

Unified in support of Ukraine

Offices around the world have been responding to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.

They come from every walk of life, every age, every background, their normal lives and future plans torn apart by the cruelty of war.

While the world has watched in horror at the humanitarian disaster in Ukraine, we've also been inspired by the strength of the human spirit and the generosity of people compelled to act.

In addition to the US\$1 million the Firm has donated to the Ukrainian Red Cross Society and its program to match funds raised by colleagues, people across our offices have been quick to get involved.

Ukrainian-born Paris Partner Olga Fedosova, who has family and friends in the war-torn nation, explains: "When you hear the first-hand stories of people in Ukraine, the only thing you can do is roll up your sleeves and help."

"For those of us with family in Ukraine, helping is the only way to remain sane, because we live far away, but are desperate to make a meaningful difference."

Poland's proximity to Ukraine places it on the front-line of the refugee crisis with an estimated 2.1 million people crossing the border during the first few weeks of the conflict. In fact, Poland has welcomed more refugees in the first three weeks of the war than the whole of Europe during the 2015 Ukrainian refugee crisis.



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OLGA FEDOSOVA, PARIS PARTNER

The relentless wave of people entering the country shows no sign of abating, but it is matched by an equally overwhelming flow of support from the Polish community.

"Virtually all my colleagues are in some way engaged in hosting refugees, either in their own homes, or in rented apartments, sometimes in summer houses," explains local partner Aleksandra Oziemska of our Warsaw office. "My family is currently accommodating three mothers and their children in the house where my grandfather used to live.

"One family was driven to Poland by a grandfather who at 64 was not required to join the army and could safely stay here. But he dropped them off before returning to join the fighting voluntarily.

"It's impossible not to be moved by the situation and there was never really any option but for us to do something.

"There was already a large Ukrainian population in Warsaw. I don't think you'll meet anyone who doesn't know a Ukrainian person, so naturally you hear first-hand so many stories about their loved ones fighting, fleeing or refusing to flee, because they rather stay with elderly parents or because their sons have been conscripted."

While two of the women staying in Aleksandra's house expect to travel onwards to Spain to reunite with their families, the future for the third family is less certain.

"She left home with her baby son and two suitcases," explains Aleksandra, "but she had to leave those suitcases behind on the 6km walk from her transport to the border in freezing cold temperatures, because she simply couldn't carry them and her son any further.

"So, she arrived with nothing and nowhere else to go, even though she told us she had everything she needed. That goes some way to explaining the shock people feel at what's happened to them."

Despite the heart-breaking situation, people in the local area have done everything they can to help, with Aleksandra's offering the woman a job while others are working to get her son accepted at the local school and to help her register for state aid.

Aleksandra says: "In my neighbourhood there is hardly a house that isn't hosting refugees.

"It's an incredible community response, but we must recognize that this isn't a short-term crisis. The future is uncertain, so we're having to adjust and manage the situation as best we can.

"The challenge is how we maintain the current enthusiasm as it's highly likely we'll need to support people for a long time.

"As the crisis progresses, we're anticipating the need to provide legal support to people affected by the war. It's a very complex situation."

Another way that the Warsaw office is helping is by collecting funds and medical supplies.



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ALEKSANDRA OZIEMSKA, PARIS PARTNER

Aleksandra says: "One of the unusual aspects of this war is that we can communicate with people on the frontline in Ukraine on their cell phones, so we know exactly what they need and, unsurprisingly, medical supplies are high on the list."



"We currently have 10 associates volunteering for the service by spending two four-hour shifts a day answering calls and giving people advice on how and where to gain help."

VACLAV KUBR, PRAGUE PARTNER

"People throughout the office are collecting money and supplies such as bandages, pain killers and band aids and thermal clothing, and passing them on to people at the border for transportation to the front line."

"We've had amazing support from Veronica Pinotti and the Milan office. They've already sent a big package which has since been transported to Ukraine. My friends crossed the border to get it there, because local men can no longer enter the buffer zone at the border."

A different aspect of the crisis involves helping non-Ukrainian refugees who were living in Ukraine and fleeing the war, but whose legal situation is more complicated.

One such example is a Nigerian woman aged 32 who was a fifth-year medicine student in the Ukrainian city of Dnipro when the war broke out and is now looking to continue her studies somewhere else in Europe.

"This is of course difficult for administrative and financial reasons," says Aleksandra. "She has two small children in Nigeria with whom she speaks twice a day, but she hasn't seen them for two years, because her dream is to qualify as a doctor so she can offer them a better future."

"We find out about these projects by word of mouth. It really is a network and everyone is making a tremendous effort to help."

Our office in the Czech Republic is further away from the war in Ukraine, but it is still deeply engaged in the response.

Since the start of the crisis, colleagues have been volunteering to man emergency assistance hotlines run by the Organization for Aid to Refugees (OPU), an NGO based in the Czech Republic.

Prague partner Václav Kubr explains: "The humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian invasion in Ukraine is something that strongly resonates with all our people also because of our history with invading forces."

