluate a whole new category of entitlement for healthcare services which not only affects the health insurance fund budget but also causes a lot of legal work as well.

Support needed

The Ukrainian health system and its healthcare workers must be supported. Gaps of the Ukrainian healthcare system and the needs of Ukrainian people must be identified to guarantee continuous help and swift responses. AIM members deliver humanitarian aid to support Ukrainians.

The Belgian Mutualities² have multiple initiatives for helping Ukrainian refugees in the country and more in particular, the Christian Mutualities have set up a support program for Ukrainian refugees in Poland and Romania in cooperation with their partner-mutuals in these countries, SWP and FDAAM.

The humanitarian aid will especially be provided to mothers with children in the border area and include gifts of materials for baby and children care. Christian Mutualities also deliver goods to the Ukrainian trade union VOST and give a direct support to the Specialized Children Hospital in Lviv.

French mutuals have and will send trucks, loaded with hygiene products, baby hygiene, first aid and medical equipment, dry food, blankets, duvets and quilts, and water packs to logistics base in Rzeszow, Poland. In addition, French mutuals have provided initial emergency aid to their partner Tulipe³ as well their partners in Moldova⁴ and Slovakia⁵ to support in sending complete kits of medicines and emergency medical devices, organising emergency reception (accommodation, food, care) for refugees at the Ukrainian border, particularly for people with disabilities. MSA (the French agricultural social social protection scheme) organised a call for donations with its partner Secours Populaire Français, a major non-profit solidarity association, which provides material, medical, moral and legal assistance to people who are victims of social injustice, natural disasters, poverty, hunger, underdevelopment and armed conflicts.⁶

Poland has to deal with 2,4 million refugees, mostly women and children. The Polish National Health Fund (NFZ) has estimated the reserves of funds for persons who need a surgical help due to war injuries and medical transport and outpatient care. Regional Branches of NFZ are checking the potential for admitting refugees in hospices for children and other medical establishments. NFZ actively cooperates with local representatives of the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), organizing transport for refugees who are sick as well as children and adults, to relocate patients for treatment to three evacuation points. These are hospitals in Warsaw, Lublin and Rzeszow. Regional Branches of NFZ collect information about patients who require further hospitalization to find out who needs to be relocated to another country for further treatment.

³ Tulipe: <https://tulipe.org/>

⁴ Keystone human service in Moldova: <https://www.khs.org/dr-ludmila-malcoci-speaks-about-relief-efforts-for-ukrainians-with-disability/>;

⁵ Socioforum and Tenenet in Slovakia: <http://www.socioforum.sk/>; <https://tenenet.sk/>

⁶ <https://msa-solidaire.msa.fr/>

On March 12, the special act on helping Ukrainian citizens in connection with an armed conflict in the territory of that country, entered into force. Based on this act, the Fund developed a number of announcements, among others on medical entitlements and benefits for entitled persons, verification of entitlement to benefits, and refunds of prescriptions.

Since March 21, the NFZ's helpline informs the medical Staff from Ukraine (in Polish and Ukrainian) on employment rules in Polish hospitals and clinics. The Fund launched the special helpline for patients from Ukraine – including oncological patients who continue their treatment in Poland. Currently the Fund is working on opening Customer Service with Ukrainian and Russian as the working languages. NFZ also plans to organize special medical care for Ukrainian children in schools.

The Fund also undertakes actions connected to pandemics: their eHealth Centre issued 120 000 referrals for COVID-19 vaccination and 5000 refugees are already vaccinated. The results of COVID-19 tests are translated into Ukrainian and English⁷.

AIM and its members will continue to implement and promote their core value of 'solidarity' and are ready to cooperate with all relevant authorities and institutions.



⁷ <https://www.gov.pl/web/zdrowie/pomoc-medyczna-dla-ukrainy>