We currently have 10 associates volunteering for the service by spending two four-hour shifts a day answering calls and giving people advice on how and where to gain help."

Associate Anna Starkova who volunteers on a range of Prague pro bono projects and got involved in this initiative from the very first day adds: "The hotlines are for refugees who are coming into the country who have questions about how to get here, where to go and whether they have the necessary paperwork, as well as those who have just arrived."

"The hotline also takes calls from Ukrainians who already live in the Czech Republic but who have questions about bringing their loved ones over from Ukraine."

While the hotlines are not currently working on legal issues, Václav says the volunteers can still learn some useful skills.

Crisis in Ukraine - in numbers



The country is home to around
44 million people





“My brother works as a doctor in Kiev treating the injured and my dad is 73, but he’s signed up for a volunteer organization so he can do everything possible to help.”

NATALIIA TUZHELIAK, PARTNER

At weekends, Nataliaiia has also been volunteering for the Ukrainian Embassy in Paris as it helps refugees from Ukraine find accommodation in shelters and private houses and apartments.

Commenting on the overall response of colleagues in the office, Olga Fedosova, says: “Response in Paris office has been tremendous and Guillaume Vallat, Paris Office Executive Partner, Orion Berg, Dariya Babyak, Cecilia Faulcon, Jade Jutrovic, Elodie Maunier, Nathalie Infante and many others have been actively participating in organising our efforts and helping on all fronts.

“I know a lot of people are volunteering in their spare time and I’ve recently been in contact with volunteers in Ukraine to help civilians to find green corridors to flee the fighting from Kharkiv.

“What’s challenging is that the situation is changing all the time, but we’re doing all we can to help, even though we’re a long way from Ukraine.”

He says: “Obviously, our volunteers just want to do whatever they can to help people in desperate need, but it also gives them valuable experience of pro bono work, providing advice, listening and empathizing with the people they’re helping. They can help around 30-40 people in one shift.”

Going forward, the Firm could help OPU with legal issues as refugees settle and seek work.

Our Paris office has also been extremely active in responding to the crisis in Ukraine.

Associate Nataliaiia Tuzheliak explains: “I’m Ukrainian and, like many of my colleagues, I’ve found it incredibly hard having family and friends back home.

“My brother works as a doctor in Kiev treating the injured and my dad is 73, but he’s signed up for a volunteer organization so he can do everything possible to help.

“I’ve also got a close friend who is chair of a regional hospital in western Ukraine. They are coordinating ambulances to evacuate people from the front line and bring them back to the hospital where they can be better treated.

“I’ve been in close contact with the team at the hospital and they’ve provided detailed lists of the items they need. Since then, people across the office have started collecting medical supplies, which we’ve then arranged to transport to the border or the hospital itself.”



“I grew up in Alberta, Canada, and there’s a very large Ukrainian population there, so i wanted to get involved as much as i could.”

ROMAN PICHERACK, PARTNER

Partner Roman Picherack may not have Ukrainian links, but he's also been involved in coordinating the office's response to the crisis.

He says: "I grew up in Alberta, Canada, and there's a very large Ukrainian population there, so I wanted to get involved as much as I could.

"The response of everyone in the office, both Business Services professionals and lawyers, has been overwhelming."

Olga adds: "This is an unfolding situation and we're already talking to our pro bono group as we think forward to offering asylum and legal advice where needed."

There are many ways for people across the Firm to donate and get involved. Visit <http://connect.whitecase.com/firm/global-citizenship/Pages/Supporting-relief-efforts-in-Ukraine.aspx> to find out more and look out for further updates on what offices across the Firm are doing to help with the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine in the Reporter Daily.

Here are some more examples of what we're doing to help in offices around the network:



Frankfurt provides employment advice to Ukrainian refugees via immigrant tech community 2hearts's job platform founded by Berlin-based Ukrainian entrepreneurs




Crisis in Ukraine - in numbers



The country is home to around **44 million people**

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Crisis in Ukraine - in numbers



More than **3 million people** are estimated to have fled Ukraine since the start of the war

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Crisis in Ukraine - in numbers



Around **1.8 million** of the refugees have gone to Poland

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Crisis in Ukraine - in numbers



All Ukrainian men from **18-60** must stay and fight

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Crisis in Ukraine - in numbers



At **603,550 square km**, Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe


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Our **Arbitration group** is working with the **Polish** Arbitration Community to identify and offer internships to Ukrainian law students

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US offices will be assisting Lawyers for Good Government to complete Temporary Protected Status (TPS) visa applications for Ukrainians currently in the US

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Before our **Bratislava** office left the Firm in March, it provided corporate advice to Médecins Sans Frontières as it considered opening an office in **Slovakia** to provide support to those affected by the current crisis

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London is supporting a donation drive of items in high demand for civilians in Ukraine, including sleeping bags, baby food and basic medication

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We are also assessing the feasibility of individual representations of **Ukrainian** refugees referred to us by our people

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